

Life Group Leader Guide

Experiencing Christ – Week #3

(Suggested Format and Discussion Questions)

Fellowship and Food (15 minutes) – Groups with new members should continue to use name tags.

Welcome (15 minutes)

- Welcome everyone, introduce any newcomers, and open the meeting in prayer. Assign a group member to call missing group members to let them know they were missed.
- Plan a time in the next 4-5 weeks for your group to hang out together whether as a whole group or with individual men's outing and women outing. This could be as simple as having a meal together before your group meeting.
- Transition to Bible Study: "Describe an achievement (small or big) where your sacrifice was worth it." [Leader Note: The purpose of the question is to jumpstart interaction and to get people thinking about the benefits of sacrifice and suffering for a great purpose. This is a great question to get some of the non-talkers talking right at the start.]

Bible Study (45 minutes) – Encourage people to bring the sermon outline from the worship service to Life Group (preferably with personal notes they made on the outline throughout the sermon). Use the questions below to wrestle with the high demands, i.e. suffering, tied to helping others to experience Christ.

Read Col. 1:24-2:5, and then review the main points of the sermon outline.

1. (Rejoice to suffer for Christians) Read Col. 1:24-25. Share your own experience in having adversity due to your faith in Christ. Some examples might be enduring scorn, being treated poorly, standing for truth, taking responsibility while others refuse to do their part, not fitting in because of your faith. How could one rejoice in these experiences by seeing the significance of the mission?

Leader Notes: This question invites us to reconsider the spiritual value of suffering when that suffering occurs for the cause of Christ. Ordinarily we might simply think of suffering as something unpleasant, something to be avoided at all costs. But Paul tells us that suffering for Christ and his kingdom is a whole new category, and it is something in which we can rejoice. Mat 5:12 "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and say all

kinds of evil things about you falsely on account of me.” Mat 5:12 “Rejoice and be glad because your reward is great in heaven, for they persecuted the prophets before you in the same way.”

2. (Rejoice to suffer for Christians) Share from *Experiencing Christ Study Guide*, page 35, My Response: “Where do you think God wants you to serve and suffer for others? Write down at least one item tied to your family or to the church.”

Leader Notes: Hopefully, most of the people in your group will have written something in their *Experiencing Christ Study Guide* and may share it during this question. Please encourage that. Service often involves sacrifice and suffering, even if only inconvenience and use of our time. Yet the truth is that some Christians are unwilling to experience even that gentle form of “suffering” in serving.

3. (Accept your commission) “If you are a Christian, you have a commission from God.” Do you share Paul's passionate purpose? Why or why not? To whom are you commissioned or whom do you influence?

Leader Notes: This question calls on us as Christians to face the fact that we have God-given responsibilities as disciples for Christ.

4. (Communicate the Word of God) Read Col. 1:25-28. What can we do as a church and as a Life Group to help us get more deeply committed to learning God's Word? How will that help us avoid the false roads (Col. 2:4) that do not lead to maturity in Christ?

Leader Notes: Paul once described the Jews as having zeal for God, but it was misguided because their zeal did not accord with the truth. There is no shame in starting as a spiritual infant, but let's make sure we don't stay there. Our walk with Christ and others' walk with Christ are at stake.

5. (Struggle for others in all Christ's power) Read Col. 1:29-2:1. "My concern with us suburban American Christians is that we are lazy. Did I offend you? Did Paul? We retreat from the high demands of the Christian faith." What do you think of this extract from the sermon? What changes do you need to make?

Leader Notes: Make sure the discussion moves from suburbanites to the group members personally. It will be easy for the group to talk about others' lack of hard work versus wrestling with their own life. Rereading Col 1:29-2:1 can help you stir the pot, if needed, because Paul's life should convict.

6. (So we are not deceived) Question from *Experiencing Christ Study Guide*, page 43, My Response: "What questions or 'fine-sounding arguments' attack your faith?...Take time to write down questions that keep you from moving

forward."

Leader Notes: Don't feel like you have to answer each question personally, especially during the meeting. Charge each individual to seek truth to their question(s) and to rest in the answer(s) they find in God's Word. Please email your Area Pastor for help on the tough questions.

7. **(Summing up)** In your study of Colossians to this point, what have you most appreciated about Christ "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3)?

Share and Prayer (20 minutes)

- Ask who has worked on their **memory verses** for the week. Ask for a volunteer to share a memory verse out loud with everyone. Encourage group members this is a great way to sacrifice and suffer for your own growth in Christ.
- Spend time together praying as a group. Pray specifically for group members who are enduring suffering and for strength to step out and sacrifice.

Close Meeting with the following encouragement:

Start fresh each week with the daily studies in the Experiencing Christ Study Guide. This means begin Week 4 this week, even if you have unfinished days from Week 1-3. This will keep you from feeling so far behind that you quit using the study guide all together and it also keeps you working with the Scripture Bruce will be preaching on.