

Life Group Leader Guide

Experiencing Christ – Week #5

(Suggested Format and Discussion Questions)

Fellowship and Food (15 minutes) – If you haven't already, then allow someone else to host. This change can add some new interaction and energy as the group meets together. A new host also gives someone else the chance to serve in this way.

Welcome (10 minutes)

- Cover any business items related to the group.
- Transition to Bible Study: Go around the circle and have each group member "Check-In" by describing how they are feeling in one-to-two words. This is not a time for questions or further explanation. Examples of answers are "busy", "tired and discouraged", "happy", "plodding", "excited and joyful", "stressed". This is a great way to get people to open up and to get an initial feel as a leader on the emotions of group members.
- Transition to Bible Study: Ask a couple of people who did not share last week regarding the "when, why, and how" you received Christ Jesus?

Bible Study (45 minutes) – Encourage group members to bring their Bible, sermon outline, and their *Experiencing Christ Study Guide*.

1. **(Freedom from legalism)** Read Col. 2:16-17. In some churches, any man not wearing a coat and tie is in trouble! Some have been places where makeup had best not be seen on a woman's face! Many of us have experienced some form of religious legalism in which we were being judged by whether we kept the rules or guidelines featured by that group. What is your story of moving from bondage-to-rules to freedom-in-Christ? What could you do to maintain a steady grip on the freedom Christ has won for you?

Leader Notes: McKinney Fellowship teaches spiritual freedom, but many Christians have seen legalism in action and can shed light on the subject. The closing question asks our people to deal honestly with doubts that may sometimes creep back to attack their freedom in Christ.

2. **(Freedom from mysticism)** Read Col. 2:18-19. Have you ever wanted to be in "the inner circle" of some religious group or experience? What did you do about it, and how did your efforts work out?

Leader Notes: Belonging to something worthwhile is a powerful need. But in some churches one cannot be a fully-accepted member until one has (ask the group to fill in the blank).

3. **(Freedom from mysticism)** Read Col. 2:19-21. In the sermon we heard that, "In verse 19, the growth is corporate: there is no thought of some members growing independently." How does that statement relate to belonging to a Life Group? How does staying connected in unity with each other and the Head keep someone from being wrongly influenced by a mystical experience or a personal vision?

Leader Notes: Help people realize that God leads "me" in the same direction he leads "us." Many Christians do not realize that the commands in the New Testament are in the form you-plural, not you-singular.

4. **(Freedom from asceticism)** Read Col. 2:22-23. Why is the avoidance of food or alcohol or television or contact with worldly people of little value in relation to true godliness? Of what value is punishing one's physical body in order to gain in standing with God? How then do we grow in godliness?

Leader Notes: Church history holds numerous examples of groups retreating from materialism, from marriage, from the unsaved, etc. Yet Jesus came to engage the world, not retreat from it.

5. **(Orient your life to Christ)** Read Col. 3:1-2. As we consider how to seek Christ and to stay focused on the things above, what areas of one's life would we expect to be affected? (See the Word Studies in the *Experiencing Christ Study Guide*, pages 66-67.)

6. **(Orient your life to Christ)** "Paul's point is not that we are supposed to think about heaven all the time, but to let Christ and the things of his realm set the values, priorities, and direction in the here and now." After reflecting on that sermon excerpt, how do you think that would work out in your own life? What changes would you expect?

Leader Notes: The point is to try to make all our earthly actions serve Christ and his Kingdom. Key Question: What does Jesus think of (whatever I'm doing)?

7. **(Orient your life to Christ)** Read Col. 3:3-4. Why do you think Paul used phrases as dramatic as "you died with Christ" and "you have been raised with Christ" and "your life is hidden with Christ" and "you also will appear with him in glory" to describe what we obtained at salvation? How do such truths impact and motivate you to follow Christ?

Leader Notes: If we have not changed much since salvation, then

we need a big clue about the gravity of what has happened. If the campground were on fire, would you still be in your tent?

Share and Prayer (30 minutes)

- Ask for prayer requests and spend time praying for each other.
- Add a Check-Out component. End your time by quickly going around the room with each person sharing how they are feeling and their takeaway as they leave. (It's ok for people to leave still feeling "stressed", etc.)

Be sure people realize the break in schedule for the week of Oct 15. Because next weekend's sermon is on Psalm 19, we have time to work on any incomplete parts of the Colossians study. Then, on October 16th, get started on Week 6 in the *Experiencing Christ Study Guide*.