



Dear LifeGroup Leader,

This week we continue our theme of setting the boundaries and frame of the LifeGroup for the Fall. Even if you've met for years, this is a good practice to return to. It's like constructing a playground: When there's intention put into rules, fences, and interactive equipment, children and families will come and play naturally in that space.

Consider the opposite. Consider on a dirt field, someone says "this is a playground", but gives no intention to setting up the space. No rules, no structures, no boundaries. More than being unsafe, there would be no life there. Children wouldn't come! Rules, structure, and intention make room for life.

That's why I think it will be good to go back over your ground rules. Keep in mind a goal of an agreement that what is shared here stays here, and that conflict should be handled directly between people, rather than indirectly to the leader or in gossip. But start openhanded and ask what we could agree on together that would help everyone feel safe and open.

This might sound mechanical, but it is the very first foundation of love of neighbor. Love requires safety. I pray it goes well, and that God draws you together in a new way this Fall!

-Connor



Imagination Imagine the Culture

Imagination is our ability to clearly envision a specific reality. Without imagination, we're caught in "the way things are", the status quo, the cultural milieu. But what if we were to allow ourselves to clearly envision a new way of being, a new way of relating, a new way of living in our world together? John speaks of the difference between living in a culture of love versus a culture of hatred. Each of us has a foot in both worlds, and there are ways in which we can be blind to the darkness within that creates division and pain, rather than hope and love. Yet the Kingdom of God is the embodiment of love of God and neighbor, which is the light of life.

FOCAL POINT: Living in God's light means taking a look at the light and darkness within each of us.



Getting Started

Catch up together about how your week has been, possibly also revisit last week's meeting.

- ▶ Whether it's in a school or a job, what cultures/contexts in your life have made you feel alive and good? Which ones have made you feel closed in or hopeless?



Exploring Scripture

Read the following passage together.

1 John 2:7-11

- ▶ Where do you hear God's heart in this passage?
- ▶ What words or phrases stick out to you?



Reflection

Take time to reflect together about the passage.

- ▶ John calls his readers back to the basics: love of God and neighbor. If you were to hear, "all you need to worry about in life is loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself", how would that hit you with where you are in life right now? Would you feel dismissive? Refreshed? Motivated? Hopeless? Why?
- ▶ John uses a strong word: hate. It's sometimes easy for us to dismiss this word as pertaining to someone else. However, all of us at times act toward others in destructive and thoughtless ways which create division, anger, and pain. Where in your life do you struggle with these feelings and actions?



Praxis

With the understanding that we gathered here are the body of Christ, let's allow the truth from today's scripture to impact us as a LifeGroup.

- ▶ John speaks of the church as being a people who are "in the light": open, loving, worshiping God, sharing, giving, forgiving. As we begin this season together, let's take a look at what we might need together in order to help us live in the light.
 - ▶ When we meet together, what can we agree upon or do to help us all feel safe and open to share?
 - ▶ How shall we handle conflicts or difficulties together?
 - ▶ How much time should we give to Bible study, and how much time should we give to sharing about our lives together?
 - ▶ What events, whether service or fun, should we plan together this Fall?



Moving Outward

Challenge each other to live out God's truth this week.

- ▶ Acknowledging that we all, at times, act in "darkness", what is one relationship this week that we might work to make right, or to bring into the light?

1 John 2:7-11

Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.