



Week 1

LifeGroup Questions

(This week you'll notice the addition of suggested times for each question and activity. This is just an additional resource designed as a guide for facilitating a discussion lasting approx. 35 min. Keep in mind, the suggested times are just that, "suggested." The timing and flow of discussion will always vary with each individual group.)

Icebreaker: (Suggested time 5 min.) Suppose you were made "Supreme Ruler of the World" for a day, what laws would you pass to eliminate your two biggest "pet peeves?"

Objective: To recognize our own bitterness towards others and begin forgiving them.

- Keeping it anonymous, do you know someone that might be described as a bitter person?
(Suggested time 5 min.)
- Why would you describe them as bitter?
(Suggested time 5 min.)
- How does their bitterness affect their relationships?
(Suggested time 5 min.)
- How do you think bitterness gets started and begins to "take root" in our relationships?
(Suggested time 5 min.)

Read together:

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:31-32 (NLT)

- How is "forgiving one another" an antidote for bitterness?
(Suggested time 5 min.)

Group Activity (Suggested time 5 min.)

For the next few minutes pray silently and in your own words ask God these three things:

Who am I bitter toward?
Why am I bitter?
How can I begin to forgive?

- What one step will you take within 24 hours, to begin forgiving someone who has hurt you? How can we, as a group, help you take that step?
(Suggested time 5 min.)

Final Thought: Bitterness ruins...forgiveness restores.

For Further Study

Matthew 5:43-48 How did Jesus say we ought to treat our enemies? (5:44) What did Jesus say we ought to do for those who persecute us? (5:44) What type of people did Jesus cite as loving those who love them? (5:46) What exceptional standard did Christ give us? (5:48) If our holy God is able to exhibit grace and mercy to everyone, why is it difficult for us to be like Him? What would have to happen in your heart in order for you to be able to pray for an enemy? In what ways does a loving spirit demonstrate that we are God's people? For which of your "enemies" will you pray every day this week?

Matthew 18:21-35 What makes forgiveness difficult? What question did Peter ask Jesus? (18:21) What surprising answer did Jesus give Peter? (18:22) How did Jesus illustrate His answer to Peter's question? (18:23) What did the servant go do after his debt was cancelled? (18:28) How did the onlookers respond when they saw the first servant throw the second in jail? (18:31) If God is so willing to forgive us, why are we sometimes unwilling to forgive others? How do we sometimes forgive with strings attached? What should we do if we don't feel like forgiving others? What individual(s) do you need to "release from their debts" today?



Week 2

LifeGroup Questions

(Suggested supplies for Group Activity this week: Paper and pen for each person and a small trash can for the group)

IceBreaker: (Suggested time 5 min.)

Sometimes life can seem like one of those “haunted house” amusement park rides...never knowing what will jump out of the dark at us next. What do you worry might “jump out of the dark” at you this week?

Objective:

To recognize and face the worries that hold us “Hostage,” then release them to God.

- (Suggested time 5 min.)
How might **irritability** and **impatience** be a symptom of worry in your life?
- (Suggested time 5 min.)
What other indications of worry do you see in your life?
- (Suggested time 5 min.)
How does worry distract us and put our relationship with God on “hold?”
- (Suggested time 5 min.)
What worries are distracting you from focusing on God?

Read Romans 8:38 (NLT)

...I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels can't, and the demons can't. Our **fears** for today, our **worries** about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away.

Group Activity (Suggested time 15 min.)

1. On a piece of paper write down the worries that are holding you “Hostage.”
 2. **Next read Romans 8:37-38 (NLT)**
...**despite all these things**, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels can't, and the demons can't. Our **fears** for today, our **worries** about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away.
 3. **Suggested time 3 min.)** Silently look at what you have written and pray, asking God to set you free from your worries. Then take your piece of paper, tear it up and throw it away.
 4. **Read:**
“My” fears for today, **“my”** worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away **“from me.”**
- How will you **personally** live out this truth?

For Further Study

Matthew 6:25-34 What are your top three worries? What three worries did Jesus discourage among His followers? Why? (6:25) What benefits does worry bring? (6:27) What comfort can followers of Christ find in the beauty of nature? (6:30) What priorities should we have in life? (6:33) If God is really in control of the universe, why do we worry so much about so many things? What worries do you struggle to keep under control? What can help you entrust your worries to God? What steps can you take today to change your priorities from worldly ones to kingdom ones?

Luke 12:22-34 Why did Jesus start talking about worry? (12:22) What is more important than food or clothes? (12:23) What does God want us to seek? (12:31) Where can treasure be found? (12:33) Why do we worry about food and clothes? What situations bring out the worrier in you? What has worrying done for you? How can we store up treasure in heaven? When can you pray today to hand over your worries to God?



Week 3 — Addiction

LifeGroup Questions

Icebreaker: Cast members on the reality show “Survivor” are sent to live in a remote location with only the clothes they have on and one luxury item of their choice. What one luxury item would you take and why? (5 min.)

Objective: To recognize the addictions holding each of us “Hostage” and take the first step towards accepting Christ’s offer of freedom from addiction.

- Do you think you have an addiction? Why or Why not? (5 min.)
- What do people find in their addictions that they don’t find in God? (5 min.)
- Hobbies, staying late at the office, avoiding silence when you’re alone, looking forward to the next meal, over spending, inappropriate relationships, serving at church...How can things like these become substitutes for God? (5 min.)
- In your life where are you finding security, or comfort, or excitement, or relief that doesn’t involve God? (5 min.)
- How might that be an addiction? (5 min.)

*...a man came running up to Jesus, knelt down, and asked, "Good Teacher, what should I do to get eternal life?" ...you know the commandments: 'Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not testify falsely. Do not cheat. Honor your father and mother.' "Teacher," the man replied, "I've obeyed all these commandments since I was a child." Jesus felt genuine love for this man as he looked at him. "You lack only one thing," he told him. "Go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." At this, the man's face fell, and he went sadly away because he had many possessions. **Mark 10:17-22 (NLT)***

- Like this rich man, what one thing/addiction has God been asking you to give up? (5 min.)

- Why do we work so hard to hide the addictions that hold us “Hostage?” (5 min.)
- How would your life be different if you were free...free from everything holding you **Hostage**? (5 min.)

*The Lord... has sent me to **proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free. Luke 4:18 (NRSV)***

- What is the first step God is asking you to take toward freedom from **everything** holding you “Hostage?” (5 min.)

Pray Together:

Ask God to help you take the first steps toward freedom from the addictions holding you “Hostage.”

For Further Study

1 John 1:5-2:14 Why might it be hard for someone to admit that he or she was wrong about something? About what do we tend to deceive ourselves? What results from "walking in the light"? (1:7) What is the result of confessing one's sins? (1:9) What do you think the terms "light" and "darkness" represent? In what way do we "walk in darkness"? How can we "walk in the light"? How does the promise of being purified from all sin make you feel? What role does the confession of sins play in your daily life? How important is fellowship with other believers to you? What confidence should our relationship with the Father give us? What steps will you take this week to walk in the light?

James 5:13-20 What are some situations in life when most people pray? Why is prayer important? (5:15) Why should we confess our sins to one another? (5:16) What is the benefit of helping a person get back into following the truth? (5:20) How can we use prayer to help someone who is sick? How could you help someone who has drifted away from his or her relationship with Christ? Whom do you know who has been drifting away from the Lord and who needs an encouraging word from you this week?



Week 4 — Anger

LifeGroup Questions

Ice Breaker: (3 min)

What are some “terms” you may have heard used to describe an “angry” person?

Objective:

To help us let go of the “small things” and to adopt a righteous anger toward the things that make God angry.

Read:

Don't be quick-tempered, for anger is the friend of fools. Ecclesiastes 7:9 (NLT)

- Do you think of yourself as a candidate for an Anger Management class? Why or why not? (3 min)
- Describe a situation where you've gotten angry and maybe even “lost it.” (5 min)

Read:

People with good sense restrain their anger; they earn esteem by overlooking wrongs. Proverbs 19:11 (NLT)

- When have you seen the destructive affects of anger in a personal relationship? In a professional relationship? (5 min)
- How does anger hold us “Hostage” in our relationships with others? (5 min)

Read:

But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who push the truth away from themselves. Romans 1:18 (NLT)

But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and practice evil deeds. Romans 2:8 (NLT)

- How do the situations that often make us angry differ from those that make God angry? (5 min)
- How would your life be different if your anger was the same as God's anger? (5 min)
- What anger is taking your focus off of God and holding you “Hostage?” (5 min)

Read:

Those who control their anger have great understanding; those with a hasty temper will make mistakes. Proverbs 14:29 (NLT)

A fool gives full vent to anger, but a wise person quietly holds it back. Proverbs 29:11 (NLT)

- Pray in your own words asking God: (5 min)
 - To give you control over your anger and not be controlled by it
 - To give you the wisdom to quietly hold it back
 - And to be angered by only those things that anger Him

For Further Study

Luke 19:45-48. When was a time you felt justified in being angry? What makes you really angry? What attitude did Jesus have toward the merchants in the temple area? (19:46) Why did Jesus quote Scripture? (19:46) How had the temple area been misused? (19:46) What ungodly practices make you angry? When might anger lead someone to sin? In what ways would your daily prayer life be helped by “hanging on the words” of Jesus this week?

Proverbs 29:1-27 What gets you mad? How do the fool and the wise person deal with anger? (29:11) About what do righteous people care? (29:7) When do people cast off restraint? (29:18) What did Solomon say about the person who speaks in haste? (29:20) From where do we get justice? (29:26) How do you vent your anger and frustration? What is the right way to deal with anger? How can you better manage the way in which you deal with or express anger?



Week 5 — Envy

LifeGroup Questions

ICEBREAKER:

If you could finally get the “one big break” you think you deserve...What would it be?

ENVY: Resenting God’s goodness in other’s lives while ignoring His goodness in your own life.

Objective: To stop resenting God’s goodness in others lives and start recognizing all of God’s goodness in our own lives.

- Do you feel like you are getting everything you deserve, or is God holding out on you?

Read:

...For He [your heavenly father] gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the just and on the unjust, too. Matthew 5:45 (NLT)

- “He sends rain on the just and on the unjust, too.”...Does this seem fair to you? Why or Why not?
- Do you tend to be more concerned with “things that are unfair” when you are personally involved? Why or Why not?

Read:

But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. James 3:14-16 (NIV)

- What “evil practices” have you seen result from “ignoring God’s goodness in your own life?”
- How does envy destroy your relationships at home? At work? In your Life-Group?

A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.
Proverbs 14:30 (NIV)

- How will celebrating God’s goodness in other’s lives and recognizing it in your own give you a “heart at peace?”
- How will freedom from any envy that is holding you “Hostage” change your relationship with Christ?

Pray and in your own words ask God:

- What is it that I need to “celebrate” in others lives?
- What have I been ignoring in my own life that I need to “celebrate?”

For Further Study

1 Samuel 18:1-30 How would you describe your feelings about someone you know for whom everything seems to go right? How does this passage describe the bond between David and Jonathan? (18:1) How did the officers and people of Israel respond to David’s successes and promotions? (18:5) How did Saul feel about David’s popularity? (18:8-9) What was Saul’s reaction to David’s successes? (18:15) Why did Saul bestow honors on David even though he resented him? Why was Saul afraid of David even though Saul was king? What concrete step could you take to counteract envy the next time you find yourself envious of someone near you who is prospering?

Luke 9:46-50 What does greatness mean to you? How did an argument start among the disciples? (9:46) What did Jesus use to reply to the disciples’ ambition? (9:47) What different ambitions and motivations can we see in churches and other religious organizations today? What kind of teamwork might Jesus be looking for today among His followers? What is one step you can take to subject your ambitions to the ambitions of Jesus?