

IN A WORLD OF LAWLESSNESS “BE KIND”

Matthew 24:12

Introduction

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- I. The World of Lawlessness – Psalm 2:1-2
 - A. Wickedness Will Increase – Isaiah 5:20-21
 - B. Love Will Grow Cold – Matthew 24:12

- II. The Way of Kindness – Philippians 2:15-16
 - A. Embrace God’s Kindness – Ephesians 3:18-19, Romans 5:5, 1 John 4:19
 - B. Express God’s Kindness – Psalm 82:3, Proverbs 14:21, Luke 3:11, James 1:27, 1 John 3:17
 - C. Embody God’s Kindness – Matthew 5:14-16

Conclusion

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Leaders: Welcome to your first Small Group of the season! These Leaders Notes are designed around the theme, "First Night of Small Group."

Getting Started

Getting acquainted (or re-acquainted) with your small group members is an important experience, especially at the beginning of the season. These questions elevate the importance of getting to know each other and communicate the message: "**relationships matter here.**" (You also received a copy of the Building the Relationship Guide which contains dozens of additional get-to-know-you questions!)

1. Get-to-know-you game: "**Who Am I?**" Have each person write *three* interesting facts about him/herself. Collect the cards and read the statements aloud. Try to guess who it is. **The focus during this game is to just have fun! Fun and laughter knit a group together faster than nearly any other experience. Have fun with you group and watch God use that fun to draw you closer together.**
2. Work the Circle: If you were able to choose a particular talent/ability to have, what would it be and why (examples might be: Olympic athlete, professional golfer, pop singer, most patient person in the world, etc.)? **Remember, "working the circle" simply means that you start with one person and then work your way around the group so that every person shares. This is a safe question, so everyone will—most likely—feel comfortable to share. But, if someone in your group doesn't feel comfortable, allow them the option to "pass" on the question.**
3. What is your favorite childhood memory or family tradition?

Going Deeper

Leaders, please read the following "Openings and Closings" information to your group:

There are two major factors that determine how comfortable we are with relationships and community: Openings and Closings.

- **Opening Experiences** - *Times in our lives when important people have treated us with love, care, respect, and dignity.*
- **Closing Experiences** - *Episodes in our lives when we've been hurt by important people.*

1. What are some examples of both openings and closings? Do they have to be big and obvious, or can they be smaller and more subtle? When have you seen someone experience an opening? A closing? **This question is to ensure that everyone is clear on Openings and Closings. And while this question doesn't require anyone to share a personal example, it would certainly still be appropriate if someone wanted to share.**

2. When you think about openings and closings, which experience has impacted you the most? How does this influence your willingness to move toward another person in friendship? Why is that? **This is a more personal question. And depending on those in your group, it might be a little scary for them to share this early on. Just like the previous question, offer them the opportunity to talk about their lives, but don't demand that people share more than they are willing. If it makes sense, be ready to start with your own example.**

3. Read Genesis 1:27. What does it mean to be made in the "image" of God? In what way can we share His image with others? How might we choose to *hide* His image? Describe a person you know who models God's image well? **"Image."** **That is a very specific word, meaning "in the *pattern/essence* of."** It communicates specifically that we can do what God does: *Relationship*. If you want relational connection, it's because you were made for it. *You were made to live in that kind of positive/safe community.*

4. Read Psalm 133. What does this passage say regarding living out God's image with other people? Have you experienced a relationship like this? Talk about that relationship a little bit. **David is describing the amazing value of "doing life together."** This is a picture of abundance, of plenty, and of blessing. It's like God is saying, *"That is where the abundance of life is."* Do you want the best of life...the extravagance of life? *You find it in community.* The dew mentioned in the passage literally spelled life for them: there were places where what they grew (what they ate) was solely dependent on dew fall. **God is saying,** "That is where you find the sustenance of life...*this is where you get what you need, what you really need.*" This deal is even more important than experiencing the "great" things of life. **This is where you get what you need for REAL life.**

Leaders, please read this to your group to prepare them for question 5:

Throughout history, castles have been seen as the “heart” of a country. To protect their country’s heart, rulers would build walls around their castles—and then surround the wall with a moat. The only way to access the castle was if someone opened the drawbridge.

5. When it comes to connecting relationally with people, where is your drawbridge – all the way up, halfway down, or all the way down? In other words, how would you rate your openness to others right now?

Leaders, this is the time in your conversation to bring out the Covenant (if you made copies of the Covenant for your group members, go ahead and pass those around).

Applying the Message

1. *Groups that go well do so because they’ve made a commitment to each other.* What does it mean to make a commitment to another person? What about to a group of people? What barriers could keep you from being able to commit to this small group right now? **This question simply prepares people to not just read the Covenant but *commit* to it.**
2. The next step for you is to work through the Covenant—as a group. **You might also take a moment to share with your group what you learned at the Kick-Off about the importance of the Covenant (also, there is a shortened, tear-off copy on the final page of the packet if you need it).**