

**Life Group Leader Guide #27**  
**September 24, 2017**  
**Engage**

---

Last week our Life Groups discussed the need for Christians to “separate” from the world, to be different and distinct from it. Jesus taught his followers to be “in” the world but not to become “of” the world... the concept of holiness. The church is to be a holy nation (i.e. ‘set apart’) and a “peculiar” people (i.e. a ‘people belonging to God’- NOT the world.) So, in the face of great temptations offered by our culture to become like it in so many ways, the Christian practice of ‘Separation’ points us towards this aim of living holy and distinct lifestyles which are characteristically different from the values and principles we see every day in the world around us. We do not participate in certain activities. We do not fill our minds with certain forms of entertainment. We may take a fast from certain other activities which may not be bad in and of themselves but do have the effect of connecting us to the world. That was our challenge last week.

This week we want to look at the other side of this discipline, the practice of engagement. Jesus calls his followers not only to live in the world but to be active participants in it. How else are we to bless it? How else are we to preach the good news and make disciples? The fundamental call of Israel in the Old Testament was to be a blessing to the nations. While they had been set apart as God’s people, their primary duty was to bless all nations (cf. **Gn 18:18**). In Jesus’ famous Sermon on the Mount he called his followers the “Salt of the Earth” and the “Light of the World” (**Matt. 5:13-14**) with the thought in mind that they would go out into the world, engaging it with the intent of making it better and brighter.

Christians do this when we engage in service to the community, in ministries that reach out into our community to bless it, when we offer a cup of cold water to someone in the name of Jesus, or in the many expressions of kindness one might share with his neighbor. We do this when we work together to meet needs of people who are not like us in our community or when we engage in movements working towards greater social justice in our world. What’s more, we do this when we share our faith with nonbelievers.

We may agree on this concept in principle, but how do we put it into practice? I have found that the longer one is a Christian and the more ingrained in Christian circles we become, the less engagement we might have with the world. I remember talking with an older gentleman, in his nineties, one time who had a heart for the lost and an eagerness to share the gospel with others, but he lamented to me that everybody he knew went to church somewhere. I suspect many, especially in our small town, can relate to that. This should prompt us, in my opinion, to get aggressive and creative about creating opportunities where we might engage the community and especially interact with people we do not already know so as to share God’s good news message with them.

Tonight, spend some time looking at these 'engagement' moments from the life of Jesus and ask in your groups how we might follow his model of social engagement so that we might not only share the gospel with the world, but be more like Jesus in the process. Blessings on your group time!

### **Discussion:**

---

#### **Read Matthew 9:9-15**

1. Why do you suppose Levi was prompted to hold a great banquet for Jesus at his house?
2. How would you have expected Jesus to respond to his invitation? How would you have responded to it? Why?
3. What kind of reaction did the religious community have to Jesus' active engagement with the tax collector's and sinners?
4. How do you see Jesus actively engaging a group of people unlike himself in this story?

#### **Matthew 11:19**

1. How would you describe Jesus' reputation given in this passage? Is this the reputation of any Christians you know? Of any churches?
2. Jesus purposefully (and unashamedly) associated with nonbelievers. What kind of challenge does this present the church today?
3. How can we as a church actively pursue those who most need to hear the gospel? Brainstorm some ideas that you or your group might engage in?

#### **1 Cor. 9:19-23**

1. How did Paul's philosophy of ministry guide his engagement with the world? What was he willing to do for the sake of saving people's souls? Are we?

**Challenge:** Go out of your way this week to actively engage our community in a way that you have not done before for the sake of Jesus. Introduce yourself to someone you don't know and talk to them about Jesus. Or go somewhere you've never gone and look for opportunities to talk to someone about Jesus. You might intentionally get involved in one of the many opportunities in our community to serve others—Hands of Mercy, Clothe our Kids, Wings of Love are all non-profit ministries who serve families in our community. There are others. Get involved. Engage and bless!