



HOW WE ***BELONG***

LIFEGROUP **STUDY GUIDE**

April 14 - May 5



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LIFEGROUP STUDY GUIDE

by Dan Franklin

This study guide follows along with LBF Church's current Sunday message series and is intended to be a supplement in your daily passionate pursuit of Jesus.

- *Watch last Sunday's message video:*
www.lbf.church/messages

Is your group stumped? Did you come to a question that you feel needs clarification? Our church isn't too big. Contact Pastor Dan with your questions.

- *Contact Pastor Dan:*
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WE WORSHIP

Lesson 1 • April 14

MAIN POINT

Belonging to the body of Christ means that we worship together.

INTRODUCTION

During the Covid-19 shutdown in 2020, a trend that had already begun became much more pronounced. That trend was for an increasing number of committed Christians to conclude that there was no significant need to regularly attend worship services. After all, we could take in a worship service at home. We could listen to a sermon without the distractions of coming to a certain location. We could sing (if we wanted to) in the comfort of our own home. And we didn't need to deal with the stress of getting up, getting dressed, and getting everyone out of the house on time.

To add to this, some of us deal with social anxiety, and so there was a sense that it might actually be less distracting to “do church” at home. We could focus on what God was saying to us without worrying about what others were thinking, and without having to worry about uncomfortable small talk that might happen before and after the service. And if any part of the service felt uncomfortable to us, we could just opt out of it, and maybe even skip it altogether.

While most of us are grateful that during times of sickness or travel we can still access worship services online, it is worth asking what we might be missing out on if we view church as something that we can simply get in the comfort of our own home. In this lesson we will explore the biblical calling to worship together, and we will look to discover God's gifts and calling for each of us in how we gather to worship him.

GETTING STARTED

1. What are some reasons why Christians might not see the need to gather regularly with other Christians for worship?

2. What are some benefits that you personally have experienced through gathering with a church to worship on Sundays?

DIGGING IN

Read Colossians 3:16.

16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. Both times the word “you” is used in this verse, it is in the plural in the original Greek. In other words, it says, “Let the message of Christ dwell richly among you all as you all teach . . .” How does this impact your understanding of this verse?

5. How can “the message of Christ” dwell among a community of believers?

6. To “admonish” someone is to warn someone. What are some appropriate ways that believers can admonish one another?

7. Read Ephesians 5:19, which is very similar to this verse in Colossians. Looking at these two verses, what do you see as some of the purposes for believers singing when they gather together?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. We often think of worship as being between us and God, and yet God consistently calls his people to worship together. How do you think you can keep your focus on God during times of worship, while also participating in the benefits that come from worshipping together?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. Receiving the gospel requires us to humble ourselves and to embrace our need for Christ. How do you think this attitude of humility relates to our need to gather with a church family for worship, instead of trying to live the Christian life on our own?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. What is one way that you can approach Sunday worship services in order to experience more of the blessing of gathering together with other believers?

11. What is one way that you can approach Sunday worship services in order to be more of a blessing to other believers who are gathered along with you?

WE CONNECT

Lesson 2 • April 21

MAIN POINT

Belonging to the body of Christ means that we intertwine our lives.

INTRODUCTION

Frequently we will hear churches, or politicians, talk about “building community.” What this usually means is that we should be more connected to one another as people who live in the same general location. We are called to build community with one another.

The interesting thing about the call to build community is that we consistently see this sense of community spring up naturally in a number of different ways. We see it among sports fans who all root for the same team. We see it around people who all ride bikes, read books, or play pickleball. We see it among people who are going through cancer or who are looking to stay sober. We see community spring up all around us.

The common thread of this spontaneous community is that it is always centered around something that is shared. There is a shared interest, a shared experience, or a shared mission. People do not unite simply because they live near each other. They unite because of something important that they hold in common.

In this lesson, we will see something much more than simply a call for Christians to live in community. Instead, we will see a call to live out a union that we have with one another. And we are united by something much deeper than a recreational activity or a temporary goal. We are bound together by our shared experience of the gospel, our shared love for Jesus, and our shared mission to follow Jesus in every way. And this unity is meant to show up in how we allow our lives to be intertwined with one another.

GETTING STARTED

1. What is the difference between simple friendship and Christian fellowship?

2. What are some reasons why people choose isolation over connection?

DIGGING IN

Read Hebrews 10:19-25.

19 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. Verses 19-21 provide the basis for everything that comes in the rest of the passage. What foundational truths are established in these verses?

5. Verses 22 and 23 each begin with the words “let us.” Summarize what the author is calling believers to do in each of these commands.

6. How do the commands in verses 24-25 flow out of the preceding verses in this passage?

7. What are some ways that believers in Jesus can “spur one another on toward love and good deeds”?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. In verses 19-23, which statement most speaks to your heart right now about the benefits that we have received through Christ and the gospel?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. What changes would happen in how you relate to other believers if you ground your connection less in your common interests and more in your common faith?

11. In what practical way can you encourage another believer this week?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. In verse 25 we are encouraged not to stop meeting together “as some are in the habit of doing.” Why do you think many of us face a temptation to isolate ourselves instead of keeping ourselves connected to other believers?

WE BRING OUR GIFTS

Lesson 3 • April 28

MAIN POINT

Belonging to the body of Christ means that we use our spiritual gifts to benefit others.

INTRODUCTION

The human body is amazing. There are so many elements, and so many moving parts, and they all work together in incredible ways to make us not only able to walk and to talk and to see, but to be able to run and to jump and to create artistic masterpieces.

And something that is obvious about the body is that the different parts are all intertwined. The eye does not see and then keep its knowledge to itself. It brings that knowledge to the hands and feet, to the face and even to the heart. This is the eye's contribution to the body. How sad would it be if the eye decided that it wasn't interested in sharing what it saw. The rest of the body would be at a disadvantage.

Throughout the New Testament, Paul uses the illustration of the church being the body of Christ. Just as a body is a unity of many parts, the church is a unity of many people. Despite this, it is not obvious to many of us that we have a calling to play our part in a way that the whole body benefits. We casually keep our gifts to ourselves, feeling no urgency about benefiting the body as a whole.

In this lesson we will explore the calling that we each have as members of the body of Christ, and we will also explore how we can practically take next steps to use our gifts to fulfill the purpose for which God gave them.

GETTING STARTED

1. Give an example of a time you received a gift that was intended to be shared with others.

2. What are some reasons why many Christians don't actively serve in the context of their local church?

DIGGING IN

Read Romans 12:3-8.

3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. 4 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. Focus on verse 3. What dangers do you think Paul is guarding against in what he says?

5. As you consider verses 4-5, what might happen if one member of the body of Christ is not functioning according to what they are meant to do?

6. In verses 6-8, what do you notice about the way Paul calls believers to use their gifts?

7. How do Paul's instructions in verses 6-8 connect with his statement in verse 5 that "each member belongs to all the others"?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. Spiritual gifts (like those talked about in Romans 12) are specifically given to believers by the Holy Spirit. How, then, do you think we can differentiate spiritual gifts from natural talents or skills we develop?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. In this passage, Paul connects our exercise of our spiritual gifts to the fact that we have received these gifts through grace (verse 3). How does the grace we've received through the gospel of Jesus empower us to serve others?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. What do you think your spiritual gifts are? Look at the list in Romans 12:3-8, and you can look at 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 for more examples of spiritual gifts?

11. What is your next step of faith and obedience as you look to bring your spiritual gifts to your church family?

WE SHARE

Lesson 4 • May 5

MAIN POINT

Belonging to the body of Christ means that we share our money and resources with one another.

INTRODUCTION

Those of us who live in the United States are currently in the most prosperous society in the history of mankind. We have a higher standard of living and more luxuries than most people have dreamed of. Whether it is hot showers, food in the refrigerator, or high-speed internet, our lives are more comfortable than the lives of royalty throughout most of human history.

Despite this fact, we are also a society that is anxious about money. We wonder if we are going to make ends meet, and we worry that we won't be able to retire properly.

We have more than anyone else has ever had, and yet we feel deeply possessive about what is ours. We are reluctant to share because we are afraid that we won't have enough to meet our own needs.

In this lesson we encounter a passage that includes a call to give generously. But Paul does not simply give the command and move on. Instead, he addresses several of the concerns we have when we think about giving more generously. The end result is that we get a life-giving, and challenging, invitation to use our money and resources in order to share with those in our church community, and beyond.

GETTING STARTED

1. How do you view your money as it relates to needs that arise in your family (or extended family)?

2. What are some obstacles to people giving generously to their church or to the wider body of Christ?

DIGGING IN

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-11.

6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever." 10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. Focus on verse 6. How does it impact your attitude toward giving when you think of it in terms of sowing and reaping?

5. How do you think a person should decide in their heart what they are going to give (verse 7)?

9. In the chapter before our passage (in the same overall context), Paul says this: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). How does the generosity of Jesus relate to our ability (and calling) to be generous?

6. Verses 8-9 bring out God’s ability to provide for our needs. What obstacle to giving do you think Paul is addressing when he says this?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

10. What would have to change in order for you to give more generously to your church family (and beyond)?

7. According to verses 10-11, what is God’s purpose in providing for our needs when we give generously?

TAKING IT TO HEART

11. What specific step do you believe God is calling you to take in order to “sow” more “generously”?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. In verse 10 Paul says that, if we give generously, we will “be enriched in every way.” Does this mean that we are promised that we will become rich if we give money to the church? If not, what kind of enrichment do you think he means?