



LIFEGROUP **STUDY GUIDE**

March 23 - April 27



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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.

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Don't Worry, Pray

Philippians 4:6-7 • pp. 4-5 • Mar. 23

When You Love Money

1 Timothy 6:6-10 • pp. 6-7 • Mar. 30

When You Have Money

1 Timothy 6:17-19 • pp. 8-9 • Apr. 6

Palm Sunday: Responding to Jesus

Luke 19:28-44 • pp. 10-11 • Apr. 13

Easter Sunday: Desperate for Life

Ephesians 2:1-5 • pp. 12-13 • Apr. 20

By Grace, Through Faith

Ephesians 2:8-9 • pp. 14-15 • Apr. 27

DON'T WORRY, PRAY

March 23

MAIN POINT

Prayer is our wisest response in every situation.

INTRODUCTION

There are times when it is good to speak up, and times when it is good to be silent. There are times to do something risky, and times to play it safe. There are times to show your emotions, and times to reserve them. Wisdom is knowing the proper response for each situation.

But, according to the Apostle Paul, there is one response that is proper in every situation. That response is prayer. No matter what happens, good or bad, public or private, big or small, prayer is a proper response. God is always excited to hear from us, and we always benefit from reaching out to him.

In this lesson we will focus on Philippians 4:6-7, in which Paul both instructs us on how to respond to every situation with prayer, and then also gives us a preview of what we can expect when we turn to God in prayer.

GETTING STARTED

1. In what situations are you most likely to pray? In what situations are you least likely to pray?

2. What do you enjoy about times when you pray (either on your own or with others)?

DIGGING IN

Read Philippians 4:6-7.

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

3. What struck you most about the passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. Paul's opening command is not to be anxious. What makes you anxious?

5. Paul calls believers to pray "in every situation." Name some situations which you don't normally respond to with prayer, but which you could respond to with prayer?

6. Instead of being anxious, Paul tells us to present our requests to God. Take an example of something that makes you anxious and turn it into a request to be presented to God. What did you notice as you went through this process?

7. Paul does not promise that God will give us whatever we ask for, but why is his promise in verse 7 so significant to those who are anxious?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. In the midst of his call to prayer, Paul says “with thanksgiving” in verse 6. When we reflect on the gospel of Jesus, how can this lead to joyful gratitude within our prayers?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. In the situations where you are most likely to choose anxiety over prayer, how can you set yourself up for a prayerful response?

11. Write out a prayer to God that includes both gratitude and requests. It can be just a sentence or two, or it can be longer.

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. What do you think Paul means when he speaks of peace “which transcends all understanding”?

WHEN YOU LOVE MONEY

March 30

MAIN POINT

The love of money is a key competitor to the love of God.

INTRODUCTION

We frequently hear people say, “Money is the root of all evil.” This is a misquote from the Bible. What Paul actually says in the passage that accompanies this lesson is, “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” The problem is not money, but love of money.

While this might feel like good news for those of us who have money, it is also sobering news. Paul is saying that we are in danger of evil not only when we have money, but simply when we want to have money. You don’t have to be rich to love money. You simply have to believe that money will solve your problems.

As we consider God’s calling for us to be generous with the money that he’s given us, we’ll explore in this lesson how the love of money blocks the path of generosity. We’ll also explore how we can practice the opposite of the love of money: Contentment.

GETTING STARTED

1. What are some problems in your life that you find yourself believing could be solved by more money?

2. Share about a time in which—either in your life or in someone you know—you’ve seen the love of money cause problems.

DIGGING IN

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10.

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. **7** For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. **8** But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. **9** Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. **10** For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

3. What struck you most about the passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. How would you define contentment?

5. In verses 6-8, what do you notice about how Paul describes Christian contentment?

6. According to verse 9, what happens to those who “want to get rich?”

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. One reason why many Christians are not more generous givers is because of the love of money and because of a lack of contentment. If you were truly content, how would this impact your giving habits?

7. What are some of the evils that come from the love of money?

11. Name one practical way that you can battle against the love of money?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. Do you think God sometimes blesses people with financial abundance? If so, is this setting people up for temptation and danger?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. As you look at what Paul says about the love of money in verse 10, consider the story of the Rich Young Ruler (Luke 18:18-25). Why do you think the love of money is particularly dangerous to our response to the gospel?

WHEN YOU HAVE MONEY

April 6

MAIN POINT

God gives wealth in order for it to be shared.

INTRODUCTION

The United States is far and away the richest country in the history of the world. This relates not only to the amount of income we have, but also to luxuries like transportation, communication, clean water, air conditioning and heating, and refrigeration. While many of us are not rich in comparison with other Americans, we are certainly rich by global and historic standards.

What are we to do in response to our riches? Should we feel guilty? Should we feel grateful? Should we reject our money and embrace poverty? Should we live it up and enjoy God's good gifts? How do we respond?

In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, Paul speaks to Timothy about how he should instruct "those who are rich." He does not condemn the rich as greedy oppressors. Instead, he gives powerful instructions about how the rich are meant to respond to their situation. Not only does he give some instructions that are joyfully surprising, but he gives reasons behind the instructions that direct our hearts toward God's heart for us.

GETTING STARTED

1. Do you consider yourself to be rich? Why or why not?

2. When you think about how many people in the world are living in poverty, do you find your heart responding more with guilt or more with gratitude?

DIGGING IN

Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. **18** Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. **19** In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

3. What struck you most about the passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. What are some ways in which people (especially in the U.S.) can be tempted to "put their hope in wealth"?

5. What does it tell you about God when Paul says that he provides us with *everything for our enjoyment*?

6. What stands out to you most in Paul's instructions in verse 18?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. Read the passage one more time. How is God moving in your heart to respond, specifically in the call to be generous?

7. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 6:19-21. How do his words relate to what Paul says in verse 19?

11. How does generous giving relate to the call for you to put your hope in God instead of riches?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. According to Paul, God provides us with everything for our enjoyment. How do you think this statement could be misunderstood or misused?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. Paul warns us not to put our hope in uncertain riches, but in God. How do the death and resurrection of Jesus make God's promises to us more certain than the security that wealth promises to us?

PALM SUNDAY: RESPONDING TO JESUS

April 13

MAIN POINT

The way we respond to Jesus determines our destiny.

INTRODUCTION

Palm Sunday is an observance of the story in which Jesus enters Jerusalem for his final Passover. This day also begins Holy Week, which is the week leading up to Good Friday (when Jesus was crucified) and Easter Sunday (when Jesus was raised from the dead). In the story, Jesus behaves in a surprising way, especially in how he enters on a donkey (not a very dignified animal for a King).

On top of this, the Palm Sunday story is an exploration of how different groups respond to Jesus. In the passage you will observe at least four groups responding to Jesus in four distinct ways. These responses are instructive to us because the way we respond to Jesus determines our destiny.

As you walk through this lesson, take time to consider how your own heart is responding to Jesus, especially at times when he doesn't behave the way that you expect or desire.

GETTING STARTED

1. What responses do you observe people in our culture having toward Jesus?

2. What qualities of Jesus make him easy for you to trust? What about him makes him sometimes difficult for you to trust?

DIGGING IN

Read Luke 19:28-44.

28 After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 As he approached Bethphage and Bethany, at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 30 "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' say, 'The Lord needs it.' "

32 Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?"

34 They replied, "The Lord needs it."

35 They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. 36 As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

37 When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

38 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

40 "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it 42 and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. 43 The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an

embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. 44 They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

3. What struck you most about the passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. This passage is full of different responses to Jesus. Use a word or a phrase to describe how each of the following groups respond to Jesus?

The Disciples (Verse 32)

The Crowd (Verses 35-38)

The Pharisees (Verse 39)

Jerusalem (Verses 41-42)

5. When you think of the above four responses to Jesus, how do each of them relate to people (or groups) in our culture today?

6. Focus on the words of the crowd in verse 38. How can you foster that kind of response to Jesus in your own heart today?

7. Focus on Jesus' words about Jerusalem in verses 41-44. What does this passage reveal about Jesus' heart toward those who reject him?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. It is often pointed out that some of these same people who were praising Jesus were probably among the crowd (Luke 23:18) who asked for Jesus to be crucified. Why do you think people's hearts can change so dramatically when it comes to how they respond to Jesus?

9. Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey is a fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9. Read that verse. How does this action from Jesus relate to his upcoming sacrifice for the sins of his people?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

10. How can you cultivate a heart that properly responds to Jesus, even when he confuses or surprises you?

TAKING IT TO HEART

11. Think of someone you know who does not currently have a responsive heart toward Jesus (either a believer who is hard-hearted or an unbeliever). Pray for them with the same heart that Jesus showed in his grief over Jerusalem.

EASTER SUNDAY: DESPERATE FOR LIFE

April 20

MAIN POINT

We needed Jesus' resurrection because we were dead in our sins.

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, I was watching an NFL game that was a tight contest coming down to the wire. The team with the ball was trailing by three points and was driving down the field with less than a minute to go. Then a play happened that involved the quarterback being chased around by the defensive linemen. The quarterback ran toward the sideline and casually tossed the ball out of bounds. This is normally a smart play because it helps the quarterback avoid being sacked and it stops the game clock. The quarterback, probably pleased with his wise decision, began to run back to his teammates for the next play. But when he did this, he was informed that he had just thrown the ball out of bounds on fourth down. This meant that he had turned the ball over on downs, the other team took over on offense, and they easily ran out the clock for a victory.

This story illustrates that there is a difference between feeling desperate and being desperate. The quarterback did not feel desperate to get a first down on the play, but it turned out that he was desperate. It was their last chance, but he didn't realize this. He did not show proper urgency and he made a bad decision because he did not feel desperate, even though his situation was desperate.

When the good news of Jesus' resurrection is proclaimed in the United States, many shrug their shoulders. They might not have a big problem with Jesus, and they might even be open to the idea that Jesus was raised from the dead, but they feel no desperation about making the major life change that would be involved in becoming Christians. They don't feel desperate, but in Ephesians 2:1-5 Paul tells us that, despite their feelings, they are desperate.

In this lesson we will look not only at the desperate state that we find ourselves in apart from Christ, but we will also look at the new life that is available to those of us who have already put our faith in Jesus. Are we settling for "good enough" when God is offering us a staggeringly new and beautiful life?

The bottom line is that we are desperate for the life that God offers us through Jesus' resurrection. But if we're going to experience that life, we will need to feel desperate.

GETTING STARTED

1. What do you think it would take for non-Christians in the U.S. to become desperate for the new life that Jesus can bring?

2. What would make you more desperate to experience the fullness of the new life that Jesus brought through his death and resurrection?

DIGGING IN

Read Ephesians 2:1-5.

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, **2** in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. **3** All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. **4** But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **5** made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

3. What struck you most about the passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. What are some implications to the idea that, without Christ, we are dead in our transgressions and sins?

5. In verse 3, what does Paul say is the destiny for people who are living apart from Christ?

6. According to verse 4, what motivated God to act on our behalf? And how do you find your heart responding to God's motivation?

7. In verse 5, Paul speaks of God making us alive "with Christ." How does this connect to the resurrection story of Jesus?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. Most non-Christians do not believe that they are dead in their sins. In fact, many might be offended if told this. How do you think believers can communicate the gospel in light of how many react to the news Paul brings in verses 1-3?

9. When you think of salvation being a change from being dead to being alive, what does this tell you about (1) the desperate state you were previously in and (2) the nature of what your life can be like now?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

10. When you think of non-Christians—whether they know it or not—being dead in their sins, how do you feel called to respond?

TAKING IT TO HEART

11. What can you do to cultivate a greater sense of desperation for the full new life that God has brought about through the resurrection of Jesus?

BY GRACE, THROUGH FAITH

April 27

MAIN POINT

The salvation that God brings is by his grace, and we receive it through our faith.

INTRODUCTION

Many people in American culture—including many religious people—don't truly believe that we need to be saved. We may need guidance and wisdom and patience, and we may even need God to be understanding with us. But it's hard for many of us to believe that we were headed for hell and judgment, and that Jesus dramatically rescued us through his death for our sins.

Because of this, there are many God-affirming people in the United States who are religious, and yet are unsaved. In some sense they think they need God, but they don't think that they need God to save them.

In this lesson we look at Paul's words about salvation. He places the idea of being "saved" at the center of the Christian message. And then he tells us how a person gets saved. And his answer may surprise us.

As you walk through this lesson, be open to the idea that you may be a religious person who still needs to be saved. And if you are already saved, focus on what Paul says about both grace and faith, and consider how that impacts the way you relate to God.

GETTING STARTED

1. What are some ways people in American culture today respond to the idea of needing to be "saved"?

2. Why do you think so many of us default to the belief that we must attain our own salvation through good works?

DIGGING IN

Read Ephesians 2:8-9.

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

3. What struck you most about the passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. Paul speaks in verse 8 about being "saved." Look back at Ephesians 2:1-7. What are the different ways Paul writes about this salvation?

5. What do you think it means to be saved by grace, not by works?

6. We are saved *through* faith. Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as “confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” In light of this, what do you think is involved in the kind of faith that saves us?

7. If the manner by which we are saved keeps us from boasting, what do you think is the proper response to salvation?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. According to Paul we are saved not by works, but by faith. How is the exercise of faith *not* a work?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. In 2 Timothy 1:12, Paul says, “That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.” How is your understanding of faith impacted by Paul speaking about knowing in whom he has believed?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. In what ways are you tempted to “boast” before God and others? How can the message of salvation by grace through faith reorient this temptation to boast?

11. In what way is God calling you to draw near to him based on faith—not works—right now?