

5 | GROUP PRAYER

Rather than going around the group and sharing prayer requests, you might consider simply bowing your heads and taking turns praying for the things on your heart or that the Holy Spirit brings to mind.

NEXT STEPS AFTER GROUP

1 | SCRIPTURE FOCUSED

• Verse to Memorize: _____

• Other Passages to Read: _____

2 | PRAYER FOCUSED

- How can you pray for people in your group this week?
- Is the Holy Spirit speaking to you about something you need to repent of and turn over to Jesus?
- How are you going to respond to this truth and put it into action?

3 | OTHERS FOCUSED

- Did anyone in your group share a need that you might be gifted to help with?
- Consider inviting a friend from group to meet up for a meal or a hang out time.
- Is the Holy Spirit bringing someone to mind with whom you can share the things you've learned today?

GROUPS

STUDY GUIDE

Why Would I Prepare BEFORE My Lighthouse Group?

Reading, thinking, and praying about the primary passage your Lighthouse Group is studying ahead of time may be one of the most pivotal ways to make your Lighthouse Group discussions powerful and meaningful. When you do prepare beforehand, you're coming with thoughtful insights and ideas you've been wrestling through. That's different from grabbing at the most accessible thoughts in real time.

How Do I Prepare BEFORE My Lighthouse Group?

1 | PRAY

Ask God to open your eyes, mind, and spirit to His truth. Your desire is not to "get the right answer," but rather to know Him as He has revealed Himself so that you can trust and rely on Him more fully.

2 | READ

Read the main passage. Consider reading the same passage in multiple versions, like ESV, NIV, AMP, and NLT. All of these can be found at BibleGateway.com. For better context, read the paragraphs before and after the study passage as well.

3 | REFLECT

What does this passage teach you about God? Maybe something to praise Him for? Does this passage reveal an area of your life you should confess as sin to God? What does this passage lead you to ask God for? How does this passage point to Jesus work on the cross and out of the grave?

Think through some of the questions you'll be discussing during your Lighthouse Group time.

4 | WRITE

This is when you cross over from reading into study - writing down truth that you are discovering. Write down questions that come to mind as you are reading.

We've included space on the next page of this guide for you to write down insights, questions, and more that you can bring up in your Lighthouse Group discussion time.

PREP BEFORE GROUP

PRIMARY PASSAGE: Matthew 9:9-13

WRITE YOUR INSIGHTS & QUESTIONS HERE:

ADDITIONAL CROSS-REFERENCES: Mark 2:14-17; Luke 5:27-32; Romans 5:6-8; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Colossians 1:21-22

DISCUSSION GUIDE

For the week of: October 7-13

1 | **PRAY:** Ask the Holy Spirit to lead your group in truth and spiritual growth.

2 | **READ** Matthew 9:9-13

One volunteer reads the passage in the ESV or NIV. Another volunteer reads the passage in AMP or NLT.

3 | **CONSIDER SITUATIONAL/HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

The Pharisees had spent years and years adding extra rules and regulations to the original law God had given them, so that they could feel even more holy and right, but in the process, they made it even more impossible for others to know God. They had lost sight of the reason why God gave His commands: to reveal His character and provide people with a way to draw nearer to Him.

All of us, in our sinful pride, draw up our own rules, build our own fences and draw lines in the sand that keep certain people out. We put limitations on *God's* amazing grace because we know *we* don't have that much grace or love inside of us, and we are too prideful to rely on God and ask Him for help in loving others. That would just be too humbling. Clearly, those other people just don't deserve God's love. We lie to ourselves when we say the problem is not with us. But there is grace for this, too. God always makes the first move toward us.

4 | **DISCUSSION**

CONTENT QUESTIONS

1. What invitation does Jesus give to Matthew?
2. What invitation does Matthew give to his friends?
3. What invitation does Jesus give to the Pharisees?

TRUTH QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between showing mercy and offering sacrifices?
2. Are all people sinners?
3. Does Jesus love the tax collectors and the Pharisees equally, yet treat them differently? If so, why?

APPLICATION/PERSONAL QUESTIONS

1. Do you consider some people more worthy of Christ's love than others?
2. Do you invite people to know Jesus? If so, how do you do this?
3. How does humbly accepting God's mercy for yourself affect your ability to feel accepted in the body of Christ and to accept others?