

I AM THIRD

Life Group Leaders Guide

Directions

This packet contains the background information, series information, and weekly curriculum you will need to lead a life group during our *I Am Third* series. Everything on this page is to help you stay connected to the series as a whole. Behind this page is the individual curriculum to help you point people to Jesus. The *Purpose* and *Move* sections of the curriculum are for the leader to read or paraphrase to the group. The *Notes and Commentary* section is for the leader to get background information and go deeper into the passages before leading the life group. The curriculum was designed with your freedom in mind. Read through the curriculum and decide what will work best for your group. SOAP the passages with the group, use only certain questions, write your own questions, or use the curriculum verbatim. As the leader, you know what will point your people to Jesus.

Series Overview

The Bible teaches that God is first, we must put others second, which means we must be willing to take third place. The idea of purposefully taking third does not seem like an effective technique for getting ahead which is probably why it is not seen commonly in our culture. The good news is that the bible promises that when we assume third we can truly be great, make an incredible impact, and help others find Jesus! In this series we will be studying the importance of serving by purposefully assuming third and how it is an integral part of following Jesus. Our hope is that all people at The Point will pursue greatness the way Jesus defined it, by being third.

Life Group Overview

During the *I Am Third* series our life group curriculum will generally cover the same topic that was covered from stage but using a different passage or set of passages. Each curriculum will begin with an unpacking of the previous Sunday's service to help the leader open up the topic for the study and also see how people responded to the Sunday teaching.

I Am Third Series Schedule

Week	Sermon Date	Topic of sermon	Topic of life group
Week 1	3/11	Great through serving - Matthew 20:20-28	Great through serving - Joshua 2:1-21
Week 2	3/18	Give God your lunch - John 6:1-15	Living Faith - James 2:14-26
Week 3	3/25	Roof Removal - Mark 2:1-12 & Luke 5:17-26	Barrier removal - 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

The Point Church Life Group Curriculum

I Am Third - Week 1 - Great through serving

Purpose of Study

To be great is to make yourself less than the people around you. To be first, one must put oneself behind others. To be on top, one must assume the bottom. Although not commonly taught to us in America, these are the strategies that Jesus gave us to achieve greatness. From stage this Sunday we saw how greatness comes through serving others. We will continue that thought in this life group study on an unlikely character who is considered great in the bible because of her service...so great that she makes it into the genealogy of Jesus and the Hall of Faith (Hebrews 11). We are going to start this study by looking at her accolades and then tracing backwards to see what greatness is and what it is not. We will end the study by taking some time to apply it to our lives.

Flow of Study

Icebreaker: When you think of a great person, what comes to mind?

Move #1: Since the sermon series and life groups are covering similar topics, it might be a good idea (both for content and time) to begin the discussion with some unpacking questions from this Sunday's sermon.

1. Did anything stand out to you from the message this weekend?
2. Is there anything from the message this weekend that you want to apply?
3. One of our key passages from this weekend was Matthew 20:26b-28. Do you think the idea of greatness through serving is a countercultural idea or is it woven in us and our society?

...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave --²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Move #2: We will begin this study by looking at a quick biography and then the accolades for one of the bible's "greatest" characters. Her name is Rahab and she appears in both the Old and New Testament multiple times. Although she is in some pretty impressive sections of scripture, we would not regard her as necessarily "great" if she lived among us today. Let's start by looking at how the bible refers to her in Joshua 2 and then we will jump to how she is mentioned in the New Testament.

Background: In the book of Joshua God's people are about to cross over into their promised land. The only issue is that there are people currently inhabiting it. So, Joshua sends some spies to go get an idea of the enemies that they might be up against. While the spies are in enemy territory, they seek shelter from an unlikely character, Rahab, who is described by the following verse...

Read Joshua 2:1 (NIV)

¹ Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

1. How is Rahab described in her bible debut?
2. How would Rahab be perceived in our culture today?
3. Rahab turns out to be great (and is mentioned multiple times in the New Testament in a positive way). What does her being a prostitute and also great teach us about biblical greatness?

Move #3: So, we have a prostitute who is helping some of God's people. We will come back to her story in Joshua 2 but before we do let's go to the New Testament and see how she is referred to in Matthew 1 and Hebrews 11.

Background: Rahab is mentioned in the beginning of the New Testament during the genealogy of Jesus. Her being mentioned in this passage tells us a lot about her and Jesus' family. In the Jewish world, your family name was important on a level that we have a hard time understanding today. Your credibility and your honor were all wrapped up in your bloodline so people would publish their family tree but would purposefully leave out certain individuals that might cause dishonor to their family. The most common types of people left out of Jewish family trees would be women, foreigners, and notorious sinners. Knowing that, let's read the beginning of Jesus' family tree.

Read Matthew 1:1-5a (NIV)

¹ This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: ² Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³ Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵ Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,

Background: Rahab is not only seen in the family tree passages of Jesus. She is also seen in a very important passage in Hebrews 11. Hebrews 11 has been referred to as the "Hall of Faith." In Hebrews 11 the writer lists a group of people from the Old Testament whose lives are meant to encourage and challenge us. There are thousands of people mentioned in the Old Testament but only 16 of them make it into this "Hall of Faith;" Rahab being one of them. Let's take a look at what it says about her.

Read Hebrews 11:31 (NIV)

³¹ By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

1. What do you think it means that she, a woman and prostitute, is mentioned in these chapters of the New Testament?
 - a. **Note to the leader:** She is also mentioned in the book of James (James 2:25) in a positive way but we did not have enough time to cover that in this study.
2. Based on what we heard in the background section, why is Rahab's name an interesting one to be found in the genealogy of Jesus and the "Hall of Faith?"
3. How can Rahab being mentioned in these passages be an encouragement to us?

4. In what ways does Rahab's mentioning in the genealogy of Jesus and "Hall of Faith" challenge what we naturally view as greatness?

Move #4: Now that we have seen the accolades of Rahab, let's go back to the book of Joshua and see the type of person she was and why she gets such a nod in the New Testament.

Note to the leader: This passage has been an interesting one for Christians to study because it seems like Rahab tells a blatant lie to the governing authorities. This passage, and Exodus 1 where a similar situation takes place, can stir up conversations about lying and when it is acceptable for the Christian. This issue would be a tangent from where the discussion should be going but just to make sure you are prepared, there is some commentary and a link below that can speak to the issue.

Read Joshua 2:1-21 (NIV)

¹ Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

² The king of Jericho was told, "Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." ³ So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land."

⁴ But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. ⁵ At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, they left. I don't know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them." ⁶ (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.) ⁷ So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

⁸ Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof ⁹ and said to them, "I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. ¹⁰ We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea[a] for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. ¹¹ When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

¹² "Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign ¹³ that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death."

¹⁴ "Our lives for your lives!" the men assured her. "If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the Lord gives us the land."

¹⁵ So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. ¹⁶ She said to them, "Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way."

¹⁷ Now the men had said to her, "This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us ¹⁸ unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you

have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. ¹⁹ If any of them go outside your house into the street, their blood will be on their own heads; we will not be responsible. As for those who are in the house with you, their blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on them. ²⁰ But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear.”

²¹ “Agreed,” she replied. “Let it be as you say.” So she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. Reread verses 2-3. Imagine you are Rahab, how would you be feeling if you, a woman and prostitute during this time period, were messenged by the king about spies hiding in your house?
3. The idea of serving does not jump off the page in this passage but we saw on Sunday that serving is purposefully choosing to make yourself third (by making God 1st and others 2nd). Where in the passage is Rahab making God 1st?
4. Where in the passage is Rahab making others 2nd?
5. Putting yourself in 3rd place will always cost you something. What does putting herself in 3rd place potentially cost Rahab (and even her family) in this passage?
6. Putting yourself 3rd will also lead to blessing (though not always physical). Where does putting herself 3rd actually benefit Rahab (and her family) in the long run?
7. At the end of this passage Rahab has to put others before herself without any real proof of reciprocation. The Israelites could have lied to her and destroyed her family when they come back (**Hint:** they don't...read Joshua 6). Do you think putting yourself in 3rd place always requires some sort of leap of faith?

Move #5: Let's close out our time by making our study of Rahab and greatness a little more personal.

1. Imagine you were a first century Jew. How would you regard Rahab? Would she be considered “great” in your eyes? Why or why not? In what ways does that happen to us today?
2. Jesus says greatness is putting others above yourself. If we take Jesus seriously, what types of things do not produce greatness?
 - a. **Possible answer:** Jesus says greatness is serving. That means that greatness is not talent, ability, prestige, fame. Greatness (through serving) is something everyone, from any background or social class, can achieve.
3. Do you look at your service of others as one of the greatest things you are doing? Or is it more of a requirement or chore? What could we do to change our thinking about serving?
4. Often the people that put others needs before their own do not get credit. Do you think this has something to do with our backwards understanding of what greatness is?

5. Since “3rd placers” almost never get recognized, what could we do as a life group and church to recognize people who serve well?

Prayer: End your study with a time of prayer where people can share prayer requests and be prayed for before they leave. If possible, please steer some prayer towards what your group talked about during this study.

Notes and Commentary

The following are pieces of commentary, facts, and links based on the passages of this study in order. Use them to help supplement your group time or for your personal preparation.

On Matthew 1

- Genealogies were important in the ancient world and played an especially significant role for the Jews. According to the Old Testament (e.g., 1 Chron. 1–9), God’s people kept extensive genealogies, which served as a record of a family’s descendants but were also used for practical and legal purposes to establish a person’s heritage, inheritance, legitimacy, and rights. Knowledge of one’s descent was especially necessary, if a dispute occurred, to ensure that property went to the right person. (Wilkins)
- Most scholars see the inclusion of the five women in Jesus’ genealogy as another clue to Matthew’s emphases. As noted above, women were not always included in Old Testament genealogies. When they were included, there was usually some particular reason. Speculation about Matthew’s purpose has a long history, but he seems to have a variety of reasons for including these women in Jesus’ genealogy. Something positive can be said for each of the following, although it may be difficult to narrow Matthew’s purpose to any one alone. (Wilkins)
 - a. (1) Women had experienced increasing marginalization and even abuse within Jewish society. Jesus’ line includes Tamar, a woman wrongfully denied motherhood by the deceitfulness of men. The women in the genealogy represent the gender equality that had been denied them within much of Jewish culture. From the beginning Jesus came to restore the personal equality and dignity of women with men.
 - b. (2) Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba had reputations for morally indiscreet behavior and character. They are examples of women sinners Jesus came to save, a powerful statement about the offer of salvation to those of either gender.
 - c. (3) The first four women may have been Gentiles, although the ethnicity of Tamar and Bathsheba is unclear. It is clear, however, that Ruth was a Moabitess, and to the tenth generation a Moabite was not to be admitted to the congregation (Deut. 23:3). Rahab was undoubtedly a Canaanite. Matthew may thus be indicating that salvation is a possibility for every ethnic group, which is a strong motif in this Gospel (Matt. 8:5–13; 28:18–20). Jesus Messiah, who could not have male Gentiles in his ancestry, nonetheless had Gentile ancestors in these women, suggesting his suitability as the Messiah for Gentiles as well as for Jews.
 - d. (4) The women mentioned had unusual marriages, sexual scandals, or suspicions of having had illegitimate children. Matthew may be disarming prejudice against Mary’s circumstances by those Jews who might forget their own history, even as he refutes charges of illegitimacy against Mary (1:18–25).
 - e. (5) These women each represent a crucial period in Israel’s history when a Gentile displayed extraordinary faith in contrast to Jews who lacked courage and faith: Tamar versus Judah’s disloyalty, Rahab versus the desert generation’s faithlessness, Ruth versus the unfaithful

Israelites at the time of the judges, and Uriah versus David's sinfulness with Bathsheba. The messianic line was preserved, even through Gentiles, when Israel was unfaithful.

On Joshua 2:1-21

- When we read these words coming from Rahab's mouth (verses 8-11), we cannot escape the implications: she was doing far more than merely trying to save her skin or that of her family. She was acknowledging that this God she had heard about was the one and only true God, the only one—out of dozens that she as a good Canaanite knew about—who was worthy of worship and allegiance. This constitutes her statement of faith in words. This is surely what gave impetus to her actions in vv. 4–8. Now we know why she did what she did: she may have been afraid, as were all the other Canaanites, but she also had come to believe in her heart that there was only one true God. This God's actions on behalf of his people had convinced her, and she had changed her life and belief system because of it. (Howard)
- **(On Rahab's lie)** A troublesome aspect of the Rahab story for many people is that she apparently uttered a bold-faced lie by telling the king of Jericho's messengers that the Israelite spies had fled when in fact they were hiding in her own house (Josh 2:4), and she was never censured for it. In fact, she and her family were spared by the Israelites (Josh 6:25) and the New Testament twice commends her in very glowing terms (Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25). How could she have been accorded such a positive treatment in the face of this lie that she told? Generations of Christian ethicists have considered Rahab's case carefully in constructing broader systems of ethics. In her case, two absolute principles of moral behavior seem to have come into conflict: (1) the principle that it is wrong to tell a lie and (2) the principle that one must protect human life. In Rahab's case, it appears that, in order to save the spies' life, she had no alternative but to lie. Or, conversely, had she told the truth and revealed the spies' position, their lives would most likely have been forfeited and Israel's inheritance of the land may have been jeopardized. (Howard)
- **(On Rahab's lie)** *Perplexing Passages: Do Exodus 1 and Joshua 2 Permit Christians to Lie?* By Sam Storms from The Gospel Coalition
 - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/perplexing-passages-do-exodus-1-and-joshua-2-permit-christians-to-lie/>