

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 3 - Barrier removal

Purpose of Study

One way to be Third is to step outside our comfort zone for the sake of others and actively break down the barriers between them and the gospel. Common barriers include the way we were raised (culturally, spiritually, etc.), feelings of guilt or shame, the business of everyday life, and past (or present) suffering. It is sometimes awkward and uncomfortable to seek out people with different backgrounds and to make ourselves vulnerable with them. But, we are often called to do so for the sake of the gospel. The reward for helping others come to Christ is to share in the joy of the harvest. The purpose of this study is to spur each other on to step outside our comfort zone and remove the stumbling blocks for those around us.

Flow of Study

Icebreaker: Describe a time when someone or something stood in the way of what you wanted. Did you overcome it? If so, how?

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?

Read Mark 2:2-5 (NIV)

² They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

3. How did the four men make themselves third?
4. What did Jesus see in them?
5. What does His response to them tell you about Jesus's priorities?
6. Notice how 4 men help remove a barrier in this person's life...not 1. Why do you think community is so important to "roof removing" for people?
7. Who were the roof removers in your life? In what ways did they help you come to Christ?
 - a. **Note to the leader:** Very few people come to faith in Christ without the influence or help of another (ex: a college roommate, a youth pastor, etc.). A great help to seeing what "roof removing" should look like is having them look backwards to who helped them come to faith.

You asking this question and then sharing about your “roof remover” would be a great way to initiate this conversation with the group.

Move #2: We will begin this study with Paul’s letter to the church in Corinth. Corinth was a city famous for two things: wealth and vice. It was also a very diverse city with both Jews and gentiles (or non-Jews) from many parts of the region. The passage we’ll consider speaks directly to that diversity and to the importance of using any moral means necessary to reach all people for the sake of the gospel.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (NIV)

¹⁹ Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. ²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³ I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

1. Can you imagine, as a free person, choosing to be a slave (verse 19)?
2. What’s the difference between the friend/coworker relationship and the master/slave relationship?
3. What would it look like to make yourself a slave to those around you?
4. What did it mean for Paul to become like one ‘under the law’ (verse 20)?
 - a. **Possible Answers:** Keeping the ceremonial laws of the old testament and eating/and abstaining from certain foods.
5. Who in today’s Triangle region might be similar to those of Paul’s time who are ‘under the law’?
 - a. **Possible Answers:** Those raised in the church, those who place a high value on tradition and obedience, or modern Jews.
6. What practical ways can we remove barriers and minister to those we thought of in question 3?
 - a. **Possible Answers:** Appreciate and value their traditions, be obedient in our personal lives, and B.L.E.S.S. them.
7. What did it mean for Paul to become like one ‘not having the law’ (verse 21)?
 - a. **Possible Answers:** Having fellowship with those considered ceremonially ‘unclean’ and reasoning with greek philosophers.
8. Who in today’s Triangle region might be similar to those of Paul’s time who are ‘not having the law’?
 - a. **Possible Answers:** Those raised outside the church, those unfamiliar with church customs and traditions, and modern Gentiles.
9. What practical ways can we remove barriers and minister to those we thought of in question 6?
 - a. **Possible Answers:** Don’t demand obedience before entry, welcome all people into our fellowship, greet people you don’t recognize in church and offer to answer any questions they

might have, be flexible with newcomers not expecting them to adhere to our traditions or even our laws from day one, and/or B.L.E.S.S. them.

10. Why do you think Paul says in verse 21: 'though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law'?
 - a. **Possible Answers:** To guard against the idea that reaching the lost is an excuse for our own sin. In ministering to the lawless, we must have compassion and understanding for them, but never forget that we are still called to follow Christ's law.
11. What did it mean for Paul to become 'weak' (verse 22)?
 - a. **Possible Answers:** Living among the vulnerable in his society, not flaunting his power or prestige.
12. Who in today's Triangle region might be vulnerable?
 - a. **Possible Answers:** Poor, homeless, widows, orphans, single parents, foster children, immigrants, refugees, prisoners, people with mental or physical illness, people with disabilities.
13. What practical ways can we remove barriers and minister to those we thought of in question 9?
 - a. **Possible Answers:** Serve at the Point Care Center, Serve at the Point Church International, foster or adopt a child, make yourself vulnerable with them, B.L.E.S.S. them.
14. What barriers have you experienced in your own life between you and the gospel?
15. Who in your life has barriers between them and the gospel and how can we remove those barriers?
 - a. **Note to Leader:** Common barriers include the way we were raised (culturally, spiritually, etc.), feelings of guilt or shame, the business of everyday life, perceptions of Christians as judgemental, and past (or present) suffering.
16. Sometimes we get a little too comfortable in Christian fellowship, surrounding ourselves with like-minded people. What ways can we step out of our comfort zone for the sake of the gospel and minister to those different from us?

Move #3: Let's close out our time by making our study of barrier removing a little more personal.

1. Were there any barriers in your life that someone helped you get through before coming to Christ? What were those?
2. What are some common barriers that people in your life have?
3. What does it say about a person who is close to people in their life (who don't believe in Jesus) but they have no idea of what barriers they have?
 - a. **Possible answer:** If someone knows people who are not Christians but has no idea about where they stand with Jesus, they have probably not been missional in their approach with this person.
4. A group of people remove the roof in Mark 2. Not one person. What could we do to benefit each other as we try to remove barriers in people's lives?

Next Steps: The following are things you could challenge your members to do in order to take what you studied in this curriculum farther.

1. Choose one person who you think may see a barrier between them and the gospel and begin to B.L.E.S.S. that person. Seek ways that you can break down those barriers.
2. Choose one way to serve regularly in the church: greeting, ushering, worship team, family ministry, care center, etc. Seek to break barriers through your service.

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.

Mark 2:2-5

- This gripping, technicolor detail, so characteristic of Mark's accounts of the miracles, may startle those who worry about property damage. Some might imagine that the owner of the house is as horrified by this destructive invasion of his property by these men as the teachers of the law are later horrified by the invasion of the prerogatives of God by Jesus. Archaeological discoveries in Capernaum, however, reveal that the houses were made of rough basalt without mortar, and they could not support more than a thatch roof. The sloping roof consisted of wooden cross beams overlaid with a matting of reeds, branches, and dried mud. It had to be replenished and rolled every fall before the onset of the winter rains. It did not take a jackhammer for the men to break through the roof, and it could be easily repaired. (Garland)

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

- In verses 19–27, Paul makes plain the evangelistic principle underlying his attitude to both idol meat and money for ministry. Whatever he does, he wants to clear the ground of unnecessary obstacles that might hinder unbelievers from coming to Christ. Verses 19–23 enunciate this principle in terms of “all things to all people.” The main thought of verses 19–23 is essentially stated six times: to win or save “as many as possible” (v. 19), “the Jews” (v. 20a), “those under the law” (v. 20b), “those not having the law” (v. 21), “the weak” (v. 22a), and “some” (v. 22b). Freedom from human “strings” or entanglements allows Paul to give the best possible service to the widest range of people (v. 19). (Blomberg)
- The four specific examples of verses 20–22a are closely parallel. “Those under the law” probably include Gentile God-fearers and proselytes to Judaism as well as ethnic Jews. “Those not having the law” obviously refers to Gentiles apart from any Jewish influence. It is less clear who “the weak” are. In chapter 8 they referred to Christians, but here Paul seems to be talking about those who need salvation. Is he using the term as in 1:27 or Romans 5:6 for the powerless of society? Yet this meaning seems out of place in this context. Given the explicit sequence of 10:32, with which Paul concludes his discussion of idol meat (“Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God”), he probably is referring to the same three groups here, in the same order. After mentioning

those under the Law and those not having the Law, the “weak” most likely refer to Christians with weak consciences, that is, those with mildly legalistic scruples. Paul must therefore be using “win” in the broader sense of winning to a more mature form of Christian faith. (Blomberg)

- The key to applying verses 19–27 is to keep Paul’s evangelistic principle clearly in focus. Verses 19–23 have massive implications for strategies of outreach and friendships with unbelievers, though they can be exaggerated. Paul is not promoting pure situation ethics. These verses form part of his larger discussion of morally neutral matters (8:1–11:1). So we dare not apply his strategy of “all things to all people” to issues of fundamental morality or immorality. Paul would never have said “to the thief I become like a thief,” or “to the adulterer I become an adulterer.” Conversely, he would never have stopped practicing those virtues that are always right, for example, the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5:22–23). But in the morally gray areas of life, such as eating food sacrificed to idols, and their numerous cultural equivalents in any era, Paul bends over backwards to be sensitive to the non-Christian mores of society around him so as not to hinder people from accepting the gospel. He does not assume that all aspects of culture are inherently evil but practices what has come to be called the contextualization of the gospel—changing the forms of the message precisely in order to preserve its content. Then Christianity stands the best chance of being understood and even accepted. Sadly, Christians of many eras have instead tended to be more sensitive to the legalism of fellow church members and have too quickly censured contemporary social customs, alienating themselves from the very people they should have been trying to win to Christ. (Blomberg)