

UNIQUE

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 *Unique* 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

Google estimates that there are roughly 4,200 religions currently being practiced around the world. That means a person could practice a new religion everyday for almost 12 years without repeating one. With all these religions, what differentiates our religion from the others? What sets us apart? With so many other religions, why should an individual choose to follow Jesus? That is what we will be talking about during *Unique*. We will be taking three weeks to walk through what makes Christianity and its followers unique to the religions of this world. By looking at grace, love, and diversity; which are all distinct to Christianity, we hope this will be a time of affirmation and discovery for you and your family.

Life Group Overview

During the *Unique* series our life group curriculum will 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.

Unique Series Schedule

Week	Sermon Date	Topic of sermon	Topic of life group
Week 1	8/13	Grace	Romans 3:20-24 & Romans 6:1-4
Week 2	8/20	Loving Others	John 15:9-17 & John 13:34-35
Week 3	8/27	Diversity	Revelation 7:9 & Acts 10:9-48

The Point Church Life Group Curriculum

Unique - Week 2 - Loving Others - John 15:9-17 & John 13:31-35

Purpose of Study

One of the unique attributes of our faith is the idea of loving others. To be clear, many religions around the world put an emphasis on loving others so “love” does not seem like a unique quality of Christianity. However, what we will see in this study is that the basis for our love is unique. In this study we will be pulling segments of scripture from the last of Jesus’ teachings in the book of John (referred to by scholars as the Farewell Discourse). Right before the passages we are studying, Jesus has just washed the disciples feet in preparation for their separation and he is giving them some final words of encouragement and instruction. These final teachings are saturated with the commands to love and these commands carry special weight in view of the cross. Tonight we will advance what we spoke about on Sunday, loving others, and see how that makes Christianity unique.

Flow of Study

Optional Icebreaker: Imagine you could only eat one meal for the rest of your life. What would it be and why?

Move #1: Since the sermon series and life groups are covering the same 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 sermon this weekend?
2. What is one thing from the sermon that you want to apply this week?
3. Why is an understanding of loving others necessary for the believer? Does this set us apart from other faiths?

Move #2: Now that we have unpacked the Sunday sermon and reintroduced the topic of love, let’s see how Jesus elevates the idea of loving others and where loving others begins.

Read John 15:9-17 (NIV)

⁹ “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

1. What stands out to you from this passage?

2. Reread verse 9. What about this is unique? How much love does Jesus have for his followers?
 - a. **Hint:** Many people have problems understanding the love that God has for them. In verse 9, Jesus gives us an easy metric to use. Imagine how much the Father loves his son Jesus...that is how much Jesus loves his followers.
3. Twice (vs. 9 & 10) in the opening verses of the passage Jesus mentions remain or abiding in love. What does it look like to remain in the love of God?
4. In this passage Jesus shows that love is a choice shown by action (i.e. keeping commands, laying down your life). How is Jesus' understanding of love unique to our world's understanding of love?
5. Do you think it is unique that before the command to love one another Jesus commands them to soak in God's love for them? Do you think understanding God's love for you is a prerequisite for loving others well?
6. In verse 11, Jesus links remaining in God's love to joy. Have you seen this connection in your life? How have you experienced this joy in your life?
7. Reread verse 12. How has Jesus loved us? How is this command different from a "golden rule: treat others how you want to be treated" type of love?
8. Towards the end of this passage, Jesus makes clear to his followers that they are no longer servants but friends of God. How is the title of "friend" unique from the title of "servant?"
 - a. **Note to the leader:** It is possible that someone in group might bring up the idea that there are times in scripture where the Christian is called to a life of a servant (ex: Mark 9:35) . We do not think what Jesus is saying in John mitigates those verses but is more so talking about a change in relational status.
 - b. **Hint:** The Old Testament refers to 2 men as being friends of God, Abraham and Moses, so the disciples are being added to a pretty impressive group.

Move #3: Jesus ends the previous scripture by talking about fruit and how a person remaining in God's love and using it to love others WILL bear fruit. We are going to take that idea further by going back two chapters to something Jesus said earlier regarding love. Here we see why loving one another is so critical to God's mission for all people to know Him.

Read John 13:34-35 (NIV)

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. What is a command? Why is that a unique word to use here?
3. Jesus begins by saying a "new command." However, the command to love and care for others goes back to the Old Testament. What do you think is the "new" or "extra" part of this command?
 - a. **Note to the leader:** The commentary section below gives insight into this idea.

4. Jesus creates a simple way to understand loving others. Whatever Jesus has done for you (or his disciples) do that for others. What are some ways Jesus loved the disciples (and loves us)?
5. Read the following piece of commentary from the NIV Application Commentary on John by Gary M. Burge and discuss what stands out to you from it.

Nothing so astonishes a fractured world as a community in which radical, faithful, genuine love is shared among its members. There are many places you can go to find communities of shared interest. There are many places you can go to find people just like yourself, who live for sports or music or gardening or politics. But it is the mandate of the church to become a community of love, a circle of Christ's followers who invest in one another because Christ has invested in them, who exhibit love not based on the mutuality and attractiveness of its members, but on the model of Christ, who washed the feet of everyone (including Judas).

6. Describe what you think a committed community of Christians trying to love one another as Christ has loved them would look like?
7. How can Jesus' call to love one another as he has loved us be a difficult call?
8. Jesus doesn't hypothesize that our love for each other will impact others. He promises it and even uses the word EVERYONE as the group who will be impacted. Why do you think a committed community of loving followers of Jesus would stand out to everyone (all social classes, all people, all races, all religions, etc.)?

Move #4: In our last move, let's try to apply what we uncovered in this study to our lives.

1. What stood out to you from our discussion that you are going to take with you?
2. The command to love others is a difficult one. For many, it can seem overwhelming. Zooming in on our life group alone, what would it look like to be a people to live out this command with each other. Are there things that we need to change?
3. What is something going on in your life right now that these passages spoke directly to?

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.

John 15:9-17

- Jesus now calls his disciples "friends" ([15:14-15](#)) to distinguish them from servants, who do not know the deeper thoughts of their masters. What characterizes such friends is that they obey him.⁷ In the Old Testament both Abraham ([2 Chron. 20:7](#); [Isa. 41:8](#); cf. [Jas. 2:23](#)) and Moses ([Ex. 33:11](#)) are called friends of God.⁸ This title is unusual and speaks of the highest relationship possible between God and a

human being. This friendship is not our doing; rather, Jesus chooses us as friends ([15:16a](#)), which gives us tremendous security that his affection for us will not disappear. (Burge)

John 13:34-35

- The “new commandment” mentioned in [13:34–35](#) is also explained in [15:12–17](#).³⁴ That the disciples are to love one another is nothing new ([Lev. 19:18](#)). That they are to love each other with the sort of love modeled by Jesus is something dramatic. Love characterizes Jesus’ relationship with God ([14:31](#)), and love characterizes God’s relationship with Jesus ([3:35](#); [15:9–10](#)). Jesus’ love is manifested in his obedience to the Father’s will (“the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me,” [14:31](#)). Therefore disciples are to reflect the sort of love known to Jesus—a love expressed through committed obedience. “As I have loved you” points to Jesus’ most immediate act of love (the footwashing) and means that to truly love another, we must pursue a life of servanthood and sacrifice. (Burge)
- But the word “new” (Gk. *kainos*) may mean something more. We can recall that in this Synoptic supper setting Jesus also talked about “newness” in another respect. He referred to the “new” covenant established in his sacrifice, and he also said he would not again drink wine until he did it “new” in the kingdom of heaven. This “new command” may be a signal that Jesus is talking about life in a new era, a messianic era. In that era love must characterize his followers—a love patterned on the generous, loving act of God that saves his people. (Burge)
- The OT had commanded love (Leviticus 19:18); what makes Jesus’ commandment new is the new standard and example: “as I have loved you” - in the context, to the point of laying down one’s life for others. (Keener)