

# HERE TO HELP

## 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 *Here to Help* 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

During our *Here to Help* series we will see that God has always had a heart for the least of these and that His plan A for their care has always been His people. It is our hope that in two short weeks, people attending The Point will discover God's heart for helping the poor and identify ways they can join God in His work. We will also be highlighting our Care Center during this series to allow an easy next step for people to get involved in serving the "least of these."

### Life Group Overview

During the *Here to Help* 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. Our previous series, *Financial Freedom*, was 5 sermons but 6 life group sessions so the life group topic in Week 1 of *Here to Help* will be finishing up our Financial Freedom Workbook.

### Here to Help Series Schedule

| Week   | Sermon Date | Topic of sermon                            | Topic of life group                   |
|--------|-------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Week 1 | 11/19       | Mandate - James 1:27                       | Financial Freedom Workbook (p. 35-41) |
| Week 2 | 11/26       | Acting on Opportunities - Matthew 25:31-46 | James 1:27 & Deuteronomy 15:7-11      |

## The Point Church Life Group Curriculum

# *Here to Help* - Week 2 - James 1:27 & Deuteronomy 15:7-11

### Purpose of Study

Tonight's study explores a commandment given to the Israelites regarding how they treat the poor and outcast around them. We will be looking at a section of scripture from Deuteronomy where Moses is giving the people final instructions on how to live. What we will see in this passage is that God has always had a heart for the poor and a desire for his people to have a *Here to Help* mindset in response to those that are hurting.

### Flow of Study

**Optional Icebreaker:** Have you ever hitchhiked or helped someone that was hitchhiking?

**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. From the Sunday sermon, the difference between a goat and a sheep is clearly seen in how they treat those who are hurting and outcast in our society (the hungry, the widowed, the naked, the sick, the thirsty, the stranger, the imprisoned). Why do you think Jesus makes such a strong correlation between the "sheep" (those that are His people) and the way they love those who are in tough situations?

**Move #2:** To begin, let's go back to the main verse from last Sunday to see what God says true religion is and is not.

### Read James 1:27 (NIV)

<sup>27</sup> Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. When you hear the word "religion" what comes to mind?
  - a. **Possible answer:** Religion is what we do regularly in the pursuit of God.
3. The original word used here for "religious" can translate to "worship." When you think of your worship does helping the poor come to mind? Do you see that as a form of worship?

4. If you go back and read verse 26 first you would assume verse 27 would read something like “a person who keeps watch on their tongue practices the religion that God accepts” but instead pure religion is seen as caring for the poor. What does this say about God?
5. James’ use of “widows and orphans” is not exclusive to those two parties but instead is more like “people who cannot help themselves. Who are the widows and orphans of our culture?
  - a. **Note to the leader:** Many commentators agree that “orphans” are not only children that have lost both parents but also children that have lost any parent. In other words, helping orphans would also be helping any single parent household.
6. James is clear, pure worship is caring for the “least of these” in society. What does this verse show about God’s passion for the “orphans and widows” of the world? What does it show about His followers job in regards to the “least of these.”

**Move #3:** Jesus’ words on being *Here to Help* for the least of these are not confined to solely the New Testament. All throughout scripture the Lord has viewed his people as his Plan A to loving a hurting and desperate world. Let’s go to the Old Testament and see one instance where this is made clear.

**Background on Deuteronomy:** In the specific passage we will read tonight Moses mentions something that can be found earlier in Deuteronomy. Moses told the Israelites that it was completely OK to lend money to others but that at the end of every 7 years you are to release them from this debt. Obviously, we do not have a similar structure set up today. It will probably be a good idea to point this out before reading the passage so people do not get caught up on that detail.

### Read Deuteronomy 15:7-11 (NIV)

<sup>7</sup> If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. <sup>8</sup> Rather, be open handed and freely lend them whatever they need. <sup>9</sup> Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: “The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near,” so that you do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them nothing. They may then appeal to the Lord against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. <sup>10</sup> Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. <sup>11</sup> There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open handed toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. Moses is clear from the first verse of the passage that the Lord God has given the Israelites the lands and towns that they are going to inhabit. Why is it necessary for the Israelites to understand what God has given them before he speaks to them about what they are to give to others? Is this important for us as well? Do you think an understanding of God as the giver of our wealth and possessions is necessary to proceed giving to the poor and needy?
  - a. **Note to the leader:** This could be a good time to bring back in what we learned from *Financial Freedom*. The Earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it (**Psalm 24:1**).
3. In verse 7 Moses explains to the people what he does not want them to be (hardhearted and/or tightfisted). What does it look like if someone is hardhearted or tightfisted towards the poor? What actions or attitudes are usually seen in a person that treats the poor this way?

4. In verse 9 Moses brings up a potential stumbling block for the Israelites. During this time period, the Lord told the Israelites that if they lend to a fellow Israelite they are to be paid back in full. But, every 7 years, the debts would be wiped clean. The stumbling block was that people during this time knew debts would be cancelled on the 7th year and therefore were stingy about lending money if it was anywhere close to that year. That would essentially be them giving money away instead of loaning it. Today, we do not have a 7th year where debts are cancelled but we do allow someone's ability/inability to pay us back to influence our decisions to give. Have you seen this idea influence your generosity (not just money, but time, honor, respect) towards the poor?
5. In verse 10 Moses gives an even more clear direction on what to do with the poor and needy than he did in verse 8. Also, he does so by bringing the heart and intentions into play. He does not want people who just give, he wants them to give without any grudge or heart issue. Have you noticed a difference between the two in your life? In what situations is it hard for you to give without a "grudging heart?"
6. Moses ends verse 10 with a promise of how the Lord will treat his people that take giving to the needy seriously. Have you seen this promise worked out in your life? What would it look like to be blessed in your "work and everything you put your hand to?"
7. Moses ends the passage with another promise, that people who are poor and needy will always exist. Is that defeating to hear? Is that encouraging to hear (i.e. we will never be out of purpose or opportunity)? As Christians, how should we respond to that truth? In what ways does that truth magnify our hope of heaven (a perfect place with no poverty)?

**Move #3:** Now that we have unpacked the verses from James and Deuteronomy, let's try to relate the principles of it to our life.

1. What is something that stood out to you tonight that you are going to take with you?
2. What do you think it looks like on a personal level for a Christian to have a heart for the poor and needy?
3. What would you say to a Christian who was looking to be a help to the poor and needy but did not actually know any?
4. What do you think it looks like on church wide level for a group of Christians to have a heart for the poor and needy?
5. Have you experienced the Care Pantry at our church. In what ways has that helped you develop a heart for the poor?

**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.

**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. Every life group at The Point should be serving together at our Care Center. If your group has never done this or has missed a few months now would be a great time to begin. Please contact your Assistant Pastor to find out what Saturday your group is supposed to serve. For many groups, this is hard to remember each month. It might be smart to delegate someone in your group at the Service Coordinator who reminds your group weekly of when their next service opportunity is.