

BE CHRISTMAS

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 *Be Christmas* 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

Christmas is the story of a God of love coming to us. So, for the believer, the season of Christmas should be defined by us going to others. In our culture, the Christmas season has been transformed into a season of us receiving from others but this stands in contrast to what God had in mind. *Be Christmas* is going to show us that Christmas is a verb for us to show love and mercy to a world that is in dire need of it. Throughout this series we will challenge our people to come closer to Jesus, give to God and others, do for others what God would, and love all people well. Our hopes is that this season our people will not only experience Christmas but *Be Christmas* to the world around them.

Life Group Overview

During the *Be Christmas* 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. Please keep in mind that this series is 4 weeks long but only the first 2 weeks will have life group curriculum. The weeks after that all of our life groups will be on a life group break. This break will last from 12/17 to 1/7.

Be Christmas Series Schedule

Week	Sermon Date	Topic of sermon	Topic of life group
Week 1	12/3	Christmas Gives	Genesis 32 & 33 (Jacob and Esau)
Week 2	12/10	Christmas Loves	1 John 4:7-12
Week 3	12/17	Christmas Does	Life Group Break
Week 4	12/23-12/24	Christmas Comes	Life Group Break

The Point Church Life Group Curriculum

Be Christmas - Week 2 - 1 John 4:7-12

Purpose of Study

What we learned from stage this week is that Christmas is not a season for us to receive to others but instead a special time of the year to remind ourselves that we are present in our jobs, family, neighborhood, and community to give ourselves for the good of others. This week, we will continue this theme by focusing in on loving the people God has placed around us well. Love can be a hard thing for us to control, however, when we understand the Christmas story and Jesus' sacrificial love for us, it becomes a possibility and a joy.

Flow of Study

Optional Icebreaker: What is a food that you hated growing up but now you LOVE? How did it shift?

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.

Read Philippians 2:1-5 (NIV)

¹ Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus

1. This is a large chunk of the main passage from this weekend. Did anything stand out to you from the sermon or this passage this weekend?
2. What do you think your life would look like if you constantly lived out verses 3-5?
3. Valueing others above yourself is a tall task and comes with a natural tension. Looking to the interests of everyone else around you can be consuming and can feel like your interests will never be met. How do you handle this tension? Should we set up healthy boundaries?
4. What do you think it would look like if everyone around you (family, neighbors, friends) all lived out verses 3-5 together?
 - a. **Possible answers:** If everyone lived out verses 3-5 it would satisfy the tension addressed in question 3. If I look after myself that is one person looking out for my interests. If I look out for others and others look out for me, I now have way more than just one person looking out for my interests.
5. What is one thing from the sermon that you want to apply this week?

Move #2: In this study we will be sitting in a passage from 1 John. Commentators think that this whole book is a response to a struggling, divided church. Through that lens, it is easy to understand why the book constantly

takes the reader back to some fundamental actions of the Christian; abiding in Christ and loving others. Tonight, we will use a piece from this book to see how we, as Christians, should love people all the more during this Christmas season.

Read 1 John 4:7-12 (NIV)

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. Are there any people in your life that are difficult to love during this Christmas season?
3. Throughout the passage the word “love” is used constantly. When you hear the word “love” what comes to mind? What does loving others look like in a practical way?
4. Reread verse 7. What do you think it means that “love comes from God?”
 - a. **Note to the leader:** Loving others, especially the way the bible reveals, is no ordinary action. It is not a worldly possibility. It is supernatural, from God himself.
5. By the mentioning of the Christmas story in verse 9 we get an example of what love looks like. It is not only a feeling but in many ways a decision. How is this different from how the world views love?
6. In verse 9 the Christmas story is mentioned but there is an interesting twist to it. It says that not only did Jesus come because he loves us, but he came so that we could live through him. What do you think it means to live through Jesus?
7. In verse 10 a spiritual impossibility is presented. It is not possible to love God and fail to love others. How is this true?
8. In verse 10, the author adds more details to Jesus’ love for us. How is Jesus making himself an atoning sacrifice for our sins a great picture of what loving others should look like? How should this truth change our love for others? How does this truth teach us to deal with loving others who might not love us in return?
9. In verse 11, it becomes clear that we should not love for love's sake but instead love others out of an appreciation of God’s love for us. In other words, God’s love for us should fuel us to love others. Have you ever experienced this in your life? Before Christ, what were your primary reasons for loving others? How should this truth change us in dealing with others who do not know God’s love for them?
 - a. **Possible answer to last question:** We are compelled to love others by God’s compelling love for us. If someone hasn’t experienced the love of God through Jesus then it makes sense that they would not be very good at or feel a strong desire to love others. It should give us grace in our interactions with them, even if we are not being treated like we would want.

10. Reread verse 12. How does loving others well allow people to “see” God?

Move #3: To close out our study, let’s make the idea of loving others during this Christmas season a little more personal.

1. During this season we are not only in closer contact with family and friends but all people seem more accepting of love. What does it look like for you to love your close family and friends well this Christmas season? Is there a specific person in your circle that really needs love? What are specific things you could do to love that person well? What are ways this group could help encourage you to love that person well?
2. What are ways that we can further remember God’s love for us (primarily through the sending of His son) in this season to help spur us on to loving others?

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.

- The coming of Jesus Christ provides a compelling portrait of God’s love for us. This theme—the compelling origin of divine love—weaves its way throughout the section ([4:7–11](#), [16](#), [19](#)). Thus for John, an exhortation to obedience does not come with a threat. Instead, obedience is encouraged through inspiration. God’s inspiring love, his generous affection, compels us to obey. If he has done this much for us, how can we do less? Genuine love cannot be exhibited in any community unless it reflects God’s love, unless it is empowered by an experience of being loved. (Burge)
- When verse [8](#) says “God is love” (cf. v. [16](#)), it is important to note what John is not saying. He is not saying that “God is loving” (though this is true). Nor is he saying that one of God’s activities is “to love” us (though this is true as well). John is saying that God is love, that “all of his activity is loving.”⁵ Love is the essence of his being. But the reverse is not the case. We cannot say, in other words, that “love is God,” as if any display of affection suddenly qualifies as divine. John is carefully defining the character of who God is and what it means to live in relation to him. To genuinely contemplate the true identity of God is to become like him. A true apprehension of the personhood of God should lead us to change how we live and behave. (Burge)
- The conditional clause in verse [11](#) (beginning with [Gk.](#) ei [“if”], translated “since” in [niv](#)) must be interpreted accurately. It does not express uncertainty (as some translations suggest) but fact: “since God so loved us...” There is no condition here—John has already affirmed in no uncertain terms that God’s activity in Christ has given us indisputable evidence of the Father’s love. Therefore, the exhortation to love springs not from any anxiety about losing this love nor from a threat of God’s wrath. Our obligation to love one another is a by-product of God’s loving generosity toward us (cf. [3:11](#), [14](#), [23](#); [4:12](#), [21](#); [5:2](#); [2 John 5](#)). John believes that this is the first inspiration of Christian love: It is a reflection of divine love already showered upon us. (Burge)

- In verse 17 John makes the remarkable statement that a life inspired by God, a life shaped by this quality of Christian discipleship—such a life exhibits a love that is made complete (cf. 4:12, 18). The niv misses an important connective with the foregoing verses: “By this love is made complete among us.”¹⁰ That is, by everything said thus far, by the principles outlined above, God’s love is perfected among us. Note that in verse 12 John refers to love being perfected in us. Now a different emphasis is apparent. God’s love is perfected not through our perception of it or our experience of it, but through our expression of it. God’s love reaches completion by the degree to which it is shared among us. Thus some have suggested that for completion to take place, John has a divine triangle in mind (see illustration, page 190). As C. H. Dodd wrote, “The energy of love discharges itself along lines which form a triangle, whose points are God, self, and neighbor.” (Burge)