

LEADER'S GUIDE

[LEADING THE DISCUSSION]

If you are the lead facilitator of the Discussion Questions, here are three things to consider during your group meetings:

1 CULTIVATE DISCUSSION.

It's the ideas of everyone in the group that make a meeting successful. Your role as a facilitator is to create an environment in which people feel safe to share their thoughts.

2 STAY ON TRACK.

While you want to leave space for group members to think through the discussion, make sure the conversation is contributing to the topic. Don't let it veer off on tangents. Go with the flow, but be ready to nudge the conversation in the right direction when necessary.

3 PRAY.

This is the most important thing you can do as a leader. Pray that God is not only present at your group meetings but that he is directing them.

A TYPICAL GROUP MEETING

SOCIAL TIME	<i>30 minutes</i>
VIDEO	<i>30 minutes</i>
DISCUSSION	<i>50 minutes</i>
PRAYER	<i>10 minutes</i>

SESSION ONE

NOTES FOR LEADING

BOTTOM LINE

Just as we need physical guardrails on a road to direct and protect us, we need guardrails in other areas of our lives as well.

TO PREPARE TO LEAD THE FIRST SESSION:

- Read Ephesians 5:15-18, and use the following “Reflection” and “Prayer” sections to consider the verses you’ve read.
- Read the session materials, watch the video, and look through the Discussion Questions.

REFLECTION

As you read this week’s verses, think about times when you’ve been foolish and times when you’ve understood God’s will for your life. How were your circumstances different in each instance? What were you doing or not doing that made it easier for you to recognize God’s will?

Remember: Just as we need physical guardrails on a road to direct and protect us, we need guardrails in other areas of our lives as well.

PRAYER

Spend some time this week reflecting on the role regret plays in your life. Also think about instances in which wisdom directed your decision-making and protected you from danger. Consider that regret may be playing a significant role in the lives of some of your group members. Express gratitude to God for his love for us and the wisdom he's provided. Ask him to soften your heart so you can provide encouragement and support to your group in the weeks to come.

NOTES FOR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1 *Andy suggests that culture doesn't encourage guardrails; culture is content with painted lines. Then he offered a few "painted-line" examples:*

- *Drink responsibly.*
- *Wait till you're ready.*
- *Consolidate your debts.*
- *Listen to your heart.*

Have you ever considered these examples to be mixed messages?

This question is designed to get the group thinking about the session topic as well as their own assumptions about culture and faith. Treat the

discussion as an open forum. It's okay if group members don't agree with Andy's premise. This is just the beginning of your conversation.

2 *Why do you think culture resists rules?*

Let your group brainstorm. The more ideas they come up with, the more fruitful the rest of the conversation will be.

3 *Have you ever heard of the “Billy Graham rule”—more recently known as the “Mike Pence rule”? The male Christian leaders that adhere to this practice avoid spending car rides, work trips, and meals alone with women other than their spouses. Billy Graham and Mike Pence adopted the rule to safeguard their marriages and reputations.*

*What is your initial reaction to this rule? Good idea?
Too extreme?*

This question may generate a lot of disagreement. That's okay. Be open to others' perspectives, and don't worry about trying to change anyone's mind. Model curiosity and acceptance to the group by asking follow-

up questions like, “What experiences have shaped your views on this topic?” or “Do you think the opposing view might be helpful to some people?”

- 4 *Have you ever been criticized for setting standards or establishing boundaries?*

This is the first personal question. Be ready with your own example in case you need to encourage your group to open up. Remember to thank people for sharing.

- 5 *In Ephesians 5:17, Paul writes, “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.” The Greek translation of the verb “to understand” means to face up to, to acknowledge, to be honest with yourself, to stop deceiving yourself.*

Why is it so difficult to be honest about (to understand) where we need wisdom and guardrails in our lives?

As you prepare to lead this session, spend some time thinking about the barriers that prevent you from being honest with yourself. Be specific during your group discussion. Your vulnerability will encourage others to open up.

- 6 *Ephesians 5:15-16 reads, “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” Is there a choice or regret you could have avoided if you were more careful about how you lived?*

Keep in mind that this is a challenging personal question. It’s difficult for people to talk openly about their regrets. Create a safe environment by listening carefully, asking follow-up questions, and thanking people for their willingness to share.

SESSION TWO

NOTES FOR LEADING

BOTTOM LINE

Friends still influence the direction and quality of your life.

TO PREPARE TO LEAD THE SECOND SESSION:

- Read Proverbs 13:20 and Luke 7:35. Use the “Reflection” and “Prayer” sections to consider the verses you’ve read.
- Read the session materials, watch the video, and look through the Discussion Questions.

REFLECTION

Consider the ways you’ve benefited from walking with wise friends and have suffered harm as a result of walking with “fools.”

Remember: Friends *still* influence the direction and quality of your life.

PRAYER

Spend time praying about your relationships. Ask God to help you recognize the influence, both positive and negative, they have on your life.

Also pray that your group members are able to reflect honestly on their past and present relationships. Ask God to help them see how they are acceptance magnets and help them begin to establish relational guardrails so they can make wise decisions.

NOTES FOR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 *How would you define the difference between being judgmental and having good judgment?*

Allow your group the space to brainstorm answers. This question is designed to set up the rest of the conversation, so it's not important that they come up with the correct response.

- 2 *Solomon wrote, "Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm" (Proverbs 13:20). Is there a wise person who has influenced you for the better?*

Be ready with your own answer. Be specific about what made the person wise and how you benefited from that wisdom.

- 3 *Has there been a case where you have suffered harm from a bad friendship or relationship?*

It can be difficult for people to share examples of their failures. Be encouraging. Withhold judgment. Offer an example from your past.

- 4 *During the video, Andy said, “Friends can be dangerous. And danger requires guardrails. You need to establish a standard that informs your conscience.” The following are five guardrails he suggested for relationships.*

This question is relatively safe because it allows group members to talk about what they have observed in others. If you want to try to take the conversation to a deeper level, offer an example of a guardrail that *you* sometimes ignore or blow past.

- 5 *Do you have an example of a time when you had to enforce a guardrail in a friendship? How did it turn out?*

Encourage people to answer by listening well and thanking them for their input. Don't pressure people to answer. Lead the way by being open and transparent in your answer.

SESSION THREE

NOTES FOR LEADING

BOTTOM LINE

Dangerous environments call for extreme measures. Morally dangerous environments call for guardrails.

TO PREPARE TO LEAD THE THIRD SESSION:

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 and use the “Reflection” and “Prayer” sections to consider the verses you’ve read.
- Read the session materials, watch the video, and look through the Discussion Questions.

REFLECTION

Life without guardrails in the area of sexuality can be particularly dangerous because we’re all prone to keeping secrets when it comes to sex. Those secrets can cause shame, which festers and affects the quality of our other relationships.

Remember: Dangerous environments call for extreme measures. Morally dangerous environments call for guardrails.

PRAYER

Are you currently living with secrets? Have you prayed that God would help you break bad habits and free you from shame? If so, understand that you can't win this battle on your own. Pray that God will give you the courage and determination to open up to a trusted friend. Ask him to remind you that when we share our secrets, it breaks their power over us.

NOTES FOR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 *People define “fidelity”/“faithfulness” in a variety of ways. In reference to a romantic relationship, how would you define it?*

This can be a helpful question to begin to gauge your group members' reactions to this topic. Don't challenge or critique perspectives that differ from yours. Be patient. Allow the conversation to develop, and give your group members space to consider or reconsider their beliefs and assumptions.

- 2 *Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:18 that we should “flee sexual immorality.” How does culture bait people to flirt with rather than flee from sexual immorality?*

Allow the group to come up with as many answers as they can. It will create a better discussion as the questions get deeper and more personal.

- 3** *During the video, Andy defined sin as “hurting, stealing from, or dishonoring someone.” Is this different from or similar to how you’ve historically thought about sin?*

Don’t shortchange the discussion by rushing through this question. Group members’ perspectives on sin are important and can vary greatly depending on their church backgrounds and where they are in their faith. Listen carefully. Ask follow-up questions if it’s helpful. Resist the urge to correct.

- 4** *Do you agree that sexual sin can make someone a secret keeper for life? Why do people often choose to keep their sexual sin hidden?*

This question invites disagreement. Allow the group space to disagree. Offer your own perspective (after you’ve listened), but without judgment or correction.

- 5** *Andy offered three steps when it comes to creating and enforcing guardrails. Do you think these steps work in real life? Why or why not?*

Give your group members a few minutes to review the three steps included in this question. Invite people to share their answers. Keep in mind that, for many people, establishing guardrails in this area is more difficult than other areas. Be ready to camp out on this question for a while. If someone selects “small group” under the first step, commit to following up with that person. Make sure you help create an environment where they feel safe to open up.

SESSION 4

NOTES FOR LEADING

BOTTOM LINE

Establish guardrails against greed. To avoid greed and irresponsibility: Give. Save. Live.

TO PREPARE TO LEAD THE FOURTH SESSION:

- Read Matthew 6:24, 31-33 and Mark 10:42-45. Use the “Reflection” and “Prayer” sections to consider the verses you’ve read.
- Read the session materials, watch the video, and look through the Discussion Questions.

REFLECTION

As you read the verses this week, ask yourself this question: “Is God my master, or is money my master?” Be honest with yourself. If your answer is that your money has entirely too much control over your life, you’re not alone.

Read those verses in Mark 10 one more time. What would it look like to use your money to serve others?

Establish guardrails against greed. To avoid greed and irresponsibility: Give. Save. Live.

PRAYER

Be honest with your heavenly Father about the influence your money has over you. Ask him to lead you to a place where *he* is your master, and money is merely a resource you steward with the purpose of serving others and maximizing your own peace and contentment.

NOTES FOR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 *On a typical day, how often do you think about money?*

This is a simple question designed to help group members begin to think about their relationship with money.

- 2 *During the video, Andy defined “greed” as “an assumption that it’s all for my consumption.” Do you agree with that definition? Why or why not?*

Allow group members to disagree. It will help set up a better conversation as you move forward.

- 3 *Read Matthew 6:25-27. Why is it challenging to not worry about money? What increases worry about money?*

This is the first personal question. Give your group members time to think. The more they recognize the negative effects of worry in their lives, the more helpful the conversation will be as you move forward.

- 4 *Why is it often difficult for people to believe that God and the church want something for them and not money from them?*

Give group members the space to be skeptical of God and/or the church. Don't argue. Don't try to convince. But don't hesitate to share your own experiences.

- 5 *What obstacles have, in the past or present, prevented you from giving first, saving second, and living off the rest? What would keep you from prioritizing giving moving forward?*

Give group members time to identify specific obstacles to changing their financial priorities. Be as specific as possible in your own answers.

SESSION FIVE

NOTES FOR LEADING

BOTTOM LINE

What do you usually do to cope with your negative emotions? Do you think your response is healthy? If not, what do you think it would take to adopt a new approach?

TO PREPARE TO LEAD THE FIFTH SESSION:

- Read Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 15:2-7, 10-11, 16-20; and Philippians 4:7. Use the “Reflection” and “Prayer” sections to consider the verses you’ve read.
- Read the session materials, watch the video, and look through the Discussion Questions.

REFLECTION

What is the current state of your heart? Are you experiencing the “peace of God, which transcends all understanding”? Are you struggling with guilt, anger, greed, or jealousy?

Remember: The heart leaks. Whatever is on the inside will eventually show up on the outside. It will influence your behavior and harm your relationships.

Take action now to establish guardrails around your heart.

PRAYER

Read Proverbs 4:23 as a prayer. Ask God to help you do whatever is necessary to guard your heart.

NOTES FOR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 *When have you seen someone blow up or lose it over something inconsequential? Knowing that “what comes out of the mouth flows from the heart,” what do you think could have really been going on?*

This is a simple question designed to help the group think about how they’ve seen the big idea of this session play out in the world around them.

- 2 *Proverbs 4:23 says, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” What are some examples of ways “your heart” fuels how you react or behave?*

Allow group members to disagree without judgment. It will create a more helpful conversation moving forward.

- 3 *Jesus stated in Matthew 15:18, “But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them.” The relationship between our hearts and our actions is explained with a visual below. Before today’s video message, had you considered that your negative behavior is offensive to God?*

Don’t rush this part of the discussion. It’s not just about group members understanding the relationship between heart and speech, but allowing them to explore that connection and how they’ve seen it in their lives and the world around them.

- 4 *Which of the four emotions Andy mentioned is your biggest tendency? Do you relate to any of the “owe” statements?*

- Guilt (*I owe you.*)
- Anger (*You owe me.*)
- Greed (*I owe me.*)
- Jealousy (*Life owes me.*)

If you feel comfortable doing so, talk to the group about why you selected the statement(s) you did.

Don’t press group members to share, but encourage them to open up by opening up yourself. With which “owe” statements do you identify? Why? Talk about

what you've done in the past to try to overcome those tendencies and how successful those strategies have been.

- 5 *Andy proposed that some of the people we respect the most are the ones who have endured suffering and pain but have refused to be owned by anger or resentment. Why are those people so impressive?*

Be ready with your own example. Be specific about someone you've known who demonstrated extraordinary self-control and how that influenced you.