

ANCHORED

Being Grounded in the Gospel

Introduction

Thank you for leading Anchored! We're grateful for you, and we pray that both you and your group will find this course stimulating and engaging. This simple leader guide is your "cheat sheet" for shepherding your group. In addition to this general introduction, the pages that follow contain some materials for each week, including discussion questions for your meetings.

What is Anchored?

Anchored is a 40-day discipleship course designed just for Willowdale Chapel. Its goal is to ground us in the gospel of God—which is far more than receiving Jesus and going to heaven when you die. The gospel, as Jesus proclaimed it, is "the good news of the kingdom of God." It's the message that Jesus, the world's true Lord and Savior, has come to rescue his people, reassert his reign, and lead everyone into an experience of the righteousness, peace, and joy that characterize his kingdom (Romans 14:17).

Anchored seeks to build disciples—students and apprentices of Jesus—who embrace his reign and extend it more confidently to others. That has always been Jesus' vision for us, that we be ***disciples who make disciples***.

So this course begins with the basics of the gospel storyline, including who God is and who we are in him. From there it progresses into how we live the life of the kingdom now: How we bless the world, pray, relate to God's family, honor Christ in our daily vocations, and embody love as the supreme virtue. Each topic entails five days of individual study designed to be covered over the course of a week, and then processed in a small group discussion.

As we say in the introduction to the *Anchored* workbook, there's more to being a solid, mature disciple than we present in this course, but certainly not less. Anyone who assimilates these truths and puts them into practice will be well on their way to living the abundant life Christ offers. As Jesus said, "Now that you know these things, you'll be blessed if you do them" (John 13:17).

Thank you again for joining us in building strong, active disciples of Christ. That's the goal, because on a cruise ship there are staff and customers, ***but on a rescue boat everyone is crew!***

Materials and Activities

Anchored Books

The *Anchored* workbook takes people through eight topics in eight weeks. Each week entails five days of study. So each person will do their individual work, then you'll come together to process your learnings. (Each person will need their own book. With writing exercises each day, it won't be practical for couples to share. Each book costs \$15, which simply covers costs.)

Video Intros

A 10-12 minute video tees up each week's study. You can view these as a group (before each new week) or watch them on your own. They can be found under the **Resources** section of our website.

Key Experiences

While the weekly studies form the bulk of the *Anchored* course, there are three additional experiences that are integral to our disciple-making goal. One is embedded in your weekly meetings; two others will stand alone.

Sharing Stories — Each week you will have one or two people share their story. This is the best way to build friendships and connections. (Read more on page 25 in your *Anchored* book.) We recommend that you use a timer set for 10 minutes, and that you go first as the leader to provide a model. The idea is to open up your life, sharing the forces that shaped you, with humility and appropriate vulnerability. We call this value *authentic storytelling*.

Serving Together — To instill the value of serving, your group will do a service project during *Anchored*. You can read about this at the end of Week 3, on page 69. **Additional helps** are found in this leader guide.

Engaging Prayer — Prayer is one of the most critical skills any disciple can learn, yet one of the most frightening things for many people to do. So after Week 5, practice this vital discipline by having a prayer meeting. This is highlighted on page 113 in your workbook, and again, **additional helps** are found in this guide.

Course Duration

Anchored is designed as a 10-week course. here are 8 weeks of study plus two additional experiences (serving and prayer). If you're starting a brand new group, an additional get acquainted meeting would be a good idea.

Get Acquainted Meeting

If you're gathering with a new group, be encouraged to have a get acquainted meeting before you start your study. You can meet, build rapport, explain how *Anchored* works, and view the Week 1 video.

A Typical Meeting

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. Meet, greet, and social time. | (10 minutes) |
| 2. Testimony: One person tells their story | (10 minutes) |
| 3. Discussion: The bold numbered questions in your book are suggested for discussion. We've compiled them here for easy reference. You probably won't get through them all. | (45-60 minutes) |
| 4. Video: Show the next week's teaching video. | (10 minutes) |
| 5. Prayer: Share requests and close in prayer. | (5-10 minutes) |
| 6. Refreshments: If you're able, give people a reason to linger. It's an axiom of good groups that the time before and after the meeting is as important as the meeting itself. | |

Share these keys to success with your group:

- Be a disciple. Have an attitude of humble, eager learning.
- Fully engage. Take the time to write out your answers and to do the exercises suggested throughout the course.
- Spread your studies over five days a week; don't cram.
- Work together so that everyone has a chance to speak and share.

Week 1: Finding Ourselves in the Story

Overview

In some ways this is the most heady topic in the course. The goal is to understand the Bible storyline of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration, and to interpret your own story in light of these great truths. Depending on your group, some people will readily accept the Bible's metanarrative while others may want to debate it. Topics like science and religion get at people's basic worldview and can be contentious. But even if there are some questions or disagreements around a topic like Creation, hopefully everyone can agree that our individual lives tend to follow this four-part flow. Life is u-shaped. We move from the goodness and innocence of birth into the pain and suffering of "real life," all the while yearning for redemption and restoration on the other side. To keep the discussion personal rather than philosophical you may want to start with the last question on Day 5: If your life were a Hollywood movie title, what would it be?

Discussion Questions

Day 1: Creation

Research shows that being anchored in gratitude floats your boat...there is a verifiable emotional lift for those who write down at least three things per day for which they are thankful. So what are three things about being created in God's image for which you are thankful?

Day 2: Fall

Virtually everyone who believes in God also believes that he forgives our sins. Do you believe that? What do you think are the prerequisites for receiving God's forgiveness?

Day 3: Redemption

Everyone tries, in some way or other, to redeem or prove themselves. We want to justify our lives and show that we really are good people. What's your self-redemption game? How do you tend to do this?

The heart of the Bible’s message is that you can’t redeem yourself, but God can. Titus 3:5 says, “He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.” To what degree do you believe in this message?

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|--------------|
| I Hardly | | | | | | | | | | I Absolutely |
| Believe | | | | | | | | | | Believe |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | |

What drives your response? Why did you answer as you did?

Day 4: Restoration

Have you experienced the restorative work of the gospel in your life?

What are three “restorations” for which you are thankful?

Day 5: The Story and the Storms of Life

What’s the biggest storm or challenge you’re currently facing in life?

Where is God in your situation? Do you sense his presence?

| | | |
|-------------|---------|-------------|
| Nowhere | Drawing | With me |
| to be found | near | in the boat |

If you were to sum up your life in a Hollywood movie title, what would it be?

Take-aways

What was your best take-away from Week 1?

Stories

Decide who will share their story the next time you meet.

Week 2: Knowing the God of the Story

Overview

One of the most fundamental challenges of our discipleship is to become God-centered people. The great goal of our faith is God: To know and love God as the Infinite Lover who knows us. This is so basic, but also so easily lost in many “brands” of Christianity where the goal seems to be our own wellness and blessing. As long as “life is good” it can seem almost irrelevant whether God is personally known or not. As one person suggested: If people could have every blessing of heaven without God, many would take it. But hopefully our people would not—because God is the Blessed One from whom all blessings flow. There is no such thing as goodness, beauty, or blessing apart from him. “Apart from You I have no good thing,” the psalmist wrote. Whether we realize it or not, God is the good we seek. Therefore knowing the God of the Story is the essence of life itself.

Discussion Questions

Day 1: The God Who Calls Us

A God who calls is a God who communicates. Every Christian believes that God communicates through the pages of Scripture, but do you believe that God speaks in other ways? Does he provide daily guidance? What do you believe about how God speaks?

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| He never speaks; it's all in your head. | He sometimes speaks at important moments. | He speaks all the time if we would only listen. |
|--|--|--|

It was suggested that if you're skeptical but open, you can pray “God, if you are real, speak to me in a way that I can understand.” Has anyone tried this who would be willing to share about it?

Day 2: The God Who Saves Us

Compare Israel's slavery in Egypt to humanity's slavery in sin. How are the two alike? Try to identify at least three parallels.

Are you currently in a situation from which you want God to rescue you?

How do you handle the waiting?

Day 3: The God Who Fights for Us

Whenever we face threats, our amygdala (“reptile brain”) is activated and we have a fight, flight, or freeze reaction. Which one is typical of you?

An alternative to fight, flight, or freeze is *faith*, which is inspired by having a God Who Fights For Us. Can faith mitigate your emotional reaction in the battles of life? Give one example where it has, or where you think it could.

Day 4: The God Who is Faithful to Us

Have you experienced God’s faithfulness personally? Describe one occasion when his faithfulness meant the most to you.

What advice would you give to a person who felt defeated or condemned because they were unfaithful to God?

Day 5: The God Who Changes Us

What are the biggest changes that you have experienced through faith in Christ? Even if you’re brand new to the faith, do you sense any changes over the first two weeks of *Anchored*?

It’s easy to think of a hundred things that ought to change in our lives, and feel overwhelmed. But if God asked you to focus on just one thing—one character trait, attitude, or behavior—what would it be?

Take-aways

What was your best take-away from Week 2?

Stories

Decide who will share their story the next time you meet.

Week 3: Discovering the New You

Overview

We live in an age of pervasive identity confusion. It touches all the big areas of life: Our gender and sexuality, our jobs and vocations, our relationships, and more. A crisis that used to afflict teenagers as a one-time season of life now haunts many of us throughout life. Most of us at least occasionally ask, “Who am I really?” Is this life I’m living really ‘me’?”

The deepest levels of our conflict can be resolved by coming to grips with who we are in Christ. There is a bedrock identity we all have in him that can keep us anchored and moving forward even when we face painful changes in our families, jobs, or health. This week’s study explores five foundational, life-shaping truths which tell us who we are in God and in the world.

Note: As you facilitate this week’s discussion leave time to work on the service project that your group will undertake in the coming weeks. The page that follows provides some additional helps.

Discussion Questions

Day 1: You are a Son

What strikes you as the most uplifting aspect of being a biblical son of God?

For some people, having flawed earthly fathers ruins the idea of God as Heavenly Father—but for others, the fatherhood of God redeems a poor experience. How do you process this? Are there any hurdles you have to get over in thinking about God as your Father?

Day 2: You are a New Creation

What are two or three clear examples of newness—empowered by God—that you observe in your life?

Romans 6:11 teaches us to reckon ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. How can you give greater credence to the new, true you over the old, past you?

Day 3: You are a Christian

Do people in your neighborhood or workplace know that you're a Christian?

If so, what is a challenging or painful misconception they have about you?

What opportunities do you have to live into the original spirit of the word *Christian*, to build authentic friendships across cultural boundaries?

Day 4: You are a Priest

As a priest who represents people to God and God to people, what do you see as your greatest strengths for ministry?

Day 5: You are an Apostle

What is the biggest barrier to your engagement as an apostle? What keeps you from going out and representing Christ more actively or overtly?

Take-aways

What was your best take-away from Week 3?

Stories

Decide who will share their story the next time you meet,

Serving Together

See the following page to help you get started on a service project plan.

--- **Serving Together** ---

Purpose

There are several important reasons for doing a service project together:

1. First, we want to instill the value of serving, both as individuals and as groups. It's possible that some people in your group will never have undertaken a ministry project like this before. This is part of their training as disciples.
2. We want to introduce and expose people to the kinds of things we do as a church, with a view to helping people engage more regularly. While this will be a one-off project for some, it may be the beginning of ongoing engagement for others. It's possible that some people will discover a passion, gift, or calling through your group project.
3. It's a joy to serve together, and we want people to experience it. Doing a project together almost always deepens relationships and creates lasting memories.

Planning

Take some time to brainstorm and strategize your project in your meeting. Don't get too bogged down trying to come up with the perfect plan; just land on an idea and then begin to execute. In all likelihood it will be helpful for you to do a little legwork ahead of time, so that you can present the group with a couple of options rather than working from a blank sheet of paper.

Here are some ideas to help you get started:

1. Scour our website for opportunities.
 - There may be an upcoming event at which you could serve.
 - You might contact a local ministry partner to see if they have needs.
 - You could even email a global partner who might have a way for you to encourage their team from a distance.
2. Contact Gustavo Castaneda, who oversees our local partnerships. He and his team will help resource you: gcastaneda@willowdalechapel.org.

3. Use contacts you have with local schools, hospitals, nursing homes, or non-profits to see if you might be able to serve them.
4. You might consider hosting a party or doing a fun event for people in your circle of relationships. Part of our mission is to reach people who are far from God but near to us. Minor holidays, cultural or seasonal events, family activities—anything can provide a reason to invite an eclectic group of people into a relational space.

Mobilizing Your Group

Whether you land on an idea right away or decide to do some research into different options, make sure to share the responsibilities and mobilize your group members. Ask for volunteers to plan and execute the project.

- Who is going to call whom?
- What tasks need to be done—and who will do each one?
- Is there someone in your group will be the overall project manager?

Write down the names and responsibilities below. By the next time your group meets, you will want to nail down the date of your project and what exactly you will be doing.

Also, keep in mind that it's likely that your project will take place at some time other than your regular meeting time, and that some people won't be available. Don't be deterred by these logistical roadblocks. If you have a "quorum" of people available to serve, make it happen. That's ministry in a busy world!

Week 4: Living a Blessed Life

Overview

It's an old line but a true one: Christians are supposed to be channels of God's blessing, not cul-de-sacs. While God gives all things for our enjoyment, they are not merely for our enjoyment. Rather, every blessing from God can be turned into a blessing for others. Here's how Paul put it: "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life" (1 Timothy 6:17-19). Since God wills our radical and regular generosity, we have to train ourselves to become this way. Week 4 shows us how.

Discussion Questions

Day 1: Bring Goodness

When Jesus sent out his disciples on a training mission, he said: "As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give" (Matthew 10:7-8). That seems impossible doesn't it—to heal, resurrect, exorcise? What do you make of these instructions? How do they apply to you?

We were challenged this week to do one *intentional* act of kindness and to record what happened. Who took the challenge? What happened?

Day 2: Learn Jesus

What are the roadblocks to committing more time to learning Jesus?

Are any of these insurmountable? What are the solutions?

Sometimes in the rough and tumble of life we wish we had Jesus' eyes, insights, and abilities for just five minutes. We would handle things so much better! Name one or two areas of life in which learning Jesus and knowing him better would have the greatest impact on you.

Day 3: Eat Meals

Like many people, do you lament that meals aren't the communal, relational events that they once were in your life?

What can you do to change this?

Day 4: Share Stories

Pain and struggle have a way of uniting people more than anything else. What pains or struggles could connect you with others who suffer?

1 Corinthians 1:3-5 reads, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ."

How has God comforted you in your pain? How might you share that with others?

How can *authentic storytelling* make it more natural for you to share the gospel with others, versus other "canned" approaches?

Day 5: Say Prayers

The man who sought help from Jesus said at one point, "I do believe; help my unbelief!" Can you relate? Do you ever doubt the power of prayer?

How does this story encourage you?

Take-aways

What was your best take-away from Week 4?

Stories

Decide who will share their story the next time you meet.

Week 5: Learning to Pray

Overview

One of the most distinctive features of Jesus' life and ministry was his practice of prayer. "Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed," the Scriptures teach us—which is all that an earnest disciple needs to know. As those who aim to have Christ's life reduplicated in us, if Jesus often sought God in private prayer, we want to do the same.

Moreover, Jesus made sweeping promises about prayer: "If two of you on earth agree about anything, it will be done for you." "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given to you." While our experience no doubt falls short of this seemingly guaranteed effectiveness, we believe that all things are possible with prayer. It's not only a means of getting things from God, it is the means of *getting God*. It's how we come to know and experience him. Through prayer we cultivate both intimacy and power. And therefore learning to pray as a way of life is as foundational to discipleship as any spiritual practice. This week we seek to deepen our souls and strengthen our skills in this most central of spiritual disciplines.

Discussion Questions

Day 1: Seeing God

Some people may feel intimidated by the idea that they live before God's face, feeling like he is always scrutinizing them. Do you ever feel this way? What would change *coram Deo* into a warm, positive reality?

If someone were to ask you whether you experience God in prayer, what would you say? Do you experience him? How?

Day 2: Wrestling with God

When in your life have you wrestled with God most arduously?

Why do you think God caused Israel to walk with a limp? What is the spiritual lesson in that for us?

Day 3: Fighting by Faith

What is the greatest victory you've seen God win through prayer?

Do you think there's ever a time to stop praying for a particular need or problem in your life?
How do you discern if God is simply saying, "No, my child, I am not going to do that"?

Day 4: Praising Your Way Forward

Why do you think it is so hard to praise God when life is hard?

We read in 1 Peter 4:7, "The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers." What does this teach you about cultivating a heart that prays when others panic?

Day 5: Covering It All

What is the role of prayer in your daily life? How well do you use prayer to cultivate a sense of God's presence?

I rarely use it

I regularly use it

Take-aways

What was your best take-away from Week 5?

Stories

Decide who will share their story the next time you meet.

Engaging Prayer

Next week you will practice prayer in a deeper, more extended way than you may have ever done before. Build excitement and anticipation in your group for your prayer meeting. Encourage everyone to be there. The following page provides some tips and guidance for how to conduct that meeting.

Engaging Prayer

This potentially will be the richest experience you have together. It may feel intimidating to give an hour to prayer—*Won't we get bored? Won't we run out of things to say?*—but with a solid plan your group will easily fill the time.

We recommend that you pray in two phases, the second one being somewhat optional.

Phase 1: P-R-A-Y through a passage of the Bible

1. Select a Psalm (40, 63, 90, or another favorite).
2. Make copies so that everyone has the text in front of them.
3. Review the PRAY acronym with your group—Praise, Repent, Ask, Yield— explaining that you're going to use this passage of Scripture as a catalyst for your praying.

You'll spend 7-8 minutes in each phase, starting with praise, after which you will prompt the group to move on. Encourage people to keep their prayers relatively short so everyone can participate. And, of course, people can jump in multiple times.

When it comes to repentance, you may want to encourage people not only to confess their own sins, but also to repent on behalf of our church and community as well.

In the "ask" phase people may bring requests directly related to the passage, or pray about any needs on their hearts.

During the closing "yield" prayers, we commit ourselves to the faith and actions called for in the passage while further asking God for the power to live according to his word. Designate one person to close the prayer and put the "amen" on it.

After closing this time in about 30 minutes, you can take a brief pause and then offer a second round of personal intercession and blessing.

Phase 2: Personal Intercession and Blessing

In the Bible, the laying on of hands is a way to confer power, blessing, and affirmation upon others. For those who are willing, the group can pray for them more specifically concerning a need, crisis, health concern, or other area in which they desire a breakthrough.

Just have whoever wants to receive this prayer sit in the center of the circle. Let them briefly share their situation. Then, to alleviate any concerns about propriety or safe touch, have the same-sex members of the group come close to lay hands on the person, while the rest of the group stays in their seats. Simply have two or three people (or more) pray for the situation. As you or other mature members have opportunity, bring Scripture to bear on the situation, citing God's attributes or promises in your prayers. This is part of modeling how to intercede for others. After a few minutes of praying, say amen and see if anyone else wants to be prayed over in this way.

These are often emotional times for people, so you'll want to have tissues available.

An alternative approach is to take turns praying for everyone individually. Some may have significant concerns to pray about, others may not. In the latter case, just pray positive prayers of blessing on the person's life and growth, their household, and their work and ministry in the world.

Like sharing stories and serving together, intercessory prayer can do much to strengthen the bonds of your group. This is one tangible way to experience "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit," which is one of the spiritual realities of our relationship together in the body of Christ.

Week 6: Experiencing Supernatural Community

Overview

Hopefully this week's study will be a natural extension of the community you experienced in your prayer meeting and the growing momentum of your group generally. The topic, the church, is vitally important.

As flawed and imperfect as the church is, it is still the object of God's love and blessing. It is the Bride of Christ, the community of believers for whom Christ laid down his life, and the vehicle whereby he accomplishes his ongoing mission in the world. What the church is, and how the Lord feels about it, gives us every warrant to bring our best love and commitment to it as well. Yet this is increasingly not the case. We allow many other things to encroach on our worship, discipleship, and ministry involvements. The average Christian now attends worship 1.7 times a month. Let's challenge the status quo and reaffirm what is good, beautiful, and worthy in the life of our church.

Discussion Questions

Day 1: Spirituality

What similarities do you see between the natural community of the Marine Corps and the supernatural community of the church?

Do you find this high level of commitment inspiring or intimidating? Why?

Day 2: Gifts

Read again the lists of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. List 1-3 gifts that you think you might have?

Would your family and friends concur with your assessment? Have others affirmed these gifts or do you need to try them out more?

Bonus question: What did you think about "The Giving Dilemma" sidebar? What has been your experience when it comes to financial stewardship and generosity? Have you seen God fulfill his promises to you in this area?

Day 3: Interdependence

How good are you at depending on others? If your balance is off, on which side do you fall?

overly dependent

Interdependent

overly independent

At least three kinds of diversity are mentioned in today's study: ethnic, economic, and "charismatic" (gifts). Which one is easiest for you to embrace? Hardest? Which kind of diversity presents the greatest challenge for our church?

Day 4: Leadership

So much of our world focuses on leadership. Do you think *followership* is overlooked? How does the gospel inform our view of following?

Do you aspire to greater leadership in the church? (Paul says in 1 Timothy 3:1 that whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.) What do you think is the path to gaining greater influence and responsibility?

Day 5: Covering It All

Of the verbs describing love in 1 Corinthians 13, which one is most like you? Which one is least?

Sometimes it's harder to love those closer to us. We tend to be more kind and courteous to friends than to family. It can be the same way in the family of God: Sometimes it's easier to love non-Christians than believers in church. Do you ever struggle with this? How so?

Take-aways

What was your best take-away from Week 6?

Stories

Decide who will share their story the next time you meet.

Week 7: Taking God to Work

Overview

Our discipleship to Christ should impact every area of our lives. Jesus is both Lord of All and our Good Shepherd, so we want to experience his guidance and empowerment at all times. And since we spend the largest part of our days at work, it would only stand to reason that our faith would have a significant impact there. But unfortunately, work is often one area of life that remains cordoned off from Christ's influence. Other than basic ethics, our faith speaks little to the actual work we do. Should this be?

The Scriptures teach us that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). Christ is before all things and in him all things hold together (Colossians 1:17). In other words, Jesus is the master of every field. Moreover, he lays claim to our lives in every dimension. So what would it mean to acknowledge Jesus as Lord of our work? How do we give him full sway over our vocational lives? How should our faith influence this significant sphere of human activity?

Discussion Questions

Day 1: Calling

How did you get to where you are today, work-wise? Was it more strategic and intentional on your part, or more accidental and circumstantial?

accidental

intentional

Apply the three aspects of servanthood from today's reading to your work. What is one way in which you can bring each to life?

Day 2: Purpose

While many companies still have a single bottom line, more and more are recognizing that having multiple bottom lines better serves their employees and world. The same holds true for individuals. If you were to bring more meaning to your work by having a triple bottom line—three great purposes for your work—what would they be?

Day 3: Engagement

What model of cultural engagement shaped your early years—Separation, Identification, or Transformation?

What is one practical way you can take a more Transformational stance where you work?

Day 4: Intelligence

How do you think the three people closest to you would rate you on empathy and emotional intelligence? What feedback would they have for you?

Day 5: Influence

If God were to grant you more culture-shaping influence at work, what would you most like to change or affect?

Note: In the workbook, the question above ends with “Pray for the opportunity!” Take some time at the end of this session to do just that.

Take-aways

What was your best take-away from Week 7?

Stories

Decide who will share their story the next time you meet.

Week 8: Making Love a Must

Overview

The greatest commandment and chief virtue of the Bible is to love. That's why love stands at the heart of our mission as a church, which is to love God, love each other, and love the world that Jesus, through his people, is working to restore.

But love is often sentimentalized in our culture, taking it far afield from its biblical shape and content. So this final week's study aims to recover love in all its true brilliance. And that may well challenge some of the prevailing values in your group members. In striking parallel to the prejudices of Jesus' day, many people in our world affirm loving God and loving others, as long as "others" are relatively good people who are similar to us. But the idea of loving the alien and stranger—especially when issues like immigration and tribalism polarize our political discourse—might present unique challenges.

Bathe this week's study in prayer, and encourage your group to let Christ hold sway over all other loyalties. Also, please note that baptism is raised in this week's study. Be encouraged to call all your unbaptized members to faith and obedience in this matter. You can either wait for the next scheduled baptism service or reach out to the church office to secure a date.

Discussion Questions

Day 1: The Love Before Our Love

As a general rule, do you launch out into life anchored in love, or seeking to earn love?

What has been the most healing aspect of God's love for you?

What's your story with regard to baptism? Have you been baptized? What does it mean to you?

Day 2: Loving God

In the story of Simon the Pharisee and the sinful woman, who do you relate to more? Explain.

Have you ever expressed lavish love for Christ in some way akin to what the woman in the story did? What's one way that you could do it now?

Day 3: Loving Each Other

When have fellow believers come through most for you?

Has the church ever profoundly failed you? Are there any resentments you need to release in order to be more devoted to the family of God? What would it look like for you to release the past and recalibrate your heart?

Day 4: Loving the World

Ethnically speaking, are you part of the majority culture or the minority? If majority, what advantages do you sense you have? If minority, what burdens do you feel you bear?

As a church we care deeply about racial harmony and reconciliation in our community. In what ways do you think we're loving others well? In what ways can we grow?

Day 5: Love in Three Dimensions

In what ways does the story of the Good Samaritan capture the essence of our rescue mission? What might it look like for us to be an entire church of Good Samaritans together? How can we improve in this area?

Take-aways

What was your best take-away from Week 8?

What were your best take-aways from *Anchored* as a whole?

Note: If you haven't discussed it yet, explore whether or not you want to continue to meet as a group. If this is the close of the group, encourage everyone to plug into a new group as soon as possible. Your small groups coach will have ideas for next steps.