



groups

Introduction to the *Margins* Sermon Series

In the month of September, we will take a look at margins. Margins has been defined by some as “the difference between our current pace and our limits.” Imagine working 30 minutes from your house and you have a meeting at 9am. You leave at 8:15am, so you have 15 minutes of ‘margin’ to get there on time. When that margin narrows (because of traffic, a late school bus, or hitting the Snooze button too many times), you feel anxious or angry. You get distracted from things that are important because you’re focused on the narrowing margin. Sometimes we cram so much into our days that our margin is automatically narrowed. Over the next weeks, we’ll take an in-depth look at margins, worry, and how we can reorganize our lives so we can focus on Christ and His Kingdom.

Each week, we’ll look at a passage from the Bible related to the topic of the weekend sermon. Our goal in reading the Bible is not only to know more about God, but also to have a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ and do what He teaches in His Word.

How to Use This Discussion Guide

- Use the summary statement for each week to quickly understand the text’s theme. You can use that as a reference point to help guide your discussion or bring it back if your group begins to get off topic.
- Use the prayer prompt at the end of each guide to help you close in prayer.

Additionally, here are some tips and guidelines to help you lead these discussions:

1. **Choose the questions that best fit your group and your time constraints.** There are a lot of questions in this guide and your group may not be able to discuss them all. That’s okay! You don’t have to ask all of them. Before your group begins, choose the questions that are most likely to help your group understand what God is saying in the text and how to apply it to their lives.
2. **Prepare for your group time by reading the passages and the notes in a study Bible.** A good study Bible can give you some insights into the passages and how they connect to the whole book or the whole story of the Bible.
3. **Begin every group meeting with prayer.** We can only understand and apply God’s Word with the help of the Holy Spirit. So, invite the Spirit to open your hearts and minds to what He says to His people.
4. **Keep the conversation focused on Scripture as much as possible.** Some people may want to bring in their opinions or continually refer to what the teaching pastor said during his message. This is helpful in small doses, but the goal of this discussion guide is to help you determine what God is saying in His Word. Encourage the group to continue to return to the Scripture. One way to do that is by saying, “That’s a great insight! Where do you see that in the Scripture we’re studying?”
5. **Encourage participation, but don’t let anyone dominate.** Encourage everyone to share insights, ask questions, and read aloud. But don’t allow any one person – even yourself, the leader – to monopolize the time. Some people are just unaware of themselves and how much they speak, so gently encourage them to listen and make space for others to talk.
6. **Help your group members to be specific in the application of Scripture.** It is easy to generalize when we talk about the Bible and how to apply it. So ask your group members specific questions – for example, “What part of the world do you sense God wants you to pray for? How will you do that? How will you make that a habit?”

We pray that you will hear God speak through His Word and that His Spirit will move you to obey Him. The Word of God – the Bible – lets us know the God who loves us and saves us. May this discussion guide help you and your Life Group to become more immersed in His story.



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Main Bible Passage: Luke 5:1-11; Luke 5:27-32

Sermon Date: September 28-29, 2019

Theme: We must be intentional to make margin and take the initiative for relationships in order to walk more closely with Christ as God intends.

- **What are the three most important qualities you look for in a friend?**
- **When it comes to making new friends, do you typically take the initiative, or do you let other people come to you? Why?**
- **What would you say is the purpose of friendship?**
Leader's Note: For some people, making friends comes easily, while others of us struggle with it. Either way, all of us need to understand what the ultimate purpose of friendship is if we are going to make and keep friends well. In today's session, we'll take a look at Jesus' approach to making new friends in Luke 5 to find principles that apply to our own friendships today.

Ask for a volunteer to read Luke 5:1-7.

- **Which is typically your focus in your daily schedule: people or projects? Explain.**
- **Name some reasons Jesus could have chosen to leave Simon and the others after verse 3. Why do you think He didn't?**
- **What principles about making friends can you learn from these verses?**
Leader's Note: At this point in His ministry, Jesus was consistently teaching and preaching, and His popularity was growing rapidly. Still, Jesus always made margin to connect on a personal level with those around Him. Instead of heading home for a nap or stepping back onto the shore to heal the sick, Jesus led Simon further out on the lake. There, Jesus met the physical needs of the men whose boat He had borrowed to teach the crowd. If we are going to make friends in a new place, we must be intentional. Friendship takes initiative, and a margin of time and attention.

Ask for another volunteer to read Luke 5:8-11.

- **Why did Simon Peter try to push Jesus' friendship away?**
- **Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Friendship requires vulnerability. Explain.**
- **From Jesus' words in verse 10 and the response of the fishermen in verse 11, what is the ultimate purpose of friendship? How does this truth impact your understanding of what it takes to make and be a friend?**
Leader's Note: Simon Peter fell at Jesus' feet—a sign of submission and desperation. He addressed Jesus as Lord. Here, the Greek word indicates Simon was acknowledging Jesus' authority. The presence of the Lord in His holiness brings recognition and conviction of personal sin. Simon asked Jesus to depart, not because he was afraid of Jesus' power, but because Simon was aware he was a sinful man. To make the kind of friends God desires and intends for us to have, we must not avoid hard conversations. The ultimate point of friendship is to walk with Christ together.

Ask for another volunteer to read Luke 5:27-32.

- **What steps did Jesus take to form a friendship with Levi? What steps did Levi take to form a friendship with Jesus?**
- **What differences could have kept Jesus and Levi from a friendship? Why didn't those differences get in the way of their forming a friendship?**
- **What did the Pharisees and scribes miss out on because of their narrow view of friendship?**
- **What life purpose would you say drove the attitudes and choices of the religious leaders? What life purpose drove Jesus' attitude and choices? How does your life purpose impact your attitudes and choices in your friendships?**

Leader's Note: No one would have picked Levi as someone who would be among Jesus' closest group of friends. The two were so different—it would be like a respected pastor hanging out with a known thief. But unlike the religious leaders, Jesus was not fazed by the fact that Levi was a tax collector. He reached out to Levi anyway, and in doing so, Jesus found in Levi a faithful apostle and friend. Jesus did not exclude anyone because He loves people and wants everyone to come into His kingdom. Because of this, Jesus spent time with people who didn't fit any particular category of personality, interest, or background. Jesus was a friend to sinners, consistently showing them love and calling them to repentance. Friendship requires sacrifice. Levi left a life of easy money to follow Jesus. Levi most likely had a lot of material possessions to leave behind as well, yet he gladly gave them up for the opportunity to follow Jesus. After he left everything to follow Jesus, Levi threw a banquet for Jesus and invited all of his friends to sit and eat with Jesus. Levi didn't try to keep his new friend Jesus separate from his work friends, because friendship is inclusive.

- **What unique relationships does God have you in right now? (i.e. spouse, parent, neighbor, co-worker, Life Group member)**
- **Would you say your relationships help you walk more closely with the Lord? Would those close to you say that you help them follow Jesus more closely?**
- **Who is God calling you to pursue in friendship this week? What will you invite them to do? When will you contact them to set this up?**
- **How can we be the type of Christian community that makes space for friendships with people who don't believe in Jesus?**
- **From today's session, what principles of friendship do you need to put into practice for making new friends and/or for growing in your current friendships?**

Close in prayer, thanking God for His friendship to you. Ask Him to show you ways you can reach out to make new friends and be a better friend to others, so that you might walk more closely with Christ and with the people He has put in your life.