

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.

Main Bible Passage: Mark 1:35-39; Mark 6:30-34

Sermon Date: September 14-15, 2019

Theme: Having margins in your schedule in order to rest with God is a critical part of knowing God.

- **Complete the following sentence: “I wish I had more time to ...”**
- **Do you think we live in a culture that values margin in our schedule? Why or why not?**
Leader’s Note: We live in an age of clutter. As believers in this busy world, it’s important for us to think about how we spend our time and what we give priority to. As we walk with God, part of that walking involves prioritizing time spent alone with Him.

Ask for a volunteer to read Mark 1:35-39.

- **After a hectic day of helping others (vv. 29-34), Jesus needed some time to be alone and pray. What do you think He prayed for?**
Leader’s Note: While Jesus was concerned about focusing on God’s mission for Him, the disciples seemed to be caught up in the increasing popularity of Jesus. Perhaps they felt they should seize the day: Simon and his companions went to look for Him; and when they found Him, they exclaimed, “Everyone is looking for you!”
- **How did the disciples’ priorities differ from Jesus’ in this scene?**
- **According to verses 38-39, how did Jesus view His mission? Why would time with the Father be critical to fulfilling this mission?**
Leader’s Note: Jesus’ primary mission was to preach the good news. The miracles of healing and casting out of demons was secondary—a means to the end of presenting the gospel and getting people to respond to that good news. With such a challenging and important mission, prioritizing time alone with the Father was central to Jesus’ days. This time gave Jesus the opportunity to rest, refuel, and remain connected to God and His will for Jesus’ work.

Ask for volunteers to read Mark 6:6-13 and Mark 6:30-34.

- **Jesus did not step away because of a lack of need, but because He needed to rest. Why do we often feel guilty for taking the time to rest?**
- **How does our need to rest keep us from building up an unhealthy pride in our work or our service to God?**
Leader’s Note: Jesus didn’t take the apostles away to a remote place because they had met every need. People still surrounded them, but at this time Jesus decided that they all needed to rest. The work the apostles did was important. However, it was not more important than their own rest. More specifically, it was not more important than their need to be alone with Jesus. However, their time alone was interrupted by the crowd in verses 33-34. The disciples found that rest can be hard to come by. Even when Jesus sought intentional Sabbath for Himself and His disciples, they were interrupted by the needs of others.
- **When it comes to your day-to-day schedule, how much of a priority is time alone with God?**
- **What is the greatest obstacle you face in your time alone with God?**
Leader’s Note: Jesus’ time alone with God also provided Him the opportunity to rest. As we walk with God, part of that walking involves resting. But we can only truly enter into that state of Sabbath rest through faith, trusting in God’s finished work on our behalf. When we do, we will remember that because of Jesus, there is nothing else we have to do.



groups

- **What are some signs that indicate you are in need of some margin in your schedule? How would the people closest to you say they know you need some margin?**
- **How might an inability to rest influence the way you interact with other people?**
Leader's Note: In each of the examples above, the true enemy of rest isn't a busy calendar; it's a failure to believe in the finished work of God at the cross. Because of the cross, we know that we are highly valued by God. Because of the cross, we know that God is out for our ultimate good and we needn't worry about the future. Because of the cross, we no longer have to prove ourselves to others because God has justified us in Christ. Keeping the cross at the forefront of our minds helps us simplify our lives and practice restful time alone with God.
- **What are some activities that clutter up your schedule? (i.e. checking social media, bingeing television shows, online shopping, email) How much time do you think you've spent on these activities in the last 24 hours?**
- **As you evaluate your day, what can you conclude are your main priorities? Starting tomorrow, what needs to change about your daily routine in order to help you prioritize your relationship with God?**
- **In a workaholic society, what is creating margin in our schedule designed to teach us about God and about our work?**
- **What about resting with God gives you the greatest pause? How would you describe the difference between resting and resting with God?**
- **Understanding that it is an instruction and not a suggestion, what are some specific ways you can create margin in your life to allot time for regular rest with God? How can you get started with that shift this week?**

Close in prayer, acknowledging the incessant, hectic pace of our world. Ask God for insight into how we can spend critical moments resting with Him. Confess our need for that.