

**Dear Life Group leaders,**

A very Happy New Year to you! We hope that you had a fantastic Christmas break, in spite of the restrictions, and that you are full of faith for what the Lord has planned for us as we regather together in 2021. Here are a few pieces of information to help you to lead as we begin the New Year together.

We are starting the New Year with a teaching series entitled **Enjoy The New You!** If you have ever been involved in the 'Freedom In Christ' course then you will recognise that we have used much of that material for this series. We are convinced that the greatest question for people in 2021 is not when social-distancing restrictions will be lifted, but whether the other, far deeper restrictions of sin will be lifted from their hearts through the Gospel. This is a series in which we want to help people to discover their new identity in Christ and to discover that the Gospel is a message about more than just forgiveness for sin – it is also a message about freedom from sin.

We believe that this freedom comes through engagement with God's Word and by believing what it says. For that reason, we are very keen for everybody in our Life Groups to engage with our **Everyday Devotions** so that they can take these Scripture truths to heart throughout the week. Our weekly church service is vital and our weekly Life Group discussion is vital too, but none of them can replace the power of daily Bible study and prayer.

The easiest way for people to access the Everyday Devotions is via our **Everyday Church App**. If they struggle with reading and would prefer a video version of the daily devotions, then they can find this instead at our church **YouTube** channel. Simply search for "Everyday Church London".

We are also starting the New Year with two online **Alpha Courses**, which launch on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January. For full details, go to [www.everyday.org.uk/alpha](http://www.everyday.org.uk/alpha). Many of the guests will be those who came to our Carol Services and who signed up before Christmas, but let's also make this a great harvesting opportunity for the people we have been praying for in our Life Groups, via our 'lost lists' and our 'oikos maps'.

Finally, don't forget that we are gathering for our next **Life Group Leaders Training** from 8-9pm on Thursday evening 14<sup>th</sup> January. Simon has sent out the details separately, so we look forward to seeing you there.

It's great to be back from our Christmas holidays and I'm looking forward to a New Year of leading with you!

**Phil Moore**

(on behalf of the whole-church eldership team)

## **LIFE GROUP GUIDE – Enjoy The New You #1 – Luke 4:14-21 – “The Joy Ahead”**

**This Week's BIG IDEA** is that our experience of 2021 will be determined less by what happens to us on the *outside* (COVID, social-distancing, etc) than by what happens to us on the *inside* (understanding that God has made us a new creation in Christ). No doubt 2021 will have its ups-and-downs, but our mood mustn't be shaped by the latest news cycle. It must be shaped by the eternal Word of God.

### **CONNECT IN with each other by looking back together**

How were your Christmas holidays?

How are the lessons that God taught you in 2020 already beginning to shape your life in 2021?

[Help for leaders: We can often shy away from asking this kind of question in case people have little to share. But we would encourage you to stir up testimonies in this way. One of the reasons we gather as Life Groups is to ask this kind of question in order to open our lives up to one another and in order to spur one another on to greater love and obedience to the Lord. See Hebrews 10:24-25.]

### **CONNECT UP with God by studying the Scriptures together**

- 1) Ask somebody to **read Luke 4:14-21**. Give people a moment to re-read it on their own in silence and to scribble down any questions or comments that they have on these verses before you begin discussing them together.
- 2) In verses 18-19, Jesus reads from Isaiah 61:1-2 and uses those two verses as a manifesto for his ministry. Can a few people try to summarise his Gospel message for us here in a single sentence?
- 3) How is that different from 'the Gospel' as it is often described by Christians today?  
[Help for leaders: This is the key question in this week's discussion. The Gospel isn't way bigger than forgiveness for our sins. It is also the proclamation of freedom from our sins and from their toxic effect in our lives.]
- 4) Reading ahead into verses 22-30, how did the people of Nazareth respond to this manifesto for Jesus' ministry?
- 5) Why on earth would anybody want to reject a message that was this good? Why would anyone say no to this?!  
[Help for leaders: What Jesus offers people is amazing, but the truth is that we can all be like the people of Nazareth. We don't want to admit to being *poor, imprisoned, blind* or in need of God's *favour*. It offends our pride. But unless we confess our sin, we will never discover Jesus as our Saviour. Unless we confess that we are the people to whom he came, he will never come to us. How tragic!]
- 6) Being really honest, how much would you say you have truly experienced all that Jesus promises us here?
- 7) How does the reaction of the people in Nazareth help explain why we haven't experienced all of this ourselves?
- 8) How might this also help us to understand the reasons why some of the nonbelievers in our lives have so far proved quite resistant to the Gospel?

### **CONNECT OUT to serve the world by looking to the week ahead.**

How can we proclaim this fullness of the Gospel to the nonbelievers around us as we emerge into 2021?

Who is God specifically calling you to talk to this week? (eg the people on your 'lost list' or 'oikos map')

We have Alpha Courses starting on Zoom at the end of January. Who will you invite and how?

We all want to be fruitful in 2021, so how can we help one another to follow through on these plans?

Move into a time of **worship** and **thankfulness** for Jesus our Saviour.

End by **bringing these nonbelievers before God in prayer**.

[Help for leaders: You may want to point out to people that the fifth button on the homepage of our new Church App contains a simple Gospel outline that they can share with their friends from their phone or tablet. Speaking God's Word to people just got a bit easier!]