



GROWTH PLAN

Small Group Discussion Guide



PREPARATION

STUDY

Spend the week studying Proverbs 3:1-7 and Luke 2:52. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

PRAY

Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their openness to God's Word.

LANDING POINT

Growth comes from experiencing the Father's love and pleasure and finding my identity and place in Him.



GROUP DISCUSSION

❑ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.

❑ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

❑ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

❑ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

THE CALL TO GENUINE FAITH

In Luke 2:52 we see that Jesus not only grew in favor with God but also with people. Jesus amazed others with His teaching and compassion toward others. His ideas and actions were counter-cultural. He called His followers to live differently than the culture around them. However, the life Jesus called His followers into is actually the life they were always meant to live. Every person is made for God and His goal for everyone is a life of genuine faith lived by hope, humility and wisdom—as Jesus lived.

Last week your group discussed how growth happens when we experience the Father's love and pleasure and find our identity and place in Him. This week your group will discuss what it looks like to grow in favor with people by taking a Christ-like approach.

Q: *Describe what 'genuine faith' looks like lived out.*



DEEPER DIVE

Select 2–3 questions to discuss as a group.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS

There are two great biblical examples of people who found favor with people—Daniel and Esther. Both characters lived in a foreign, hostile culture yet they were able to remain faithful to God and even find favor among others. Their faithfulness was the application of what Proverbs 3:1-7 tells us is the key to real success in life and finding favor with both God and people. Like them, we can have genuine faith wherever we find ourselves in life.

Q: *Have a volunteer read Proverbs 3:1-7. What's the main point the father is communicating to his son in this passage?*

Q: Share about a time when you had to fully trust the Lord for something. What happened and what did you learn?

Q: How might the life approach of Proverbs 3:1-7 help you find favor with people? What about that approach would be appealing to others?



REFLECTION AND NEXT STEPS

THREE QUALITIES¹:

What does it look like to live like Daniel, Esther and Jesus? Let's look at three distinguishing qualities that characterized their lives.

- *Hope* – Hope enables you to see God's hand over circumstances.
- *Humility* – Humility gives you a right understanding of yourself before God and others.
- *Wisdom* – Wisdom empowers you to live well and bless others.

These three qualities enable you to live a life of genuine faith. People are attracted to and admire hope, humility and wisdom. That's God's goal for you.² When you have genuine faith, you refuse to quit. It keeps you moving forward despite your circumstances, feelings, or opposition. Genuine faith lived out makes you salt and light to those around you.

Q: What's an area in your life where you need God's hope, humility or wisdom?

Q: What's one way you can use your wisdom (applied knowledge and lived experience) to bless someone this week?

FOLLOWING HIS LEAD

God wants you to grow and mature as Jesus did. You have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to grow in genuine faith. Spiritual growth happens when our focus is on Jesus and we seek to live as He did. In Jesus we see these qualities:

- *Hope* – that God accomplishes His plans for our good and His glory. He helped people lift their eyes to God.
- *Humility* – in putting others' needs before His own. His hands were open to see and help others.
- *Wisdom* – that He passed on to others. He shared what He had to grow and empower others.

You can do the good works God has planned for you with hope, humility and wisdom. These three qualities aren't based on your circumstances, feelings or opposition. They are based on the power of God's Spirit at work in you. This gives you genuine faith to persevere in any circumstance.

🗣️: *What are some ways that your group can encourage one another in genuine faith?*

🗣️: *How can the group be praying for you this week?*



JESUS' MATURITY “Luke provided his readers with a concluding summary of the years between this event and Jesus’s baptism. Compare [Luke] 1:80 and 1 Sam. 2:21, 26 for similar statements concerning John the Baptist and Samuel, and [cross reference] Luke 2:40 concerning Jesus’s earlier years. Some scholars have seen a reference to this commendation in 3:22. For a similar statement concerning the development of Jesus’s character, see Heb. 5:8–9; 2:14–18.”³

LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS ‘Love’ in Prov. 3:3 refers to a “strong, intimate commitment to another” and ‘faithfulness’ refers to “reliability.”⁴ The father’s command to the son is for love and faithfulness to shape his character (what’s inside) so it will match his actions (what’s outside).

TRUSTING THE LORD Trusting God is essential in finding wisdom. In Prov. 3:5-6 we see that to trust God means to trust Him in these ways:

1. *Entirely* with your whole heart.
2. *Exclusively* and not lean on your own understanding.
3. *Extensively* in all your ways.⁵

ENDNOTES:

1. Larry Osborne, *Thriving in Babylon: Why Hope, Humility, and Wisdom Matter in a Godless Culture*, (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2015), 13.
2. *Ibid.*, 41.
3. Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 123.
4. D. A. Carson, ed., *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 1064.
5. Jim Newheiser, *Opening up Proverbs, Opening Up Commentary* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2008), 59–61.