

Leadership Tip!

One of the most important ingredients to being a successful life group is to focus on the people and not the content. Strive to create an environment that emphasizes authentic relationships in your group.

UP – WHEN YOU’RE TEMPTED TO GIVE UP**STARTER QUESTIONS:**

Have you ever had one of those days when nothing seemed to go right?

Did you ever feel like giving up in a tough situation?

MAIN IDEA:

As we enter into the Christmas season, Pastor Hank is beginning a new sermon series entitled “Up”. The church is encouraged to remember *five* things whenever we’re thinking about giving up. For most of us, Christmas is a very joyous time of year. A time to come to together with loved ones and celebrate the birth of our Savior. However, for others, the reality is, that as Christmas approaches, stress increases, and memories of loved ones that we’ve lost, can often lead to sadness, even to the point of feeling tempted to give up. This is absolutely the time to look, “UP”, towards our Heavenly Father, who is always waiting for us with arms wide open, to embrace us with His love.

The *first* thing Pastor Hank asks us to remember is **Jesus is real**. Now this may seem obvious to us as believers, but is this how we live our lives? The bible describes Jesus as Lord of Lords, King of kings, the I Am! (John 8:58)

” Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “*What you do speaks so loud, that I cannot hear what you say.*”

1 John 2:4 (ESV) is even more direct. Whoever says, “*I know him,*” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person.

How is Jesus real to you? Does your life testify of how Jesus is real to you?

The *second* thing he asks us to remember is **The Bible is true**. The following is an excerpt from author and theologian, John Stott’s book entitled, “*Understanding the Bible*”. The Bible contains 66 books written over 1,500 years by 40 different writers but it tells one “big story” of God’s plan of salvation that culminated in Jesus Christ. You can’t even pass a secret around a circle of 12 people and get the same message at the end. “There is indeed a wide variety of human authors and themes (in the Bible). Yet behind these there lies a single divine author with a single unifying theme.”

Another well known theologian, R.C. Sproul's writes in his book "*Now That's a Good Question*" That there are over 300 specific prophecies in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. The very dimension of the sheer fulfillment of prophecy of the Old Testament Scriptures should be enough to convince anyone that we are dealing with a supernatural piece of literature. God has himself planted within the scriptures an internal consistency that bears witness that this is his Word."

Paul states it most eloquently in 2 Tim 3:16. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

How has studying the Bible helped you to know God more intimately and equipped you for every good work?

The *third* thing to remember is **We don't expect much from God**. Pastor Hank uses the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth in first chapter of Luke to help illustrate how one may not expect much from God.

"One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple... he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. While the incense was being burned, a great crowd stood outside, praying. While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him." "But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John." Luke 1:8-13 (NLT)

Although Zechariah was desperately praying for a son, his expectation was still small, even after the angel of the Lord appeared and spoke to him! Isn't that crazy! I mean what would your reaction be if an angel appeared and spoke to you? The angel's message from God was so specific. He not only tells Zechariah that Elizabeth will give him a son, but he even says that his name will be John.

"In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly." Psalm 5:3 (NIV)

"But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me." Micah 7:7 (NIV)

Why is it important to pray with expectation? (Give an example.)

"But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind." James 1:6

The *fourth* thing to remember is **God hears our prayers**. God answers our prayers, but it is always in *His* timing.

*“Zechariah said to the angel, “How can I be sure this will happen? I’m an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years.” Then the angel said, “I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! But now, since you didn’t believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled **at the proper time.**”* Luke 1:18-20 (NLT)

“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.” Luke 18:1 (NIV)

What are some prayers God has answered for you? (Take time to give Him praise & thanks)

The *fifth* thing to remember is **Faith is what God wants from us.**

“Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.” Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

*“For by grace you have been saved through **faith**. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,”* Ephesians 2:8 (NIV)

From the very beginning of our relationship with Christ, we had to exercise the measure of faith, God gave us, to receive the gift of salvation by God’s grace.

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” Hebrews 11:6 (NIV)

How will you exercise your faith throughout the week?

FINAL THOUGHTS:

Although life can be tough, especially when following Christ, we should always look UP to our high priest, Jesus Christ. Through our weakness, His power is made perfect!

“For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:30 (NIV)

“By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.” 2 Peter 1:3 (NLT)

How can our group pray for you?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

UP

“When You’re Tempted to Give Up”
December 4, 2016

5 Things To Remember When You’re Thinking About Giving Up:

“When Herod was king of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a member of the priestly order of Abijah, and his wife, Elizabeth, was also from the priestly line of Aaron.”

Luke 1:5 (NLT)

1. Jesus is real.
2. The Bible is true.

“Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God’s eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord’s commandments and regulations. They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old.”

Luke 1:6-7 (NLT)

“One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple... he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. While the incense was being burned, a great crowd stood outside, praying. While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him.”

Luke 1:8-12 (NLT)

3. We don’t expect much from God.

Jesus: *“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Matthew 28:20 (NIV)

Jesus: *“My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.”*

John 5:17 (NIV)

“But the angel said, “Don’t be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John.”

Luke 1:13 (NLT)

4. God does hear our prayers.

“We must patiently, believingly continue in prayer, until we obtain an answer; and further, we have not only to continue in prayer unto the end, but we have also to believe that God does hear us and will answer our prayers. Most frequently we fail in not continuing in prayer until the blessing is obtained, and in not expecting the blessing.”

-George Muller

“Zechariah said to the angel, “How can I be sure this will happen? I’m an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years.” Then the angel said, “I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! But now, since you didn’t believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time.”

Luke 1:18-20 (NLT)

5. Faith is what God wants from us.