

Small Group Leader's Guide

Guiding Question

Which of the three responses to Jesus (antagonistic, noncommittal, or believing) shows up most in your life right now, and what would it look like to move closer to wholehearted devotion to Jesus?

Keep this overarching question in mind as you guide the conversation—it will help bring everything back to personal application and growth.

Discussion Questions & Leader Notes

1. When you think about the three responses to Jesus in John 7—antagonistic, noncommittal, and believing—where do you most naturally find yourself on an average day, and what influences that?

Leader Tips

- Normalize the idea that our response can shift depending on circumstances.
- Encourage honesty and avoid letting anyone answer in a way that feels “performative.”

Follow-Up Questions

- *What specific emotions or situations tend to pull you toward one response over another?*
 - *When have you recently noticed yourself acting more like the first or second group in the message?*
 - *What helps nudge you back toward trust and belief when you drift?*
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2. Opposition to faith looks different today than it did in the first century. What are some ways you've personally experienced subtle or direct resistance when trying to live out your faith?

Leader Tips

- Remind the group that opposition isn't always dramatic; sometimes it's internal, relational, or cultural pressure.

- Guard against political rants; keep the focus on personal experience and spiritual growth.

Follow-Up Questions

- *How do you usually respond to that resistance—pull back, speak up, or something else?*
- *How has resistance affected your confidence or boldness in your faith?*
- *What encouragement do you find in knowing other believers face similar challenges?*

3. Have you ever felt like an “undercover Christian” in certain environments? What makes it difficult to be open about your faith, and what might help you become more confident?

Leader Tips

- Vulnerability from the leader will help open the group here.
- Celebrate small steps toward courage without shaming anyone’s hesitations.

Follow-Up Questions

- *What specific environment makes you most hesitant—work, family, school, social circles?*
- *What do you fear might happen if you spoke more openly about your faith?*
- *What’s one example of a time you did speak up? How did it go?*

4. Jesus offers “living water” that satisfies our deepest thirsts. What are the things you tend to turn to instead of Him when you feel dry, overwhelmed, or spiritually empty?

Leader Tips

- People often answer this surface-level at first; encourage them to go deeper.
- Affirm that these patterns are common and part of discipleship.

Follow-Up Questions

- *What do those substitutes promise you and what do they ultimately fail to deliver?*
 - *What does it usually feel like when you finally turn back to Jesus?*
 - *How can the group pray for you in this area?*
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5. As we move into Advent, what is one practical step you want to take to move closer to being fully committed to Jesus—whether that’s Scripture, prayer, community, serving, or something else?

Leader Tips

- Encourage tangible, realistic, doable steps.
- Use this as a chance to build relational support in the group.

Follow-Up Questions

- *Why did you choose this particular step? What are you hoping it will change?*
 - *What obstacles might get in the way, and how can the group support you?*
 - *Would you like someone to check in with you on this during the week?*
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Additional Leader Notes

1. Create a Safe, Open Environment

Remind the group that honesty is welcome and that doubt or tension doesn’t disqualify anyone—it’s part of the journey.

2. Watch the Tone

If the conversation drifts into debate, politics, or culture wars, gently redirect toward the heart: *How does this affect your walk with Jesus?*

3. Guard Time for Prayer

End by praying specifically for the response each person desires—courage, renewal, repentance, deeper belief.

4. Listen for Pressure Points

If someone shares about significant spiritual struggle or pain, reach out privately later in the week.

5. Encourage Next Steps

Consider asking group members to share their Advent commitment again next week for gentle follow-through.