

Apostles Houston  
Life Group Study: Meditating on God's Word

**Love and Laughter** (~15-25 min)

Creating a Sacred Space

Welcome→ Embrace→ Refresh

**Remembering Our Purpose** (~5 min)

Why Do We Do Life Groups? (*feel free to communicate this in your own words*)

In Acts 2, we read how early Christ followers devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. In Life Groups we follow their example with the hope of becoming more like Jesus, the goal of our salvation.

**Being Known** (~10 min)

Story Telling

We believe that loving God and others begins by being known.

*In 5-7 minutes, what do you want us to know about yourself (~5Hs)?*

Pray and Celebrate

Be sure to honor whatever is good or beautiful about their story, and ask one or two people to pray over those who just shared.

**Following Up** (~5-10 min)

Responding to God's Word

Last week you were encouraged to practice self-examination and the prayer of Examen. How did that go? Did God reveal anything to you?

## Hearing the Word (~35 min)

Hearing: (Read “*Context.*” Pray before beginning the exercise, inviting the group into God’s presence.)

- **Prompt 1:** As we read this passage for the first time, pay attention to the parable. Imagine the scene, sounds, smells, emotions and tensions in the parable and in Jesus’ interactions with his disciples. Notice if God is giving you a word or phrase to focus on. (Read Mark 4:1-9; Pause)
- **Prompt 2:** Now as we read the passage the second time, consider more deeply what is the meaning of this story. What does this story tell you about God? About yourself? (Read Mark 4:1-9; Pause)
- **Prompt 3:** Shift your focus inwardly. Consider the emotions this passage evokes within you. Do you feel joy, sorrow, fear, anger, guilt? Share your feelings with God in quiet prayer. (Read Mark 4:1-9; Pause)
- **Prompt 4:** For the final read through, try to still your mind and actively listen. What is God saying *to you*? How is the Spirit inviting you to respond? (Read Mark 4:1-9; Pause)
- **Reflection on Exercise:** Did God speak to you? What did He say? What is the faithful response? How did you feel God moving in this exercise? Is this something you will try again?
- **Reflections on Scripture Reading as Discipline:** What is the importance of Scripture reading and meditation in the life of a believer? What is difficult about the Bible to you? What are ways we can infuse our lives with the Scriptures?

Obeying:

- After reflecting on God’s word together, this week try practicing *lectio divina* by yourself at least once. Read a passage of your choosing four times, each time listening more attentively to the Spirit’s voice.

## Soul Care (~30 min)

### Prayer Requests

This week, break up into groups of MEN and WOMEN for prayer. Along with sharing prayer needs, create some space for confession. Pray for God’s grace to repent and be healed (Jn 5:16)

## Announcements (~5 min)

- No Life Group meetings next week. Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services at 6:30PM.

## Teacher's Notes

### Context

This week we will try a different exercise in our Life Groups. We will be doing a Bible reading practice called *lectio divina*. This is a repetitive approach to reading where we open ourselves up to the Spirit moving through Scripture. We will read the same passage four (4) times. Each time we will be prompted to reflect deeper and deeper into the passage. This is not an intellectual exercise but a listening exercise—we are attuning our hearts and minds to listen to what the Spirit is saying to us in the present moment through the Scriptures. As we reflect on this passage, open your hearts to the Spirit and seek God's voice speaking to you.

### **Notes for leaders:**

- The study will look a little differently this week. For the first section of the *Hearing the Word* section you will be leading a *lectio divina*. To do this, begin by praying and reading the *Context* which will prompt your group on what to expect. Next, read the entirety of the prompt and then read the passage. Make sure to read the passage deliberately and slowly so everyone has a chance to meditate on what is being read. Now, instead of moving forward, pause for a moment in silence. Give your group about 1 to 2 minutes of silent reflection. After the pause, proceed to the next prompt and repeat the process.
- Lectio Divina Protocol:
  - Read Context
  - Pray for Spirit to quiet hearts and minds
  - Reading:
    - i. Read Prompt
    - ii. Read Passage
    - iii. Pause for 1-2 minutes
  - Repeat "Reading" 3 more times
- After leading your group in the *lectio*, invite them into a time of reflection. Have them share what God spoke to them through this exercise. It's okay if people don't want to share but encourage people to share their experience of hearing God's voice. Next, reflect on the exercise more generally. Discuss if this is something they had done before.
- There are many other ways to read the Bible. One can read the Bible devotionally, have a practice of Scripture memorization, or contextual, historical study. All of these methods center God's Word in our lives through different practices of attention.