

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

PRAY TOGETHER

God, thank You for Your mercy that is new every morning and meets us not with condemnation, but with love and an invitation to draw near. As we discuss today, help us lay down pride, comparison, and the need to prove we are “enough,” so we can honestly receive what You want to show us. Holy Spirit, speak clearly to each of us and convict us where we need to respond with repentance, humility, mercy toward others, or a step of faith. Amen.

ICE BREAKER

What’s a funny or memorable time you realized you “didn’t have enough” of something—like time, patience, coffee, a skill or even “enough monies.”

SERMON OVERVIEW



SCAN FOR
SERMON CLIP



SCAN FOR
SERMON CLIP

This week, Pastor Joseph Antley challenges the congregation to examine where they place their faith—in their own righteous acts or in the mercy of God. Drawing on the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18 where Jesus told the story of two very different men who walked into the temple to pray. One had done everything right by every outward measure. The other had done nearly everything wrong. Yet only one walked away justified before God. The contrast between the Pharisee and the tax collector cuts right to the core of how we approach our faith. We live in a world that rewards performance and scorekeeping, and without realizing it, we bring that same mindset into our relationship with God. We fast, we give, we show up, and then when life falls apart anyway, we are often left confused and shaken because we placed our hope in our own record rather than in who God is. The Pharisee's prayer was filled with the word 'I,' and that one detail reveals everything. When our faith becomes about what we have done rather than what God has done, we have already missed the point. Pastor Joseph reframes mercy not merely as divine restraint from punishment, but as an active, loving embrace from a Father who runs toward his children. The sermon calls the church to stop measuring their standing before God by what they have done right, to release shame and guilt that mercy has already covered, and to become a people marked by extending mercy to others just as freely as they have received it.

READ SCRIPTURE

LUKE 18:9-14, MATTHEW 9:9-13, JAMES 2:12-13
MICAH 7:18-20, EXODUS 34:6, LAMENTATIONS 3:21-24

CONNECT RELATIONALLY

- 1) Have you ever had a moment when you felt like, “I’ve done everything right, so why isn’t this working?” What did that experience reveal to you?
- 2) When Pastor Joseph talked about realizing “I am not enough,” where do you most feel that tension in your own life, or where do you have a tendency to compare yourself to others: relationships, work, parenting, faith, your appearance, or something else?
- 3) The sermon said some people are still “beating their chest” with shame, like the tax collector in Luke 18:13. What past failure, regret, or label do you most need to bring under the mercy of God rather than keep carrying?

GROW SPIRITUALLY

4) The Pharisee was doing many objectively “good” things: fasting, giving, praying, obeying. So what was actually wrong with his approach to God? What had he misunderstood about righteousness and faith? What do you notice about the difference between the Pharisee’s prayer and the tax collector’s prayer?

5) Pastor Joseph connected the Pharisees’ concern for boundaries with their failure to show mercy. How does Jesus’ statement in Matthew 9:13 — “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” — clarify what God values most in His people?

6) The sermon explained the Hebrew word ‘hesed’ as mercy, loving kindness, and steadfast love. How do Micah 7:18 and Exodus 34:6 help expand our understanding of biblical mercy beyond simple restraint from punishment?

LIVE GENEROUSLY

7) The sermon draws a distinction between mercy as mere restraint from punishment and mercy as an active, loving embrace from God. How does your understanding of God’s mercy shape the way you approach him in your moments of failure and shame? What action steps can help you to maintain an appropriate view of God’s mercy and your ability to reflect that towards others?

8) James 2:13 says, “Mercy triumphs over judgment.” Is there someone in your life who may experience more of your frustration, judgment, or boundaries than your mercy? What could it look like to show that person a little more mercy this week?

9) If “I do these things because I love God, not because I need God to love me” became the posture of your life, what is one thing you would do differently?

TAKE ACTION

Based on our conversation today, how do you sense the Holy Spirit inviting you to take a next step in practical application? Please complete this statement, I am feeling convicted to take the following action (keep it simple):

Please invite each group member to share their action step, if they have one.

PRAY TOGETHER

Take a few minutes for each person to share a recent joy or praise, as well as something that’s weighing on their heart and in need of intercession. Invite someone to pray over these requests. Be sure to share them with everyone in the group so you can continue praying for one another throughout the week.

ENGAGE TOGETHER



Serve Finder - Looking for opportunities for yourself or your group to participate in the amazing Kingdom work happening in, around, and through Northview? Serving is a wonderful way to use your gifts and talents, align with God’s plans and purposes, and bring hope to the world. Whether you’re looking for a one-time event or a regular opportunity—within the walls of Northview, in our local communities, or around the world—start with Serve Finder!