

SESSION FOUR: LIFESTYLE (1 hour)

We recommend you read through these notes before leading the session. They are intended to help you understand the purpose and journey of the session, and to help you keep the group focused on the core issues.

OVERVIEW:

The focus of this week's session is understanding how every part of our lives can be lived for God. We recommend getting the group to engage with at least a couple of these core ideas:

- Following Jesus isn't about what we do on Sundays or in our free evenings, but about our whole lives – there is no sacred/secular divide.
- In the new creation all life is service.
- Loving our neighbour will affect our lifestyle choices, because they often have an enormous effect on other people in the world, even those in developing countries who we will never meet.
- Jesus said he is “the **way**, the truth and the life”. Jesus cares about the ‘how’ of our lives, as much as the results.

START (5min):

Watch the vox pop clip. Ask the group to discuss: If someone was to observe you for a week, what areas of your life would they see as being most obviously affected by your faith? Which areas are least affected?

DISCUSS (20min):

Read Luke 3: 1-14 and answer these questions together:

1. John's judgement and criticism is not levelled at the Romans, but at God's own people, the Jews. Why does it matter so much how God's people live?
2. In what way might John's comments to the tax collectors and soldiers be surprising to the crowd?
3. In verse 11 John tells a group of people who aren't well-off to be radically open-handed and generous with what they have (a person with two shirts was hardly rich!). How would you contextualise this teaching for 21st century followers of Jesus?
4. Who benefits from the actions John suggests in verses 11-14? How can our lifestyle choices benefit others in our community, and further afield?

Some thoughts on the questions:

1. *The quotation in the passage from Isaiah ends with the phrase, “And all people will see God’s salvation”. We know that it is God’s desire that everyone should know him and be welcomed into the experience of his salvation. It is the calling of God’s people to make this possible. People begin to experience the love and nature of God through how we live, and it is often this experience that determines whether or not they want to know more.*
2. *Tax collectors and soldiers worked for the Roman Empire – the oppressors – and many Jews would have seen this work as incompatible with being part of God’s people. Yet John sends everyone back to their same homes and jobs telling them to live differently where they are.*
3. *Consumerism and materialism are two of the biggest diseases in the west today. It’s too easy for Christians to be swept up in the same values of the society around us – prioritising possessions and comfort above all else. Can we imagine how we could live another way?*
4. *Is God more interested in making us better people, or making the world a better place? Many people hesitate to make lifestyle changes, such as giving, recycling, political campaigning, buying fair-trade, because they feel that these things don’t make a significant difference. But if God is interested in the kind of people we are becoming, as well as reconciling the whole creation to himself (Col 1:20), we have a double incentive to examine how we live and the influence it has on others.*

WATCH (10 min):

Watch the DVD clip ‘Life Discipleship’ in which Elaine Storkey, Tim Keller and Tom Wright offer their thoughts on living our whole lives for God.

Choose one of the following statements to discuss:

- In our lives before God, there are no sacred/secular splits, no spirit/will splits, but it’s actually all one piece; all of life is service.
- Church isn’t there to box us in; we should be living and worshiping as though the church has no walls.
- ‘Good Work’ is something that we as humans are called to do... when you are bringing order and beauty to God’s world then this has a deep, human, image-of-God resonance.

STORY (10 min):

Watch one of the stories and discuss what it means to live for Jesus in the day-to-day.

- Ruth Valerio – Living out her faith in choices around fair-trade, farming and community participation
- The Entertainer – Gary Grant shares how he runs his business in accordance with his Christian beliefs

REFLECT (Optional Extra):

Watch the DVD clip of Mark Greene talking about mission in the workplace and daily lives. Discuss what he means by: "We participate in Jesus' project, which is to initiate this new era in which we are restoring the world, making it more and more the way he would like it to be".

PRAY (15 min):

Share in pairs the areas of life in which you want to be more distinctive for God. Then, choose one of the following prayers to pray as a group:

1) Reflection by Luis Samacumbi, from the Evangelical Congregational Church in Angola - a Tearfund partner

Oh God, you asked for my hands, that I might use them for your purpose; I gave them for a moment, and then withdrew them, for the work was hard.
You asked for my mouth, to speak out against injustice; I gave you a whisper that I might not be accused. You asked for my eyes, to see the pain of poverty; I closed them, for I did not want to see.

Oh God, forgive me for my calculated efforts to serve you only when it is convenient for me to do so, only in those places where it is safe to do so, and only with those who make it so easy to do so.

Oh God, forgive me, renew me, and send me out as a useable instrument, that I might take seriously the meaning of your cross. Amen.

2) From Engage Worship:

Psalm 16

Keep me safe, O God, I've run for dear life to you. Without you, nothing makes sense.
God, You have made known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness and joy.

Don't just go shopping for a god.

Gods are not for sale. Instead be consumed by 'all-consuming God'.

God, You have made known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness and joy.

My choice is you, God, first and only. And now I find I'm your choice!

You set me up and then you made me your heir.

God, You have made known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness and joy.

The wise counsel God gives when I'm awake is confirmed by my sleeping heart. Day and night I'll stick with God.

God, You have made known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness and joy.

I'm deeply content from the inside out, and from the outside in, I'm firmly formed. You cancelled my ticket to hell - that's not my destination.

God, You have made know to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness and joy.

God, You have made known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness and joy.

Today, I choose to surrender to the love, and walk Your way.

Amen

ACT (5min):

This week's action is about changing how we live in a small way, to benefit someone else. You might have your own ideas of what you should do, but if not, pick one of these:

- GIVE – as an individual or as a group, set aside some money monthly to support a local or international charity you trust.
- SHARE – instead of always buying new equipment, see what you can borrow or lend. Share your need with the group, or join www.streetbank.com to find out who lives locally and needs something.
- DIG – start growing your own vegetables instead of relying on hyper-packaged supermarket produce.
- RECYCLE – find out what your local recycling facilities are and start collecting.
- SHOP FAIR – Only buy fair-trade chocolate, bananas, sugar, and anything else you can find fairly traded. Do your clothes shopping with fair-trade, ethical companies or in charity shops.

More information about all of these options is available at [insert url].

EXTRAS:

Visit the website for extra activities and reading.

Activity:

Ask everyone to fill out the mini-survey on the website, exploring how well you are being equipped to service God in your daily life. You may want to chat to your church leader about areas in which you need further help.

How well do you think you are being equipped to serve God in the following areas?

Church life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Working life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Family life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
In your local community	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
In your leisure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Thought life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Environmentally	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Make a plan of action as a small group to provide teaching, help and encouragement in a life area where you feel you need more help. You may want to chat to your church leader about this.

Inside Out journal – Chapter 4

Suggested further reading

- Mark Greene & Tracy Cotterell, *Let My People Grow* (Authentic)
- Mark Green, *Thank God it's Monday – Ministry in the Workplace* (Scripture Union)
- Julian Hardyman, *Maximum Life* (IVP)
- Krish Kandiah, *Twenty Four: Integrating Faith and Every Day Life*, (Authentic)
- Mark Powley, *Consumer Detox* (Zondervan)
- Ed Silvano, *Anointed for Business*, (Wesley Owen)
- R. Paul Stevens, *Abolishing the Laity* (Authentic)
- Ruth Valerio, *L is for Lifestyle* (IVP)