



Group Leader Guide

“Excellent Environments: Searching For a Mission” - Searching For Me

September 12-13, 2020

Group Creed

We come together as a Group with the goal of Spiritual Formation; encouraging one another to become the same kind of person that Jesus is, so that we can live out every part of our lives inside of His Kingdom.

// Message Summary

Jim Burgen continues the series **Searching For Me** laying out Flatirons’ fourth value: Excellent Environments. Everything we do, and especially how we do it, should be strategic in getting us closer to our mission of bringing the awesome life of Christ to a lost and broken world. This leads us to create environments and opportunities (both physical and digital), as well as remove any obstacles, so that lost and broken people can bump into and experience Jesus for themselves.

// Biblical Background

Teaching with Authority: Jim mentioned that the main compliment of Jesus’ teaching was that He taught with authority, and not as the other teachers (scribes). Examples of this are found in **Matthew 7:29**, **Mark 1:22**, and **Luke 4:32**. This means that for most teachers to gain any credibility, they were to quote other respected teachers and appeal to their higher authority and tradition. Since Jesus could claim no higher authority other than Himself, He did not do this. He taught original thought that did not necessarily adhere to any previous tradition or teaching. As Jim noted, this included His parables, which were tailored to whomever He was speaking to so that they could understand His teaching as easily as possible.

Jesus Angry at Religious Leaders: Jim mentioned that the angriest we ever see Jesus is when someone was getting in the way of people getting closer to God. Examples of what made Him mad included, but were not limited to, religious leaders loading people up with impossible rules and exploiting the poor in the Temple. Here is a list of some of these stories: **Matthew 21:12-13, 23:1-39; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 11:37-54, 19:45-48, 20:45-47; and John 2:13-16.**

Jesus Corrects His Disciples: Jesus also had some words for when His own disciples ventured into similar territory, though not quite as harsh as His words to the religious leaders (though He did call Peter “Satan” once!). He would rebuke His disciples and devoted followers for keeping people away from Him, critiquing His teaching, or for seemingly wasting their resources or time on Him. Examples include **Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 8:31-38, Luke 10:38-42, and John 12:1-8.**

Matthew 16:18 - “Gates of Hades”: In Jesus’ response to Peter’s confession of faith, He states that the “gates of Hades” will not be able to prevail against the church (NIV). Sometimes, as in the KJV and ESV, this is wrongly translated as “hell.” Hades is distinct from hell, however, and can simply represent death or the power of death. In the literal sense, Hades is also a real place that is sort of a “holding area” for lost souls until the end of

time. Hell (a.k.a. “Gehenna” or “lake of fire”) is a place of punishment into which the lost souls in Hades will be thrown when it is “opened” at the end of time (**Revelation 20:14**). It’s all very confusing, and translation discrepancies don’t help! However, the point of what Jesus is saying in **Matthew 16:18** is that the power of death, which figuratively keeps living people in bondage behind its “gates” (since the church exists in the physical world of the living), will not be able to stop the church as it is based on the truth that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (**Matthew 16:16**, ESV).

// In Preparation

Welcome back! And to all the new leaders, welcome! Hopefully, this guide will help you learn a bit more about the background of whatever Bible teaching is going on during the weekend message. This will be a resource for you to gain some context around the text, be able to answer possible questions from your group members, and hopefully learn something new and interesting!

While the weekend message focuses mainly on application to our lives today, this guide aims to help put the Biblical text in the context of what was going on culturally at the time of its writing and give you, the leader, a more complete understanding of the Biblical meaning. It is by no means meant to be a comprehensive study, but merely a resource to help you feel prepared and confident heading into your groups. Also, feel free to send this out to the members of your groups.

This will post to the website every Friday by 5pm before the weekend the relevant message will be given.

The discussion questions for your group are on the following page. The last page contains discussion questions specifically for student ministry groups and parents of students.

Take some time before your first group to pray for each of your members, even if you don’t know them yet. Pray that they will begin to feel safe to open up and share their lives with you and the other people in the group. Pray that God will use you in whatever way He desires to bring the people in your group closer to Him.

// References

Keener, Craig S Ph.d. *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. InterVarsity Press, 2014.

Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. AMG Publishers, 1994.

Myers, J. (2019, May 30). *What is Hades in the Bible? Is it hell?* <https://redeeminggod.com/hades-hell/>



Group Discussion Questions

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// Bible References

Matthew 16:15-18, 5:16; 2 Corinthians 4:15; Philippians 2:9-11

// Message Screenshots

- We exist to serve Jesus.
- We exist to serve lost and broken people who don't know what Jesus actually is offering.
- He taught for their benefit.
- “Does it get us to Japan?”
- Excellent Environments: Creating environments and opportunities as well as removing obstacles so that (lost and broken) people can bump into and experience Jesus for themselves
- For His glory. For their benefit.

// Community Questions

1. Do you have a favorite historical quote or event that has helped shape your life in some way? If so, what is it?

// Core Questions

1. How would you describe the environment of Flatirons?
2. Concerning the environment of Flatirons and how we do things, do you find yourself more concerned about reaching lost and broken people or with how it meets your needs and wants?
3. Read **Romans 14:1**. What “disputable matters” or “opinions” over how things are done do you see in the church today? What does Paul (the author of Romans) say to do with them?
4. Read **Romans 14:13**. While your wants and needs are by no means unimportant, in what ways might they be an obstacle to lost and broken people meeting Jesus?
5. How does the mission of Flatirons to strategically go after lost and broken people, possibly at the expense of stronger Christians' wants and desires, sit with you? Do you understand it? Are you excited about it? Are you angry over it? Why?
6. Would you say that you are living your life in a way that is “For His glory”? How or how not?
7. Would you say that you are living your life in a way that is “For their benefit”? How or how not?



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8. How can you leverage your prayer life, time, talents, and treasure to help fulfill Flatirons' call to be “for His glory and for their (lost and broken people) benefit”?
9. How can this group support you as you look into and apply that?

// Challenge

This week could be hard to digest for some Christians. Human nature dictates that our needs and desires should come above the needs and desires of others. However, Jesus never put His needs and desires above the people He was sent to serve, love, and save. Spiritual growth is becoming more like Jesus. But like any type of growth, spiritual growth has growing pains. Becoming aware of how we have put our needs and desires above others is part of that. So, take some time this week to reflect on this week's discussion questions. Ask God to search you and reveal how you have put yourself before others. Ask Him to reveal how you can re-align your life with His desire to live your life “for His glory and for their benefit.” And then decide if you are willing to do that. Come next week ready to share any new revelations you have had in this area during the week.



Student Group Discussion Questions
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// Parent Questions

1. Is there anything that you are living your whole life for?
2. Are there ways you can incorporate Jesus into that?
3. Do you think that purpose is for anyone beyond yourself or your family?

// Student Questions

1. Have you ever been on a team or group project?
How did you work together for the benefit of the team?
2. What are places you feel safe in, or groups of people you feel safe around?
Do you feel like student ministry is one of those places?
3. Read **Matthew 16:15-18**. When it comes to Jesus, who do you think he is? *(The answer we are pushing the student towards is “Savior”)*
In relation to Jesus, who do you think you are?
4. Read **Matthew 5:16**. What sticks out to you about this passage?
What do you think it means to have Jesus’ light shine through you?
5. What can you do right now to bring glory/worship to God?
6. What can you do right now for the benefit of others?

// Leader Feedback

Please let us know how these questions went over in your Group. Email your answers to caleb_flowers@flatironschurch.com

- What was good?
- What was bad?
- What was confusing?