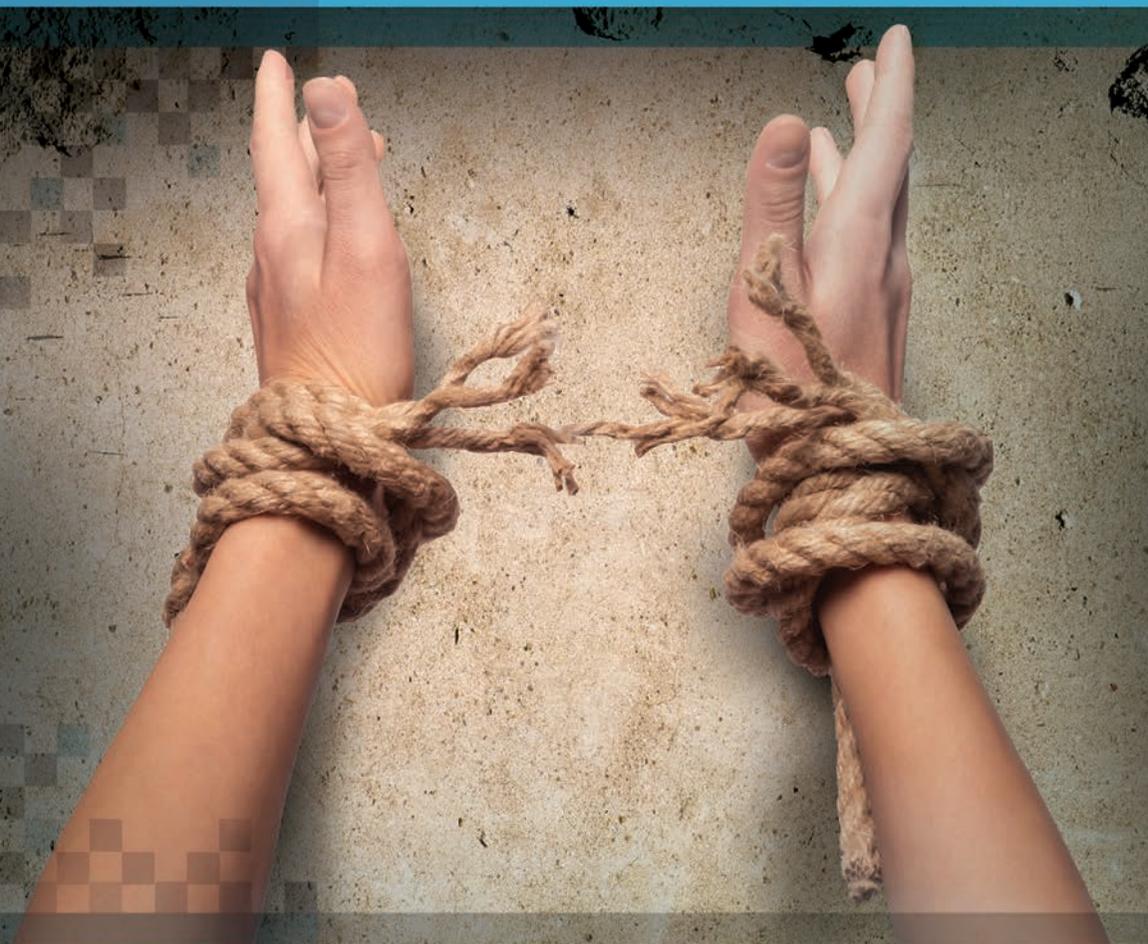


Responding to Grace



Winter
Group Discussion Guide

A thirteen-week
Narrative Bible Study



Sample LifeMosaic Group Discussion Guide

Thank you for your interest in LifeMosaic, a new Bible Study series for adults by Warner Press! LifeMosaic lessons incorporate fresh, throughout-provoking stories, discussion, and activities that invite everyone to get involved and take a deeper look at the Bible.

Why Life Mosaic?

- **LifeMosaic taps into the power of learning through story.** You'll spend each week studying the stories of the Bible, finding connections between them, and exploring where our lives fit into God's eternal redemption story.
- **Lessons use experiential learning to help them really stick.** The suggested activities are designed to engage multiple learning styles so no one gets bored and everyone gets involved.
- **It's easy to use.** The lessons to require very little prep time and can be adapted to different settings, from Sunday School to small groups and more. And because everyone uses the same book, you won't need to purchase a separate leaders guide. In fact, you don't even need a set leader for your study.
- **It studies the whole story of the Bible, along with relevant themes, over the course of each year.** LifeMosaic follows the Narrative Lectionary, so the weekly group lessons and daily individual readings cover the entire scope of the biblical narrative every year, focusing on a major theme of the Bible each quarter. Even if your church doesn't follow the Narrative Lectionary, we think you'll still appreciate how well the structure and themes of the lessons fit together.

Are you ready to help more people engage with Scripture and live out their part in the mosaic of God's eternal story? Then LifeMosaic is what you've been looking for.

Learn more about LifeMosaic at mylifemosaic.org.

Kevin Stiffler, Editor • Mary Jaracz, Layout & Design

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1 Get Acquainted



Take time to introduce everyone in the group if anyone new is joining you this week. Update one another on any prayer requests or life situations that were shared last week. If any group members took the “Conclude” challenge from last week to introduce themselves to those with whom they do not often connect with, take time to share what the experience was like.

- **What place do you consider to be your hometown? Were you born there, did you spend the majority of your childhood there, or something else?** Share this information with the group. If possible, you might plot these hometowns on maps.google.com or on a map sketched on a sheet of paper or whiteboard to get a sense of everyone’s geographical history.
- **What does it feel like when you return to your hometown? What kind of greetings are typically shared with you when you visit? Have the greetings changed over time? What specific places do you visit when you go there (favorite restaurant, park, church, etc.)?** Look for correlations among group members’ experiences of returning home.

Hostile to Freedom

Desired Outcomes

1. To study Jesus’ reading of the Isaiah scroll in the synagogue at Nazareth.
2. To consider why the people of Nazareth responded so strongly and harshly to Jesus.
3. To think about our own response to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Session Key Verse

“And he said, ‘Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown.’” —Luke 4:24

Optional Materials

- Computer with Internet access
- Large sheet of paper and marker, or whiteboard and marker
- *For free digital resources to enhance this lesson, go to www.mylifemosaic.org/resources.*

Sneak Peek

At Nazareth, Jesus proclaimed that he fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, but the people rejected him.

2 Discover



Read and discuss Luke 4:14–30. The commentary section can be used to generate dialogue or for study prior to your meeting.

Luke 4:14–30

Commentary

When Jesus entered his hometown of Nazareth, he had just returned from the southern district of Judea, where he was baptized by his cousin John and faced temptation in the desert. Jesus returned to Nazareth in “the power of the Spirit” (v 14). The fresh manifestation of the Spirit’s power not only signified Jesus’ victory over temptation but also his faithfulness to God, on whom it depended.

On the Sabbath, Jesus attended the synagogue in Nazareth. Synagogues played an important role as places where the traditions of Judaism were taught, and any male member of the synagogue had the right of speech in its assembly. On the occasion described here, Jesus exercised that right. The text does not say whether he requested the Isaiah scroll or that it was simply handed to him unbidden. Nevertheless, he found Isaiah 61:1–2 and read it. This passage would have had an unmistakable meaning in the ears of the men sitting in the synagogue. The Isaiah passage looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, the one who would bring with him the acceptable year of the Lord. Jesus handed the scroll back to the attendant and, without fanfare, simply said, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (v 21).

That Jesus read the Isaiah passage does not in itself account for the hostility directed toward him. The synagogue members may well have anticipated the coming of the “year of the Lord’s favor.” Only after Jesus took the further step of claiming that the scripture had been fulfilled that very day were the hearts of his fellow townspeople stirred against him. To make such a claim was tantamount to a claim to be the “Servant of the Lord” predicted by Isaiah—the Messiah. The people of Nazareth thought they knew Jesus well enough to make a judgment about his claim. Perhaps their familiarity with him and his family bred a little contempt. Jesus recognized this attitude in them when he commented on the honor that prophets often receive everywhere but in their own hometown. Jesus let people think of him what they would.

Jesus’ claim challenged the villagers’ conventional theological wisdom. He was aware of this and quoted to them a proverb that placed him alongside Elijah and Elisha, two prophets who rarely got a fair hearing from Israelites in their day. Jesus’ claim was disturbing for another reason. He referred to episodes from the two prophets’ lives when they ministered to the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian—both Gentiles. This was to declare



Modern-Day Nazareth

that these prophets received a more favorable hearing from non-Israelites, even though it was to Israel that Yahweh had sent them. In making this comparison with past treatment of the prophets, Jesus was telling his fellow villagers that things are always the same in Israel: Yahweh’s people reject

Yahweh’s prophets. This explains why the people of his hometown refused to accept his reading of Isaiah—and their fury with him and his words.¹

Questions

- The previous section of Luke 4 tells about Jesus being in the wilderness for forty days, where he faced temptation from the Devil. Luke says that Jesus then returned to his hometown “filled with the power of the Spirit” (v 14). **What might this power have looked like and felt like on Jesus? How could the previous temptation have played a part?**
- Jesus healed all sorts of people and preached that all are welcome to become God’s children. Look at Isaiah 61:1–2 and the surrounding verses to get some context for the passage Jesus read in the synagogue. **Even though God’s inclusiveness of Gentiles was not a new idea in Jesus’ day, why was it so difficult for the Jews to hear? Why would they reject Jesus?**
- Jesus anticipated that the people would ask him to perform miracles for them like he had done elsewhere. **Why do you think Jesus’ miracles were “limited” in his hometown of Nazareth?**
- Attempting to throw Jesus off a cliff was a violent response. **How could things have turned so quickly from verse 22, which says that “all spoke well of [Jesus] and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth”?**

1. Adapted from Merle Stregge, *Bible Backgrounds: Explanatory Notes on the Bible* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 2006).

3 Experience



Option 1

Luke tells us this story not in summary, but in real-time narrative. The time it takes to read through the event is pretty much how long it would have taken to occur, with some extra time allowed for the people to drag Jesus up to the cliff. Have three participants read Luke 4:14–30 aloud—one as the voice of narrator, one as the voice of Jesus, and one as the voice of the people in the synagogue. Picture the events and interactions taking place as the story is read.

- **What do you notice about the relationship between Jesus and the people during this event?**
- **What sorts of moods and tensions are present, and when and how do they change?**
- **What other things stand out to you as you read the passage this way?**

Option 2

Create a visual slideshow to help imagine the context of Jesus delivering this message. Using www.pinterest.com or images.google.com, search for pictures of the Synagogue Church in Nazareth, temple scrolls, the Nazareth landscape, and other images that help to fill in the story. Place all of these images in a slideshow or PowerPoint as a compilation illustrating the setting in Nazareth and the synagogue in Jesus' day.

4 Apply



Spend some time in quiet reflection as you consider your responses to the following questions. Share your thoughts with the rest of the group as you are comfortable and willing.

Have you ever had a strong negative internal response to including someone or a group of people? When? Why?

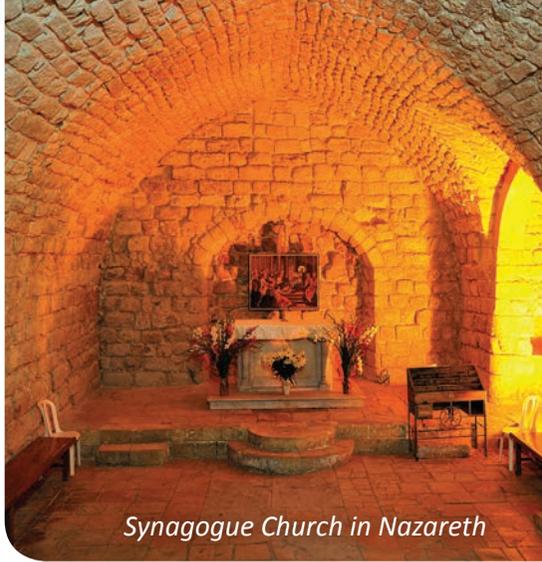
In your own words, describe whom you believe the gospel message is for. Who is included? Who should hear?

If you can recall, what was your first response to hearing the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ?

Based on Jesus' reading from Isaiah and your own knowledge of the Old Testament, how do you see the story of God woven through Scripture and time?

In those times when you can't clearly see God at work, what is your response to God? Do you look for a miracle? What kind of proof do you seek that God is real and active?

Who are you in this story—a rejecter or a believer? Why?



Conclude



When Jesus returned to Nazareth and read in the synagogue, proclaiming that he fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy, the people asked, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” (4:22). Jesus acknowledged that prophets are not welcome in their hometown. When we have grown up in the presence of people and they have labeled us in a particular way, it is hard to change their perception to reflect who we have become. It may be difficult for them to view us as living a new, adult life in Christ.

Think back on what you have studied and discussed today and on the changes God is bringing about in your life. Fill in the following blanks to indicate how you might introduce yourself upon a return to your hometown or a move to a new town:

Hi, my name is _____. You used to call me _____. You may remember that I used to _____, but now I _____. I want to be remembered for _____.

Share your response with the group, then conclude your time together in prayer. Ask God for the faith and the perception to sense his presence and work, and that others would see him at work in your own life.

Daily Bible Readings Week 7

Sunday

Luke 4:14–30
Hostile to Freedom

Monday

Luke 4:31–37
An Unclean Spirit

Tuesday

Luke 4:38–39
Peter’s Mother-in-Law Healed

Wednesday

Luke 4:40–44
Healings and Casting Out Demons

Thursday

Isaiah 61:1–3
The Spirit of the Lord

Friday

1 Kings 17:8–16
Elijah Helps a Widow

Saturday

2 Kings 5:1–14
Elisha Heals Naaman

Notes

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Scope & Sequence 2016–2017

LifeMosaic lessons follow a four-year cycle of Scripture readings that cover the overarching biblical story each year, from Creation through the early Christian church. Below are the texts, lesson titles, and major themes that will be studied in 2016-2017.

Narrative Bible Curriculum

WINTER 2016-2017—RESPONDING TO GRACE

Unit I: God Gives Grace

Week 1	Joel 2:12–13, 28-29	Return and Find Compassion
Week 2	Isa 61:1–11	God's Grace Restores
Week 3	Luke 1:26–45	God's Unexpected Gift
Week 4	Luke 2:8–20 (Christmas)	Praising God for Grace
Week 5	Luke 2:21–38	The Ultimate Gift

Unit II: Responses to Jesus, Part 1

Week 6	Luke 3:1–22	Called to Justice
Week 7	Luke 4:14–30	Hostile to Freedom
Week 8	Luke 5:1–11	All In for Jesus
Week 9	Luke 6:1–16	Rejection & Acceptance

Unit III: Responses to Jesus, Part 2

Week 10	Luke 7:1–17	Compelling Faith
Week 11	Luke 7:18–35	He's the One!
Week 12	Luke 7:36–50	Great Love
Week 13	Luke 9:28–45	The Inspiration of Hope

SPRING 2017—LUKE: SALVATION, PRAISE, AND SACRIFICE

Unit I: Finding New Life

Week 1	Luke 10:25–42	Stop, Look, & Listen
Week 2	Luke 13:1–9, 31–35	Time Runs Out
Week 3	Luke 15:1–32	Lost and Found
Week 4	Luke 16:19–31	Helping the Helpless
Week 5	Luke 18:31–19:10	New Sight

Unit II: Praise & Adoration

Week 6	Luke 19:29–44 (Palm Sunday)	Praise on Palm Sunday
Week 7	Luke 24:1–12 (Easter)	The Righteous Shall Live
Week 8	Luke 24:13–35	Sorrow Turned to Joy

Unit III: Christ Died for All

Week 9	Acts 6:1–7:2a, 44–60	Forgiveness of Persecutors
Week 10	Acts 8:26–39	Opening the Scriptures
Week 11	Acts 15:1–18	Light to the Gentiles
Week 12	Gal 1:13–17; 2:11–21	Justified by What?
Week 13	Gal 3:1–9, 23–29	Unity in Christ

SUMMER 2017—A DIVERSITY OF PRAISE

Unit I: Songs of Praise

Week 1	Acts 2:1–4; Gal 4:1–7 (Pentecost)	Provision of the Holy Spirit
Week 2	Ps 100	Entering with Praise
Week 3	Ps 13	How Long, O Lord?
Week 4	Ps 23	The Lord Is My Shepherd
Week 5	Ps 30	Joy Comes in the Morning
Week 6	Ps 150	Strike Up the Band

Unit II: Unity in Diversity

Week 7	Eph 1:1–14	The Blessings of Redemption
Week 8	Eph 2:11–22	Unity in Christ
Week 9	Eph 4:1–16	One Body, One Spirit
Week 10	Eph 6:10–20	The Armor of God

Unit III: The Grand Finale

Week 11	Rev 4:1–11	Come Up Here!
Week 12	Rev 5:1–13	Worthy Is the Lamb
Week 13	Rev 6:1–8; 7:9–17	Salvation from Our God

FALL 2017—CREATED TO SERVE GOD

Unit I: God at Work for the Good

Week 1	Rev 22:1–5, 12–21	Back to the Beginning
Week 2	Gen 1:1–2:4a	God's Good Creation
Week 3	Gen 21:1–3; 22:1–14	A Tough Test
Week 4	Gen 27:1–4, 15–23; 28:10–17	Blessed in Spite of Himself

Unit II: God at Work through People

Week 5	Ex 2:23–25, 3:10–15; 4:10–17	What's in a Name?
Week 6	Ex 16:1–18	Food from Above
Week 7	1 Sam 3:1–21	Called as a Boy
Week 8	1 Sam 16:1–13; Psalm 51:10–14	Matters of the Heart
Week 9	1 Kings 5:1–5; 8:1–13	God's Home
Week 10	1 Kings 19:1–18	In God's Presence

Unit III: God's Expectations

Week 11	Amos 1:1–2; 5:14–15, 21–24	Justice and Righteousness Exalted
Week 12	Isa 9:1–7	Eternal Light
Week 13	Rev 5:1–13	Bloom Where You Are Planted

You're invited...

God's invitation to his people is to return to him, and the path to God is open to us today through Jesus. Some have reacted to Jesus Christ with rejoicing and acceptance, others with scoffing and offense. How will we respond to this greatest of gifts?

This 13-week study covers the birth and life of Christ and how it fits into the broader story of the Bible. Go deeper in your study with experiential learning activities that bring a greater understanding to the Scriptures and real life application for your whole group.

Use all of your senses to learn and live God's Word in your life. Act out the story. Listen to a song. Watch a video. Hear God speak. Taste the fruit of fellowship and study the Bible with others. This is LifeMosaic. This is how our stories fit into God's eternal redemption story.

How do I use LifeMosaic?



This book contains all the information your group will need for each week of study. No leader's guide is needed. In addition to one of these books per person, your group just needs Bibles and a place to meet. Any extra materials required for activities are easy to find or may be items you already have on hand.



If your group has a leader, the leader can review the desired outcomes, Bible verses, and lesson ahead of time and choose the discussion questions and activities that will work best for your group. If your group doesn't have a leader, you can read through the lesson together when you meet.



Go through the lesson and activities together as a group. We also have free bonus resources for your lessons at mylifemosaic.org/resources.



During the week, complete the Daily Bible Readings to understand the context of the group lessons. Daily and weekly readings are taken from the Narrative Lectionary.

Find free bonus resources for your lessons and sign up for the latest news about upcoming LifeMosaic studies at mylifemosaic.org.



We hope you enjoy LifeMosaic. For kids, be sure to check out Speed Sketch, our new interactive curriculum that brings essential Bible stories to life. speedsketch.warnerpress.org