

Tips and Tricks:

The sermon notes are designed to be used as a guide for discussion. Don't feel like you have to use every question. Some questions will take a while to work through and others will be over in a few seconds.

1. Don't teach the lesson. The sermon was just preached. Just ask the questions and let everyone else talk.
2. Let other people ask questions. It's OK to go "off topic" for a while. Sometimes those conversations are more interesting anyway!
3. Have fun. Don't forget to laugh and crack up. Relationships, not curriculum, are the heartbeat of our ministry. Remember: We have to build a relational bridge strong enough to hold the truth!

Agenda for Group Time

1. Ice Breaker - Lighthearted ice breaker question (10 minutes)
2. Discussion - Bible study, sharing and application. (25 Minutes)
3. Prayer - Pray together (5 minutes)
4. Planning - Remember to talk about what's coming up.

Icebreaker: Have you ever misunderstood someone's criticism of you at first, but later realized they were actually trying to help you?

Read John 15:17-16:4

Context: In our relationship with Jesus, we are told to abide in His love (vv1-11); in our relationship with one another, we are called to love one another (12-17); in our relationship with the world, we are told to anticipate hatred (vv18-16:4)

1. Who is Doing the Hating?

Question: What are some ways in which the Bible talks about "the world?"

Question: What are some of the characteristics that Jesus gives to describe "the world" in this passage?

Discussion: In the modern west, we live in an era that is still very concerned about morality (consider: cancel culture, political correctness, the value of equality, the importance of justice). Why is it important to recognize both the influence of Christianity on culture and the ongoing opposition to Jesus? How can we be both thankful for the impact of the Christian tradition on our culture while also being critical of the world?

Discussion: How does it challenge our assumptions to realize that many of the people who rejected Jesus were religious and morally serious people?

Discussion: At root, what is the reason that our hearts are experience tension and hostility towards Jesus?

Discussion: Have you ever experienced tension or criticism because of your faith in Jesus? What was that like?

3. God's Response to the World and Our Response to the World

Question: Dick Lucas told the story of the delivery boy who responded to criticism by saying, "I don't want to be posh." What did he mean by that?

Discussion: It is always uncomfortable when someone reveals something in our life that must change — that cannot stay the same. What are the areas of our life where we find Jesus calling us out and provoking us to change?

Discussion: What was the original context of John 3:16-17? How does that impact our reading of that famous verse?

"You are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world." (v19)

Discussion: How does remembering that God chose us in kindness and grace change the way we think about people who don't yet believe?

"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning."

Discussion: What are some ways we can respond poorly to opposition or criticism?

Discussion: Why do you think Jesus focuses on bearing witness to Him instead of trying to win arguments or gain cultural approval? What place do these have in the ways we engage non-believers?

Discussion: How does the Holy Spirit give believers confidence and courage when they face hostility for their faith?

In Closing: Before prayer requests, take several minutes to pray:

- thank God for His faithfulness to His people in the midst of a world that is hostile to Jesus
- to ask the Lord that the Lord would deepen our love for Jesus
- to increase our faith and reliance upon His Spirit
- for courage to faithfully and lovingly bear witness to Him
- that He would soften hearts of those who do not know Him.

Maybe go around the room with one person taking one of these items each