Small Group Leader Guide: Luther’s Five Favorite Verses

Week Three

Matthew 11:28-30

Faith Alone

*15 minutes*  **Social Time**. Fellowship time is important! Plus people do it anyway.

*15 minutes*  **Opening**.

* Welcome everyone.
* Remind the group of the three parts of the PTA prayer model: Praise, Thank, Ask. Pray the opening prayer using that model, using a prayer you pray either spontaneously or that you have written out in advance in the space below:
* **Check in.** Going around the room, remind each person in turn of what they said they were going to do at the end of the last session. Ask “How did that go?”
* Ask the following **Launching Questions**:
  + What do we have to do in order to have our sins forgiven?
  + How does your “soul find rest” when times are tough?
  + Have you ever felt like you were not worthy of God’s love? If you feel comfortable, please share why and what happened.

*45 minutes*  **Discussion**.

* Ask for a volunteer to read the theme verse for this session, Matthew 11:28-30, which is at the top of their handouts.
* Watch the sermon from May 7. Participants make notes on their Small Group Handout.
* Discussion questions (see page 2-3)

*15 minutes* **Closing**.

* Ask everyone to share their answer to the Two Questions, “What has God been doing in your life in the past week?” and “What are you going to do about it?” Record the answers.
* Before the closing prayer, ask the group “What are the three parts of the PTA prayer?” Say “I am now going to close us in prayer using this model. Would anyone like to volunteer lead the opening or closing prayer next week? You may prepare it in advance if you wish.” If no one volunteers, that’s OK. Close using the PTA model either spontaneously, or praying what you wrote out in advance in the space below:

Small Group Discussion Handout

Week Three: Faith Alone

Matthew 11:28-30 (New Living Translation)

*28 Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”*

1. Write down your thoughts and observations from the bible study and the sermon. Share them with the group for discussion.
2. Key words are those which, because of emphasis or repetition, stand out as being central to the message of the passage. What are some keywords or phrases in this passage?
3. For Lutherans, faith is not the means by which we achieve salvation. Instead, faith is the instrument that receives the gifts of forgiveness and salvation. What’s the difference?
4. [John Calvin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Calvin), another Reformation leader, taught that "every one who would obtain the righteousness of Christ must renounce his own." What does this mean?
5. Do you think that being a Christian makes you feel more or less guilt than you would otherwise? In what ways is that difference good or bad?
6. Martin Luther taught that we are “justified by God’s grace apart from the works of the law.” This means that our forgiveness is solely because of our faith, and not because we confess our sins or ask forgiveness. In fact, he specifically stated that confession is not required for forgiveness. How does it make you feel to know that God forgives us solely because of our faith, regardless of whether or not we confess our sins?
7. Do you find the yoke of Jesus easy? Do you find his burden light? Why or why not?
8. Luther wrote in the Large Catechism: “(Jesus) invites us … with the greatest kindness, as when He says in Matthew 11:28: Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Now it is surely a sin and a shame that He so cordially and faithfully summons and exhorts us to our highest and greatest good, and we act so distantly with regard to it, and permit so long a time to pass … that we grow quite cold and hardened, so that we have no inclination or love for it.” How can we better accept the grace God offers us?
9. In what ways should being a Christian make your life better or worse? Is that what happens? Why or why not?
10. The Two Questions

This is what God has been doing in my life over the past week: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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This is what I’m going to do about it: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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