

Life Group Discussion Guide  
Finding Your Place In The Game  
The Sandlot  
July 19 and 20, 2025

**Romans 15:5-7 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup>May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup>Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

**Question #1**

*"If the perfect, sinless Son of God was willing to bring sinners into God's family, how much more should forgiven believers be willing to warmly embrace and accept each other in spite of their disagreements over issues of conscience?" (John MacArthur) As Benny frequently involved Smalls into the game of baseball, do you find yourself doing this to and for strangers? Why or why not?*

**Romans 14:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup>As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.

**Acts 9:26-27 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup>And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. <sup>27</sup>But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

**Question #2**

*"We all need connection and we all need acceptance, and we all need true friendship" (Pastor T.K. Anderson). The word welcome is in both **Romans 15:7** and **Romans 14:1**. In these contexts, the Greek word, προσλαμβάνω (proslambano) means to extend a welcome, receive into one's home or circle of acquaintances. How willing are you to go out of your way, like Barnabas (the son of encouragement) did with Paul in **Acts 9**?*

**Luke 6:27-31(ESV)**

<sup>27</sup>"But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup>bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. <sup>29</sup>To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. <sup>30</sup>Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who

takes away your goods do not demand them back. <sup>31</sup>And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

### Question #3

The essence of being a disciple (a *follower*) of Jesus, is to *do* those things which prove we are like Jesus. Notice in the above text that *loving* our enemies is about *doing* good (v. 27), both *blessing* and *praying for* others (v. 28), *offering* our other cheek and *not withholding from* others (v. 29), *giving* and *not being* one who demands a gift back (v. 30), and finally *doing to* others what we would have them do to us (v. 31). Explore the *doing* nature of discipleship in your own walk with Christ.

### Luke 19:5-7 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup>And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." <sup>6</sup>So he hurried and came down and received Him joyfully. <sup>7</sup>And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."

### 1 Timothy 4:12 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup>Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

### 1 Corinthians 11:1 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup>Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

### Question #4

"Someone needs to be invited in... You could be the very someone who *changes their story*" (Pastor T.K. Anderson). Benny noticed Smalls, even when the other boys on the field did not. Jesus noticed Zacchaeus (**Luke 19**), Paul encouraged Timothy to set an example for others to follow also (**1 Timothy 4**). Who are those in your life you are striving to set an example for? Are you being intentional right now to live a life that can be followed?

### Proverbs 18:24 (ESV)

<sup>24</sup>A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

**Matthew 12:48-50 (ESV)**

<sup>48</sup>But He replied to the man who told Him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?”

<sup>49</sup>And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>50</sup>For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.”

**Question #5**

Perhaps many of us live in a city away from the family in which we grew up. Even if we have the ability to reach out and have our family respond, in many instances what we really need is a *sibling in the faith* to help us. Can you think of times in your life when you needed spiritual direction, prayer, and support from those believers who were close by? How meaningful to you was their encouragement and love?

**Galatians 6:7-10 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup>Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

<sup>8</sup>For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. <sup>9</sup>And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup>So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

**1 Timothy 4:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup>For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

**Question #6**

The focus of this question is on the word *especially*...The Greek word is μάλιστα (*malista*), which contextually means *to an unusual degree, most of all, above all, especially, particularly, (very) greatly*.<sup>1</sup> Classically understood, evangelism is primarily geared towards the proclamation of the gospel to those who do not know Christ. While discipleship is the training up of those who *now* believe. While it is important to reach the world for Christ, wrestle with the amount of time and effort you put forth in growing those *already in* Christ. Are you loving them *to an unusual degree*? Are you loving them *most of all*?

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<sup>1</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 613.

### **John 15:13-15 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup>Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

### **James 2:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup>and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God.

### **Romans 6:17-18,22 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup>But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, <sup>18</sup>and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness...<sup>22</sup>But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

#### **Question #7**

The linchpin in the **John 15** text above is **verse 14**. Our being *called* a friend of God is conditional upon one thing: Obedience. Even Abraham was called a friend, but the reason? Because he was *faithful*; he *believed*. Scripturally speaking, believing has always meant more than just mental assent to the truth. Wrestle, if you will, with the texts above, where we might be *called* friends, but *are* slaves of God/Christ. Again, reflect upon the fact that our being friends of God require we do what He *commands* (**John 15:14**).

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## Five-Day Devotional

### Day 1: First Base

Scripture: Read **John 1:12**

<sup>12</sup>But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, (NASB)

It may be politically incorrect to say we all are not children of God, but the Bible is clear that God's children are only those who *believe* and *receive* Him. Life is more than a game, but using baseball as an analogy, first base is coming to the knowledge of the truth: Acceptance of God on His terms.

Reflection: If you do not have a relationship with God, pray your own prayer, along these lines. *Lord, today, I admit I am a sinner in need of You. I repent of all my sins; I know my sin has kept me apart from You. I know there is no heaven for me unless I give my life up entirely to You. I believe the Bible when it says You died for my sins on the Cross and then conquered death by resurrecting. I believe! Lord please save me!*

## Day 2: Second Base

Scripture: Read **John 3:16**

<sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (NASB)

In keeping the theme of baseball, even though day one emphasized belief (as does day two), the distinction is that day one stressed God's terms, this day stresses God's love.

Reflection: O how magnificent is God to love us with such a great love! (**Ps. 8:1**). As I go around the bases of life, help me to never forget Your love which influences my belief every step of the way!

## Day 3: Third Base

Scripture: Read **Romans 6:21-23**

<sup>21</sup>But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup>even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (NASB)

Another essential element in our salvation and development as believers is to acknowledge our nature as sinners, our failures to live up to God's standard, and our tendencies to go astray. We must believe *and* repent.

Reflection: LORD God, help me to never forget that You require that I let go of the past if I am to move forward in life with You (**Mk. 1:14-15**). And now that I am saved, I continuously relinquish any and every vestige of my former life. I repent over and over again; and believe again and again.

## Day 4: Home Plate

Scripture: Read **1 Corinthians 3:12-15**

<sup>12</sup>Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup>each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. <sup>14</sup>If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup>If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (NASB)

The goal may be salvation, and to love God all the way through life, but the reality is that we are in a fallen, sinful state. When the time comes, we will all stand before Christ, even with some baggage that remains from our former lives...

Reflection: I thank Thee, Lord, that when I stand before You, it will not be for judgment, but for rewards! Even so, Lord Jesus, let Your will be done; strip away from me all things that did not honor You. And thank You again, for receiving me, despite myself!

## Day 5: Extra Innings

Scripture: Read **Revelation 11:1-3**

<sup>1</sup>Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. <sup>2</sup>Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. <sup>3</sup>And I will grant *authority* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." (NASB)

When the end comes, and the scrolls are ready to be rolled up, and God's representatives (the Two Witnesses) have been abused and murdered, only to then be resurrected. Their last act is to still show the love of God by prophesying to those who still do not yet know the love of God.

Reflection: Holy Father, please help me to express the depths of Your love, and the extent You are willing to go, even at the end of the Age, to bring in yet more and more people. To Your Name be the honor, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.