
Life Group Leaders' Guide: The Great Invitation: Serving Others

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin your time together with prayer, asking God to open your eyes to the quiet invitations He is placing before you. Ask Him to help you see the people and places where He is calling you to serve, especially in the ordinary and unnoticed moments of life. Pray that He would reveal where you may be seeking recognition, validation, or control instead of simply serving from love for Him.

Ask God to free you from the need to be seen by others and to deepen your trust that He sees, knows, and rewards what is done in secret. Pray that He would give you humility, generosity, and courage to obey even in small things. Ask Him to form you more into the image of Christ, who served faithfully, loved sacrificially, and lived fully surrendered to the Father.

Worship Song Suggestions (10 minutes)

"Available" — Elevation Worship

"Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me" — CityAlight

"Take My Life and Let It Be" — Traditional / modern versions

"The Servant King" — Graham Kendrick

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Question: Who is someone "behind the scenes" in your life who has made a big impact on you? This could be a parent, teacher, coach, friend, mentor, or someone who served quietly.

Key Scripture Passages

This week's message from Colossians 3:1–4:

"Set your hearts on things above... For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." This is the central scripture for the message: living a hidden life with Christ rather than seeking recognition from people.

Key Takeaways (5 minutes)

- God is El Roi -- the God who sees. He sees every act of faithfulness, from the grand to the mundane, and he rewards them.
- Jesus warns against performing our righteousness for others. When human applause is the reward we seek, that applause is all we will receive.
- Our lives are meant to be hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). The more we die to our need for validation, the more Christ is revealed through us.

- Serving is not seasonal. The shape of our service may change, but we never stop serving.
 - Faithful, consistent obedience in small things is the soil from which lasting fruit grows.
 - God does some of his most important work precisely where no cameras are rolling and no one is watching.
-

Discussion Questions

Open up the Conversation (10–15 Minutes)

Take a few minutes to get everyone talking before diving into the deeper content.

1. Have you ever heard of Albert McCacken before this sermon? When you heard his story, what was your initial reaction? Did it challenge or encourage you?
 2. Pastor Mark asked: "Why is it that I need people's validation?" Take a moment to sit with that question. How would you answer it honestly?
-

Going Deeper (15–20 Minutes)

3. In Matthew 6, Jesus says that those who give publicly to be seen by others have already received their reward in full. What does that tell us about the difference between earthly validation and heavenly reward? Which one do you find yourself chasing more often?
 4. In the sermon, Pastor Mark described a tension between Matthew 5:16, where Jesus tells us to let our light shine before others, and Matthew 6:1–4, where he warns against practicing righteousness to be seen. How do you personally navigate that tension in your own life?
 5. Colossians 3:3 says that your life is hidden with Christ in God. What does it mean to you practically that your life is "hidden" in Christ? How does that change the way you think about serving without recognition?
 6. Pastor Mark said: "The more secrets you have with the Lord, the more it tells you that you are so secure in his validation." Do you have secrets with God moments of obedience or service that only he knows about? What does it feel like to keep those things between you and him?
 7. Burnout was described as often rooted not in overwork but in thanklessness doing good without receiving gratitude. Have you experienced that? How does fixing your eyes on God as the one who sees and rewards change your relationship to burnout?
 8. In the sermon, Pastor Mark said: "It is easier for us to do projects of love than it is to become people of love." What is the difference between those two things in your own life?
-

Personal Reflection (10–15 Minutes)

9. Where in your life right now are you serving faithfully in ways that feel invisible or unnoticed? How does it feel to hear that heaven takes notice of those moments?
 10. Pastor Mark described a pattern of: "Faithful, faithful, faithful, faithful fruit." Where in your life do you need to recommit to faithful, unglamorous obedience while trusting God for the fruit in his timing?
-

Practical Applications (10 minutes)

This Week, Choose One or More of the Following:

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice this week before your group meets again.

- **Serve anonymously.** Do something kind or generous for someone without telling anyone, not even close friends or family. Let it be a secret between you and God.
 - **Audit your motivations.** Before your next act of service or generosity, pause and ask yourself honestly: Who am I doing this for? Bring whatever you find to God in prayer.
 - **Pray for attentiveness.** Ask God each morning this week to show you one small, mundane opportunity to serve someone around you. Then take it when it comes.
 - **Write it down.** Keep a private journal this week of small acts of faithfulness things only God saw. At the end of the week, read it back as a prayer of gratitude.
 - **Encourage a hidden servant.** Think of someone in your life or church community who serves faithfully behind the scenes without recognition. Reach out and specifically honor what you have seen in them.
 - **Show up on October 4th.** Pray and ask God where he wants you to serve during the community outreach day. Come ready to serve without needing to be seen doing it.
-

Closing Reflection (5 minutes)

Close your group time by praying together. You may use this as a guide:

Lord, we ask You to hide us in You. Prune out of us the need to be seen, applauded, or validated by the people around us. Remind us that You are El Roi, the God who sees every quiet act of faithfulness, every prayer prayed in private, every sacrifice made in secret. Help us to serve not for an audience of many but for an audience of one. And when you choose to reveal your glory through our lives, may people see us attached to You. Amen.

Additional Discussion Questions to Choose From

Albert McCacken never preached a sermon or served as a missionary, yet one invitation to Billy Graham's tent revival helped influence hundreds of thousands of people to faith. What does this reveal about how God measures a life's significance?

Pastor Mark distinguishes between doing good deeds for public recognition and allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal them naturally. How do you discern the difference between Spirit-led visibility and self-promotion in your own acts of service?

Hagar named God "El Roi," the God who sees, after encountering Him in one of the most desperate moments of her life in Genesis 16. How does believing that God sees your hidden faithfulness change the way you approach everyday obedience?

Pastor Mark describes the tension between Matthew 5:14–16, which calls believers to let their light shine before others, and Matthew 6:1–4, which warns against practicing righteousness to be seen. How do you hold these two truths together in your daily life?

Pastor Mark suggests that the leading cause of burnout in service is not overwork, but a lack of gratitude or validation from others. How might grounding your sense of reward in God rather than human approval transform your ability to serve without growing weary?

Paul writes in Colossians 3:3 that our lives are hidden with Christ in God, meaning that as we hide ourselves in humble service, Christ is revealed through us. What would it look like practically for your life to become so intertwined with Christ that people see him before they see you?

Pastor Mark challenges the congregation by asking whether they have secrets with God -- moments of faithful obedience that only God witnessed and suggests that the quantity of those secrets reflects the depth of security in his validation; how secure are you in God's approval, and what does your answer reveal about where you are truly seeking affirmation?

Pastor Mark argues that serving is not a seasonal task and that while the how and when of service changes by season, the call to serve never stops. Are there areas of your life where you have quietly retired from service, and what would it take to re-engage in those areas?

Tyler Staton is quoted as saying it is easier to do projects of love than to become a person of love. What is the difference between those two realities, and which one more accurately describes where you currently are in your spiritual formation?

Pastor Mark closes with the image of God saying 'well done, good and faithful servant' rather than affirming titles or accomplishments. What would it mean for you to reorient your ambitions and daily decisions around hearing those specific words at the end of your life?

Leader Notes

- This message touches themes that can feel deeply personal: feeling unseen, craving validation, serving with mixed motives, pride, humility, spiritual performance, burnout, family responsibilities, generosity, loneliness, hidden obedience, comparison, disappointment, and the desire for our lives to matter. Create a safe space where people can talk honestly about both the beauty and the difficulty of serving without being shamed, corrected too quickly, or pressured to “do more.”
- A helpful direction for the discussion: move from “Who sees me?” to “God sees me”; from needing applause to trusting the Father’s reward; from public performance to private faithfulness; from building our own name to hiding our lives in Christ; and from chasing big impact to obeying God in small, ordinary acts of love. The goal is not to make people feel guilty for not serving enough. The goal is to help people see that Jesus invites us into a hidden life of faithful love where God sees, God knows, and God rewards.
- Keep bringing the conversation back to the message’s central truth: the Father sees what is done in secret. Hidden service is not wasted service. Small obedience matters in the kingdom of God. A prayer, a meal, a visit, a quiet gift, a forgiven debt, a faithful act of parenting, a loving word, or an unseen sacrifice can create ripple effects far beyond what we can measure.
- Be careful not to let the discussion become a comparison between “public ministry” and “hidden ministry.” The point is not that visible ministry is bad or that people should hide their gifts. Jesus says both, “Let your light shine” and “Do not practice your righteousness to be seen by others.” Help the group see the heart issue: Are we serving for God’s glory or for our own recognition? Are we willing to be faithful even when nobody applauds?
- Also be mindful that some people may feel unseen in painful ways. Single parents, caregivers, spouses carrying heavy burdens, people in thankless jobs, volunteers who have burned out, or those who have served without appreciation may hear this message through exhaustion. Do not minimize that pain. Remind them that God is not unjust; He does not forget their work and the love they have shown Him by serving others.
- A helpful emphasis: hiddenness is not invisibility to God. Biblical hiddenness does not mean “you do not matter.” It means your life is safe in Christ. It means you do not have to manufacture recognition, prove your worth, or turn your obedience into a personal marketing campaign. God sees the secret place, the mundane place, the ordinary place, and He delights in faithful obedience.
- Encourage the group to consider motives gently. Most of us have mixed motives when we serve. We may genuinely want to love people and also want to be noticed. That does not mean we should quit serving; it means we can invite Jesus to purify our hearts. The question is not, “Are my motives perfect?” but, “Am I willing to let God form me into a person of love?”

5-Day Devotional: Hide and See: A Life Hidden with Christ

Day 1: The God Who Sees You

Reading: Genesis 16:6-14 — The passage where Hagar, alone and desperate, encounters God in the wilderness and receives the name El Roi, meaning "the God who sees."

Devotional:

It is easy to believe God watches over nations, movements, and great events while overlooking the ordinary details of your life. But Hagar was a servant woman, forgotten by the powerful and displaced by circumstance, and God found her at a well in the wilderness. He saw her pain before she spoke a word. He named her son before he was born.

The same God who holds the cosmos together narrows his gaze to you, in your particular struggle, on your ordinary Tuesday. You are not invisible to heaven. Every quiet act of faithfulness, every prayer whispered in exhaustion, every moment you chose to keep going, He saw all of it. Let that truth settle into the places where you have felt unseen and unappreciated. El Roi is your God too.

Reflection:

In what area of your life have you felt most invisible or overlooked? How does knowing God sees that specific place change how you carry it today?

Application:

Write down one hidden act of faithfulness from the past week that no one acknowledged. Offer it to God in prayer, trusting that he saw it and honors it.

Day 2: Serving for an Audience of One

Reading: Matthew 6:1-6 — Jesus instructs his followers not to practice righteousness in front of others for the purpose of being seen, promising that the Father who sees in secret will reward openly.

Devotional:

Jesus does not call us away from generosity; He calls us away from performance. Some versions of giving, praying, and serving are ultimately about building a reputation rather than building the kingdom. Jesus identifies this as its own reward, and a small one at that. People's applause is temporary, inconsistent, and ultimately unable to satisfy the deep need for validation that drives us toward it.

When you give without announcing it, when you serve without documenting it, when you pray without an audience, you declare: God's approval is enough for me. That declaration, repeated in the small moments of daily life, begins genuine spiritual freedom.

Reflection: Are there areas of your spiritual life that have quietly become performances? What would it look like to do those same things in secret this week?

Application: Choose one act of generosity or service this week and commit to keeping it entirely between you and God. Resist the urge to mention it to anyone.

Day 3: Hidden with Christ in God

Reading: Colossians 3:1-4. Paul describes the believer's life as hidden with Christ in God, with the promise that when Christ appears, believers will also appear with him in glory.

Devotional:

Paul presents one of the most mysterious and beautiful realities of life in Christ: your true life is hidden. It is not on display for the world to evaluate. It is not measured by your productivity, your platform, or your public reputation. It is tucked away in Christ himself, secure and unseen, waiting for the moment when he is fully revealed.

This means the pressure to prove your worth through visible achievement is not yours. You have died to that old way of measuring a life. What you are becoming in Christ in the quiet, in the mundane, in the faithful and unnoticed moments is more real and more lasting than anything the world can see right now.

Reflection:

How much of your sense of purpose is tied to what others can observe about you? What would it mean to genuinely trust that your hidden life in Christ is your most important life?

Application:

Spend ten minutes in silent prayer today, simply resting in the reality that God sees and knows you fully, without any need to explain or justify yourself to Him.

Day 4: Faithful in the Mundane

Reading: Hebrews 6:10-12 and Galatians 6:9-10 — The first passage affirms that God does not forget faithful service done in love. The second urges believers not to grow weary in doing good, promising a harvest for those who do not give up.

Devotional: The pattern of fruitful kingdom life is not dramatic — it is faithful. The harvest does not come after one extraordinary moment of sacrifice. It comes after years of ordinary obedience: showing up, serving quietly, loving people who may never say thank you, praying for

the same person decade after decade. God does not consider this small. He calls it faithfulness, and he promises he will not forget it.

The mundane tasks of your life raising children, caring for aging parents, working with integrity in an unnoticed role, choosing patience when frustration would be easier these are not interruptions to your ministry. They are your ministry.

Reflection:

Where in your daily life are you tempted to believe that what you are doing does not matter because no one is watching or applauding? How does today's Scripture reframe that?

Application :

Identify one recurring, unglamorous responsibility in your life and intentionally offer it to God as an act of worship before you do it today.

Day 5: Released to Serve: The Legacy of the Hidden Life

Reading: Matthew 5:14-16 — Jesus declares that his followers are the light of the world and calls them to let their light shine so that others see their good works and glorify the Father in heaven.

Devotional:

The hidden life and the shining life are not opposites; they are the same life at different moments. When you serve faithfully in secret, when your motivations are purified by fidelity to Christ rather than hunger for recognition, something happens.

The Holy Spirit takes what you have offered in hiddenness and reveals it in his own timing, not to make your name great, but to make the Father's name great. Albert McCracken invited one boy to a tent revival and never became famous. Billy Graham preached to hundreds of thousands. Both mattered equally in the kingdom. You may never know the full weight of your faithful, hidden obedience this side of eternity. Trust that God will.

Reflection:

Do you believe your life will count if no one remembers your name? What would it look like to fully release your legacy into God's hands and serve freely without needing to see the outcome?

Application:

Ask God in prayer today to show you one quiet, specific opportunity to serve someone this week and commit to doing it without telling anyone. Let that act be your offering, hidden with Christ in God.