2026-11-01 Small Group Guide

Small Group Guide: Working to Believe

Overview

This guide is based on a sermon exploring the difference between working for temporary, earthly things and investing in what endures eternally. Drawing from John 6, Luke 18, and Matthew 25, the sermon challenges believers to examine the quality and consistency of their faith, and to understand that genuine belief in Christ is not passive but active and growing.

Key Passages

John 6:25-29 -- Jesus tells the crowd not to work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, and identifies the work of God as believing in the one He sent

Luke 18:1-8 -- The parable of the persistent widow, illustrating the call to pray always and not give up

Matthew 25:1-30 -- The parables of the ten virgins and the talents, showing the consequences of prepared, active faith versus passive, unprepared faith

Matthew 4:4 -- Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God

James 2 -- Faith without works is dead

Key Takeaways

Jesus commands His followers not to make earthly provision their primary pursuit, but to work for food that endures to eternal life.

The work of God, according to Jesus in John 6:29, is to believe in the one He sent -- and that belief is active, growing, and expressed through action.

Faith that is never fed will not plateau; it will decline. Spiritual nourishment requires intentional, consistent effort.

The parables in Matthew 25 make clear that God rewards faithful investment and takes seriously the failure to act on what He has entrusted to us.

Endurance in faith is not optional. The call to pray always, to seek first the kingdom, and to not give up runs throughout Scripture as a consistent command.

Discussion Questions

Opening

The sermon opened with a lighthearted question about honesty. Think about a time you were honest with yourself about a spiritual shortcoming. What prompted that moment of honesty, and what did you do with it?

The pastor described how we instinctively reach for food that tastes good rather than food that is good for us, and drew a parallel to our spiritual lives. In what ways do you see that pattern playing out in your own walk with Christ?

Digging In

In John 6:26, Jesus tells the crowd they are following Him not because they saw miraculous signs but because they ate the loaves and had their fill. What does it reveal about a person when their pursuit of Jesus is driven primarily by what they receive rather than by who He is?

Jesus says in John 6:27 to work for food that endures to eternal life. What does that kind of work look like in a practical, daily sense? What has it looked like in your own life during seasons when your faith was growing?

The sermon described faith as something that requires ongoing effort, comparing it to physical exercise. What happens to a person physically when they stop exercising? How does that parallel what happens spiritually when we stop feeding and exercising our faith?

The pastor said, "It is hard to believe. Anybody else?" He went on to describe how people quit praying when prayers go unanswered, and how blame toward God can follow. Have you experienced that cycle? How did you move through it, or are you still in it?

In the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18, the judge eventually grants justice simply because the widow would not stop coming. Jesus then asks whether the Son of Man will find faith on the earth when He returns. What does persistent prayer have to do with the condition of our faith?

In Matthew 25, the servant who received one talent buried it out of fear. The master called him wicked and lazy. How does fear function as an obstacle to faithful investment in the kingdom? Where does fear most commonly show up in your own walk?

The sermon made a distinction between believing in Christ for salvation and the ongoing, active work of believing. How would you describe that distinction in your own words? How does understanding that distinction change the way you think about your daily life?

The pastor asked, "Do your friends and neighbors see anything in you that required faith?" How would you honestly answer that question right now?

Reflecting on the Parables

In the parable of the talents, the master gave to each servant according to their own ability. What do you believe God has entrusted to you specifically, whether in gifts, relationships, resources, or opportunities? Are you investing it or burying it?

The master said to the faithful servants, "Come and share in your master's happiness." The sermon pointed out that this is more than a reward -- it is an invitation into relationship. What does it mean to you personally that faithfulness leads not just to greater responsibility but to shared joy with Christ?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to practice individually or as a group before your next meeting.

Feed your spirit intentionally. Set aside time this week to read a portion of Scripture not as an assignment but as a meal. Come to it asking, "Lord, what do you have for me here?" Note what you receive and bring it back to share with the group.

Audit your investment. Spend time in honest reflection asking: What am I primarily working for? Is most of my energy going toward things that will spoil, or toward things that endure? Write down what you discover.

Return to a prayer you gave up on. Identify one prayer you stopped praying because it seemed unanswered. Bring it back to God this week. Practice the persistence the widow modeled, and do it as an act of faith rather than an act of desperation.

Name your talent. Based on the parable of the talents, identify one specific thing God has entrusted to you that you have not yet put to work. Take one concrete step this week toward investing it.

Tell someone what God is doing. The sermon noted that our testimony is both what others see and what we speak. Find one person this week and share something -- however small -- about what God is doing in your life or what He has been speaking to you through His Word.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together along these lines:

Confess any ways you have been working primarily for food that spoils
Ask God to increase your hunger for the bread of life
Pray for the faith to not give up, especially in areas where you have grown weary
Ask God to show each person in the group what He has entrusted to them and how He wants them to invest it
For Further Study
Matthew 6:25-34 -- Seek first the kingdom of God
Philippians 2:12-13 -- Working out your faith
Hebrews 11 -- The hall of faith and the active nature of belief throughout Scripture
James 2:14-26 -- Faith and deeds
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 -- Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all

circumstances