

Small Group Guide: Making Ripples

Introduction

This guide is based on a sermon about living with purpose and making a lasting impact on the world around us. The central idea is that God created each of us with a specific destiny, and when we surrender our lives to Him and place Him at the center, our lives begin to touch other lives in ways that ripple outward far beyond what we can see or imagine.

Key Takeaways

- 1. God created you with a purpose and a destiny.** You were not made to drift through life "whatever like." Scripture is clear that God formed you intentionally, knows you personally, and has prepared good works specifically for you to do.
- 2. God must be at the center, not a spoke on the wheel.** Many people treat faith as just one of many priorities in life. But when God moves from the edge to the center, everything else begins to align with His purpose.
- 3. Your story is connected to other people's stories.** The ripple effect is real. One life touches another, which touches another. You rarely see the full reach of your impact, but God does.
- 4. You are a Christian first.** Whatever your job, role, or season of life, your identity as a follower of Jesus comes before everything else. That identity shapes how you show up in every other area of life.
- 5. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.** There is one destination worth building toward, and it is found only through Christ. That conviction is what gives ripple-making its eternal weight.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

Go around the group and share: What is one person in your life who made a significant ripple in your story? What did they do, and how did it change you?

Section 1: Living With Purpose vs. Living "Whatever Like"

1. The sermon describes two ways people tend to live: with intentional purpose or drifting along "whatever like." Which of those has most described your life in the past? Which describes you right now?
2. Lee shared that many 95-year-olds, when asked what they would do differently, said they would slow down, risk more, and do something to make their mark on the world. What does that list stir up in you personally?
3. In Ephesians 2:10, Paul describes believers as God's handiwork, created to do good works that God prepared in advance. What does it mean to you that your good works were prepared before you were even born?

Section 2: God at the Center

4. The sermon used the image of a wheel, with God as either a spoke among many priorities or the hub at the center of everything. Honestly, where would you say God currently sits in your life?
5. Lee described his own moment of surrender, crying out to God in a pickup truck with no purpose and no direction. Have you ever had a moment like that? What happened?
6. In Acts 17, Paul tells the philosophers in Athens that God is not far from any one of us, and that in Him we live and move and have our being. How does it change your perspective to know that God has always been present, even in the seasons when you were not looking for Him?

Section 3: Ripples and Relationships

7. Lee traced a chain of impact that started with a prayer, moved through a man named Gary who started a recovery ministry, reached a young woman overcoming addiction, and eventually brought her father to faith years later. Have you ever witnessed or been part of a chain of impact like that? Share it if you are comfortable.
8. The sermon challenges us to ask: Who are you going to ripple? Who in your life right now is someone God might be calling you to invest in more intentionally?
9. Lee said that some people he poured into walked away from God, and he compared that to the disciples who walked away from Jesus. How do you handle the discouragement of investing in someone who later walks away? What keeps you going?

Section 4: You Are a Christian First

10. The sermon says that regardless of your occupation or role, you are a Christian first. What would it look like practically for you to lead with that identity this week at work, at home, or in your neighborhood?
11. Lee's daughter Ashley chose to stay in a dark and difficult job because God was using her there, even when better opportunities came along. Have you ever felt God calling you to stay somewhere hard because He was not finished with you there? How did you respond?
12. Jesus did not choose the best of the best when He called His disciples. He chose ordinary, willing people. What is one area of your life where you have been telling yourself you are not qualified or capable enough to be used by God?

Practical Applications

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

- 1. Map Your Ripples.** Take 15 minutes this week to write down the names of people who made a significant impact on your faith journey. Then write down the names of people you have poured into. Pray over both lists and thank God for the chain of grace you are part of.
- 2. Identify Your "Whoever."** Think of one specific person in your life who does not yet know Jesus. Write their name down. Commit to praying for them every day this week and ask God to open a door for a meaningful conversation.
- 3. Audit Your Wheel.** Draw a wheel with several spokes. Label each spoke with a major priority in your life: work, family, hobbies, finances, friendships, health, and faith. Be honest about where God currently sits. Then redraw the wheel with God as the hub and ask yourself what would need to change for that to be true.
- 4. Take One Risk.** The 95-year-olds surveyed said they would risk more. Identify one step of faith you have been putting off, whether it is a spiritual conversation, joining a ministry, inviting someone to church, or sharing your story. Commit to taking that step this week.
- 5. Share Your Story.** Practice telling your story in three to five minutes: what your life looked like before Christ, how you came to faith, and what has changed. Stories are one of the most powerful ripple-making tools we have. Be ready to share it when God opens the door.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your time together by praying specifically for the following:

- The people in your group who are still searching for purpose and direction
- The names of specific people each group member wants to ripple
- Courage to take risks and live as Christians first in every area of life
- A growing love for the people around you who do not yet know Jesus

Memory Verse for the Week

John 6:68 -- Peter's response when Jesus asked if the disciples would also walk away: Peter declared that Jesus alone has the words of eternal life, and there is no one else worth following.

Based on a sermon series drawing from Mike Brough's book "Make Ripples."