

## Before the Lesson

**Read the Scriptures and overview below before your LIFE Group meets.**

Scripture passages: James 1:26-27, Acts 1:18, Ruth 1-4

What is your story, and what is it filled with? Seriously! Examine it. Ask yourself the question: “What is my story?” Is the story of your life filled with personal desires, comforts, and pleasures of the world? Don’t misunderstand me, there is certainly nothing wrong with enjoying that with which we have been blessed, but true religion isn’t characterized by wants, desires, or comfort.

Now ask yourself these questions: “Where am I in *His Story*?” “Am I ministering in my Jerusalem, my Samaria, and my Judea?” Have you even identified where those places are in your life – specific places where God may be calling you to show compassion and care? Tough questions? Maybe, but after all, *Life Is Complicated* and religion, well, if it’s true religion, complicates things as well. True religion complicates your conversations, your level of compassion for others, and your personal character. Why? Because true religion compels a person to evaluate those things through the character and person of Jesus Christ, through His sufferings, and through His eyes of impartial love.

**Focus questions: Do you have a credibility problem with regard to your faith?**

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## Group Discussion

**Authentic religion comes out in a person’s conversations. (James 1:26)**

- Discuss the topics, tone, and tenor of your conversations this past week. Would someone listening in characterize you as one with true religion? Why or why not?
- Read Psalm 39:1, Proverbs 18:21, Matthew 12:36-37, 15:10-12 and 15-20, Luke 6:45, Ephesians 4:29, 1 Peter 2:1, and other verses about the tongue that you can find. What topics of conversations are addressed in these verses, and how do they reveal the true heart of our religion?
- Compare and contrast your words and conversations with the Word of God using Hebrews 4:12. What do they reveal about your heart?
- If asked the question, what do you think your family members, co-workers, or neighbors would say about how you speak? What do you need to change about the way you talk? How can you use your mouth to glorify God when you speak to your husband or wife, children, neighbors, friends, and co-workers?

**Authentic religion comes out in a person’s compassion. (James 1:27)**

- Do you think your beliefs actually impact the way you live? Explain.

- Jesus was always concerned about the wellbeing and care of others, and as believers with changed hearts we should want to imitate Him. Keeping that in mind, what does the statement, “Be the hands and feet of Jesus” mean? (See Colossians 1:18-24, Romans 12:43-8, or 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.)
- 2 Corinthians 5:14 says, *For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.* Who is God calling you to “look after” or “look out for”? Will you do it out of duty, or will you do it out of devotion to Christ and His love that compels you?
- Discuss practical ways you can be like Christ and show compassion and love to the lost and dying world in your own neighborhood, at the gym, in line at the store, at home, or work. What is holding you back from doing this?
- Are you doing everything you should to put your feet to your faith? Do you sense God calling you to do more for His Kingdom in your Jerusalem? Samaria? Judea?
- In the Old and New Testaments there were no provisions for orphans and widows. Remembering the story of Ruth, in what ways was Boaz compelled to look out for Ruth and Naomi because of His love for God and desire to help the helpless? How have you seen Jesus be your *Kinsman Redeemer* and look out for you and those you know because of His love and compassion for others?
- Are you helping the helpless or living the life of one who is selfish? What does the world tell you to do? Use verses to contrast a life that is selfish versus selfless.

#### **Authentic religion comes out in a person's character. (James 1:27)**

- Do you have a credibility problem with regard to your faith? Can you identify any issues of hypocrisy, sin, overindulgence, or disengagement that are causing you to live on mission for yourself and your personal comfort rather than for God?
- Read Romans 12:1. As believers we are to offer our lives, bodies, bank accounts, pantries, hands, and hearts to God. That is a picture of undefiled worship. It's not comfortable, but it is Christ-like. The world, on the other hand, embodies evil, sin, and selfishness. Where are you in *His Story*? Are you motivated by the character of the world or the character of God?
- Because of who Christ is, are you being passionate in your pursuit of Christ and His mission and vision for your life? Do you know the mission of your life? Are you living that mission?

#### **Further Study (to be used in your personal Quiet Time)**

John 17 is Jesus' prayer to His Father prior to His crucifixion. He speaks of the glory He brought to God on earth and the desire to bring Him glory in His death. It also speaks of Christ's love for believers and His desire for them to glorify the Father. Read and meditate on this chapter in the Gospel of John this week, then ask yourself this question: To whom do I wish to bring glory?

#### **How can you be a bigger part of His Story?**

- Pray over your life mission and ask God to reveal a fresh and selfless *way of life* to you.
- Pick up a copy of *His Story* and read through the ministry and mission opportunities available. Pray and ask God to show you who He is calling you to “look out” for in your Jerusalem, your Samaria, and in your Judea.
- Ask God for the boldness, the resources, and the time, as well as the love that would compel you to live a life on mission for His glory.

For additional resources, visit [warrenlifenotes.com](http://warrenlifenotes.com).