



2023 DNOW SMALL GROUP CURRICULUM

Dear Leaders,

First off, let us say THANK YOU for being willing to lead this weekend for us. We know that there are a lot of other things that you could be doing, but you have chosen to help impact the students here at Radiate. We are praying that your small groups really are able to capture the heart of what it means to be equipped by Jesus.

With that being said, we are very strategic in how we are laying out the sessions. We have Friday night, Saturday morning, and Saturday night Large-Group Worship sessions. Then we have Friday night, Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, and Saturday night Small Group sessions.

The small group sessions are what you will be responsible for teaching. Here are your top 10 leader tips, in no particular order, we have for when you teach these small groups:

1. Allow personal stories to shine, when appropriate.
2. Share successes and failures that relate to the topics that are covered.
3. Keep the teaching a two-way conversation rather than a lecture.
4. Don't be afraid to call on a student to talk, but if someone doesn't feel comfortable sharing, that's ok – maybe have a sideline conversation with them later to see where they are at with the Lord.
5. Be strategic about a student that may be doing all the talking. Engage them with a task like being the Bible-reader or question-asker, to give other students the chance to speak up.
6. Do your best to keep students on track and respectful while others are sharing.
7. Think of ways, as you prepare to teach these sessions, to add context, however brief, to the reading of the Scripture. Ask yourself, what if you had never read out of the Bible before and didn't know anything about church culture – how would it make sense to me?
8. You may or may not have a co-leader, so prepare as if you don't. You may be asked to split your group into smaller groups for teaching time, so you'll need to be prepared to teach all the sessions.
9. Spend time in prayer and confession between you and the Lord before each time you teach. Make sure you're in a place to hear from the Holy Spirit with a clear conscience, to be used by him.
10. Ask open-ended questions, not yes-or-no questions, to get conversations going.

Know that you are being prayed for from this point till the weekend is over, and if there is anything you need from us, please reach out and let us know. Have a great time studying to presenting this content to students, may God always be invited to change US before we ever challenge anyone else.

Love,

The Radiate Students Staff

This weekend we will explore what it looks like to be a fully-equipped follower of Jesus and how we are to live that out.

- In session one, we will learn Who we are in Christ
- In session two, we will learn What a person equipped by God *looks like*.
- In session three, we will learn How to live out an equipped life for Jesus.
- In session four, you will have the opportunity to create your own lesson that follows the Theme of the weekend

Session 1 – Who are we in Christ – Friday Night

QUESTION: What do you know about the book of Ephesians?

The book of Ephesians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church of Ephesus. He begins this letter with a greeting.

Read Ephesians 1:1.

Most letters in the New Testament begin with who the author of the letter is and to whom it is written. Notice that he calls the believers in Ephesus “saints”.

The New Living Translation says, “I am writing to... faithful followers of Christ Jesus.” It doesn’t say “mediocre followers” or “half-hearted followers” but *faithful* followers. The word *saint* sounds intimidating, but do you realize that if you are a follower of Christ, you are a saint? You are counted as the faithful.

QUESTION: If you’re a “saint”, does your life look like a faithful follower of Jesus? Why or why not?

Many people remain in bondage after they are saved, because they don’t realize who they are in Christ.

1. Why do you think we sometimes don’t realize our full potential in Christ?

Read Ephesians 2:4-6.

There are two types of people in this world:

- those who are **alive** with Christ AND
- those who are **dead** in sin.

A person can’t be sort of alive or kind of dead. You are either living or you’re not. The same is true with followers of Christ: you are either SOLD OUT or you’re not. Verse 12 says we were “separated from Christ” then we were “brought near”.

According to 4-6 we, as *saints*, are seated with Christ in heavenly places. This is not in the future tense. We have *already* been seated with Christ in heaven. Even though we are sitting in a small group room at the church, we are mysteriously seated with Christ in heavenly places.

If you are not a follower of Christ, you will learn this weekend what that looks like and have a chance to find out how to become one.

QUESTION: But if you are a follower of Jesus, do you have times where you don’t FEEL like a faithful follower? That you don’t feel like you are with Christ in heavenly places? Explain that a little more.

The next time that you feel unworthy or are suffering from low self-esteem, tell yourself that you are a saint who is seated with Christ in heavenly places.

AW Tozer said, “What comes to mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

Perspective about who we are in Christ is so important. Sin is still in our lives, and we are still in this world, but if we realize that we are always seated in heaven, then we may decide to walk a little differently. We should have no fear when we need to take a stand for Christ or stand against Satan’s schemes.

Read Ephesians 1:18-19.

2. What three things has God given us that are in Christ?

1. Enlightened eyes to know hope
2. Glorious inheritance

3. Immeasurable greatness of his power

QUESTION: So why don't we live like this? Why does our hope seem dim, our future seems unsure, and our hearts seem weak?

If we do not commit daily to being equipped, sold out, completely in love with Jesus, we will easily forget that we belong to "the heavenly places" and have been given hope, inheritance, and power.

Read Colossians 3:1-2.

QUESTION: What are those things that are "above"?

Those of us who are equipped will be constantly focusing on eternal things, on what Jesus did for us on the cross. When our focus is "above", we will be able to live fully committed to God.

So once we understand our identity in Christ and where our focus should be, what do we do? What is our purpose?

QUESTION: Why does God allow us to stay on the earth once we become his followers?

Read Ephesians 2:8-10.

Verses 8 and 9 are probably familiar, but we rarely hear verse 10. What does it say our purpose is? Our purpose is to glorify God and share the name of Jesus so that more and more people can be saved and live lives that are fully equipped by God.

3. What are the Characteristics of those who are in Christ?

- Faithful followers
- Seated with Christ
- Sharing our hope with others

Takeaways:

- 1.** What is one thing that was new to you in this session?
 - 2.** What did you need to be reminded of as a follower of Christ?
 - 3.** How can this new/refreshed knowledge change you this weekend?
 - 4.** What are you most expecting God to do in your life this weekend?
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Session 2 – What does being equipped by God look like? – Saturday Morning

Last night we talked about the identity of someone who is in Christ.

QUESTION: What were the three characteristics we closed with?

- Faithful followers
- Seated with Christ
- Sharing our hope with others

In this session, we are going to learn what being equipped by God looks like...

Read Ephesians 4:1-3.

Being equipped by God looks like...

1. Jesus equips us for a purpose

Live a life worthy of the purpose

Ephesians 4:1-3 MSG

¹⁻³ In light of all this, here's what I want you to do. While I'm locked up here, a prisoner for the Master, I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run! —on the road God called you to travel. I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don't want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with humility and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences.

Some of you may have a good understanding of what your purpose is... some of you may not be certain right now what that is. And that's ok!

QUESTION: What are your thoughts about this quote... "the realm of uncertainty is the place of miracles"... agree? Disagree? How can you relate? How have you seen this to be true (or not true) in your walk with Jesus?

When you move with God, he always shows up. It's just hard to predict what he will do or how he will do it. But, if you wait for guarantees, the only thing that will be guaranteed is that you will miss endless opportunities – that you can know for certain.

Read Colossians 1:9-12.

QUESTION: Where is your Identity right now?

Some examples include...

- sports
- that guy or girl
- your social media accounts
- your image
- your video game skills
- being top of your class

QUESTION: So when we say that we find purpose in JESUS, how does that align with where you are finding your identity right now?

Being equipped by God looks like...

2. We are equipped for the work of God

Read Ephesians 4:11-13.

What is the work of God

- **Starts with Salvation**

QUESTION: We read in our first session Ephesians 2:8-10 that we are saved by WHAT?

Answer: by grace through faith.

- **Our Salvation equips us to live**

In that same set of verse we are called to serve and to carry out God's good works.

QUESTION: What does Ephesians 2:10 say?

- **Our living equips us to serve**

As we serve others, we reflect the love of Christ and demonstrate His work in us.

3. What Does being equipped by Jesus look like?

Read Ephesians 4:17-32.

We are told to put off the old self and put on the new self in Jesus, which identifies us as a new creation. We are no longer to walk in sin as the lost do, but we are to walk in *love* and walk as children of *light*.

Below is a list of things Ephesians says we are to "put off" and "put on".

QUESTION: Take a few minutes going through some or all of the things that characterize who we aren't and who we are in Christ. List the things we are told to "put on" and "put off" as a group.

Put Off	Put On
Anger	Always give thanks in all things
Bitterness	Anger not always sin
Dirty Jokes	Be careful how you walk
Don't hold grudge,	Be kind to one another
Don't speak unwholesome words	Forgive each other
Filthiness	Fruit of Light
Greed	Give thanks
Immorality	Goodness
Impurity	Grow up
Lying	Holiness of the truth
No longer children	Imitators of God
Old self	Light of the Lord
Silly talk	Make most of your time
Slander/malice	New self
Stealing	Renewed in spirit of your mind
Unfruitful deeds of darkness	Righteousness
Unwise	Speak to one another in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs
Wrath	Speak truth
	Tender-hearted
	Truthful
	Walk as children of Light
	Walk in love
	Wise
	Words of encouragement, grace to hearer

QUESTION: Why do you think the "put on" list is longer than the put off?

Many of us do not realize what it will cost us to be equipped by God.

The "put on" list is longer than the other because it is more difficult to follow Christ than it is to not follow Christ.

QUESTION: What are your thoughts about this quote... "If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" ... **thoughts? What is the answer in your life? Is it a yes or no, why or why not?**

This seems intimidating, knowing that following Christ will be difficult. But remember the three things God has given those who follow him in Ephesians 1:18-19! Hope - future - power!

Takeaways:

1. In what ways do you give God your "leftovers"?
 2. What practical measures can you take to make sure God gets your full devotion?
 3. Why is walking with Jesus more than just a list of do's and don't's?
 4. When you read the phrases, "put on" and "put off", do you tend to see it more of a list of rules or a way to live out your relationship with your Savior?
 5. The heart of the matter is seeking that intimacy with Jesus. What are some things that you need to put off in order to put on more of the things of God?
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Session 3 – How do I live out an equipped life for Jesus? – Saturday Afternoon

The first two sessions have been focused inward. We asked, Who we are in Christ? What does being equipped by God look like? In this session, we will focus on how to live out an equipped life for Jesus.

QUESTION: What is one thing that stood out to you about small group Session 1? What is one thing that stood out to you about small group Session 2?

QUESTION: You have probably heard it said before, you talk about the things you care about. What do you spend most of your time talking about?

Similarly, you must learn to protect, defend, and live out the things you care about as well.

It is easy to be at DNOW and get pumped up and equipped with tools to live a full life and then wanting to share the gospel with everyone you meet. But as soon as you leave tomorrow, you will have to *apply* the things you learn here into your everyday life. This can cause some anxiety, challenges, and different ways of living. But remember these 3 words as you prepare to step back into "real life": JESUS OVER EVERYTHING.

QUESTION: Fill in the blank for what you need right now. Jesus over _____. Is it sports, your family, your sin? What does it mean to you that Jesus is over EVERYTHING?

If you feel that there is still something blocking you from being able to live as one in Christ and equipped by Christ, consider this...

1. You must have a relationship with Jesus to be fully in Christ.
2. You must confess the sin in your life in order to be fully equipped with the Holy Spirit.
3. You must be ready for the enemy to attack.

If the enemy knows God wants to use you in a big way, he will try to keep you from being effective, by making you doubt, be distracted, scared, or unprepared.

QUESTION: Have you ever experienced this before?

Read Ephesians 6:10–20.

(Leaders, You will take the rest of the time talk through what it looks like to live out an equipped life for Christ. Make these descriptions your own. Here are some tools to get you started but weave your own personal stories into these descriptions.)

1. Belt of Truth: **Read John 17:17** Let's be honest. What does a belt do? It keeps your pants up. We are not fully clothed without the truth of God's word in our lives.
2. Breastplate of Righteousness: **Read Isaiah 61:11**. The breastplate covers most of the vital organs. Without any one of our vital organs, we would not be alive. Isaiah shows us that life comes when God's praise is shouted among the righteous.

QUESTION: How can righteousness bring life in a situation you are facing?

3. Shoes as the Gospel of Peace: **Read Isaiah 52:7**. In those days, the major means of transportation was walking, and often the terrain was dusty and dirty. Even if people had shoes, their feet were probably disgusting, dry, cracked, bloody, and caked in dirt. (Now do you see why it was such a big deal for Jesus to wash the disciples' feet?) And Isaiah calls those who bring the gospel's feet *beautiful!*

The means by which we transport the gospel is beautiful, whether through our words or actions. And notice that these shoes are being worn "on the mountains". It is not going to be an easy hike when we venture to share the gospel, but what an amazing view we can have when beautiful feet bring us to the moment someone decides to follow Christ because of hearing the gospel!

4. Shield of Faith: Shields can be maneuvered to protect different parts of your body or other people. Romans says we have each been given a "measure of faith", which means at different times in our lives we need more faith than other times. When we are making a life-changing decision, we need more wisdom. When someone around us is unkind, we need more love. **Read Matthew 17:20.**

So sometimes you need to cover your ankles with the shield of faith, because things are kind of sticky. But other times you must cover your neck and major arteries with the shield of faith because it is a deadly situation. And possibly someone near you needs

that shield, and you need an added amount of faith to help carry the burdens of another. That "measure of faith" has to do with our ability to accept it and is not contingent on God's ability to provide it.

5. Helmet of Salvation: If actions and habits originate as thoughts, then doubts about those actions and habits originate in the mind too. Salvation comes when our hearts are surrendered to Christ by grace through faith in Him. But a majority of the battles a believer faces are in the mind. We must guard our minds. **Read Colossians 2:8-10**. It is so easy to be "taken captive" by different ways of thinking that man has made. But **Christ is the "head of all rule an authority," so He can certainly keep your mind safe from the "empty deceit" of the world.**

6. Sword of the Spirit: In this armor, there are five defensive pieces and just one offensive weapon. What is the sword of the Spirit? **Read Hebrews 4:12**. Remember when Jesus was tempted by Satan in the desert? He literally used Scripture to fight the battle. And how can we fight if we don't even *look* at our Bibles, not to mention memorize them? Yes, memorizing does not come easy to everyone.

QUESTION: What are practical ways that you can begin to make memorizing Scripture a priority?

(Leaders, think through practical answers to this question beforehand... may include, meditate on one verse a week, write it on your mirror or put it as your phones lock screen. Then don't go to bed until you've repeated it out loud five times.)

7. Prayer: God calls us to pray. Communication is a huge part of any relationship. Prayer is communicating with God. However, it is not always just asking for something for us, but it is also lifting others up and giving God the praise he is due.

End this session by praying aloud the words of Ephesians 3:20-21.

Takeaways:

1. How important is having a relationship with Jesus in living out an equipped life for Christ?
 2. What is the significance of each piece of the armor of God in living out an equipped life for Christ?
 3. Which of those pieces of armor do you tend to forget about/needed a refresher on?
 4. How can we apply all the things we have been equipped with this weekend already so that when we step back into "real life" we are living a life that really proclaims Jesus over Everything?
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Session 4 – Leader Session – Saturday Night

This session is your opportunity to challenge your group and write your own session. It needs to be based off the weekend's theme of Equipped and that God's equipping allows us to live a life that proclaims that Jesus is over everything. Please take this session seriously and make sure you are prepared. If you just show up and plan for it to be a "recap" and you're not prepared, students will know it. It will take some pre-planning on your part, but here are some suggestions of how to make it happen:

- **Write notes** and questions during the large-group sessions and have your students do the same. Take this time to expand on, dissect, and clarify Kelly's messages.

- **Read through** the book of Ephesians before the weekend and pick out a passage that was not covered in this curriculum. Relate that passage to back to the theme of Equipped to close out your time.

- **Take a character** from the Bible that lived a life that proclaimed Jesus over everything. Read the Bible passage and relate him or her to the theme.

- **Go back** to a point in a previous session that may have been overlooked. In the craziness of the weekend, some sessions have to be cut short or altered. Maybe students just didn't want to end a discussion when you went to rec. Maybe you didn't get to fully expand on something God laid on your heart that still fits in the flow of the sessions.

- **Challenge** students to live out the teaching from the weekend when they go back to day-to-day life. You have gotten to know your group over the weekend, and you know where to challenge them. List out some takeaways and practical steps to get there.

Take this time to really dig deep with your students. It's less about reading from a piece of paper with three points and an application. Use visual aids and crafty activities, or just get your students talking about what God's doing. The Saturday night large-group session is followed by an invitation, so continue that conversation while being respectful of some people's need to process internally.

At the end of your session, please make sure you...

1. CELEBRATE DECISIONS. Many times, a student will decide for Jesus, then be tempted not to share. You as the leader will be contacted after the large-group sessions about any students in your group that made decisions. Let's celebrate that people have gone from death to life!!!

2. ENCOURAGE BAPTISM. This is an absolute first move that we as believers make after we decide to follow Christ for the first time. In fact, our entire church is having a Baptism Celebration tomorrow morning – Middle school at 9:30 and high school at 11:00am. Contact Chip, Eli, or Katie if they are a YES for Sunday morning.

Please pray now about how God would use you on this last night to continue to impress the theme of being equipped by Jesus. Thank you for sacrificing your weekend for the sake of the kingdom. Remember **Jesus is Over Everything!**

****If at ANY point in the weekend a student discloses any physical or sexual abuse or harm, you are required by law to inform a Radiate staff member IMMEDIATELY. You may contact Chip at 770-344-9427, Eli 770-826-2215, or Katie at 678-294-6153.***