



Growth Group Discussion Questions

Lesson: #LevelUp!

Primary Scripture: John 16:33

Lesson 1 - Week of April 5, 2020

Welcome to the Spring Session of Growth Groups!

This week, we kick-off our 2020 Spring Growth Group Session. Our first meeting will include time to get acquainted and time to review the Growth Group Covenant.

To prepare for our first meeting, take some time to focus on the discussion and questions below and be prepared to share your answers with the group. Have a great meeting as we come together to connect, to encourage one another to grow, and to see how God might work!

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

- 1) If you could go on a road trip with any person dead or alive (besides Jesus), who would you choose and where would you go?
- 2) What movie can you watch over and over again without ever getting tired of it?

DISCUSSION

Like most kids, Michael and Ted had aspirations of one day becoming the next NBA superstars. On most days, despite the weather conditions, you could find these two elementary “superstars” hooping it up in Ted’s backyard on his adjustable goal. They quickly discovered that if the goal was adjusted to six feet, they could be “ballin outta control” with elaborate and air hanging dunks. As fate would have it, Ted’s family had to relocate to another state for several years. Eventually, they were able to return during Ted’s high school years, and the two friends were reunited. You can imagine where they ended up; yes, on the basketball court. However, Ted’s game had gone to the next level, and he was able to perform different types of ball handling skills and elaborate dunks on a **standard NBA regulated** ten-foot goal. Michael, on the other hand, could barely touch the nets, much less attempt to dunk. Becoming frustrated while watching Ted’s double clutch, tomahawk, windmill, and baseline dunks, Michael suggested they lower the rim; like back in the old days when they were “ballin outta control.” But Ted suggested that Michael “LevelUp” and learn to play by NBA standards and not by their made-up childhood standards. This caused a rift in their friendship. Eventually, Ted was able to play at the college level and to live out his dream of becoming an NBA player with many endorsement contracts. These contracts trademarked and marketed his various, unique dunking styles. Michael simply became a fan of the game. What was the difference between Michael and Ted? One major difference was the standards by which they practiced and played.

As imitators of Christ, are we operating by God’s standard or our own? Are you “ballin outta control” by the **lower** standards of the world? This growth group series will assist us with understanding what it takes to LevelUp and perform consistently by God’s higher standard.

Many of us are proud of our spiritual accomplishments, but are they in line with **God’s regulated** standards? We have lowered the rim of standards in our morals, language, integrity, character and relationships so that we can appear to be “ballin outta control.” But to God, we look as if we are spiritually out of control. It’s better for us to operate at God’s standard than to go through life fooling

ourselves by operating at a lower level. God is trying to get us to a level in life where, with His guidance, we can endure no matter who our opponents are and what type of opposition has been placed in front of us. He has given us the ability to operate at His level. Today, let's challenge ourselves to play at God's level and not at our self-proclaimed levels. Let's LevelUp in our marriages; in our leadership roles; in our relationships with people that we like and don't like; in our finances; in our stewardship; in our families; and in our morals, integrity and speech.

Looking back over the career and achievements of Kobe Bryant, we can see that he practiced and played above the **NBA regulated** standards. On January 22, 2006, Kobe scored 81 points against the Toronto Raptors! What?! This type of high scoring is usually found only in video games. But Kobe was able to accomplish this within the **NBA regulated** standards, with opponents and referees, on a ten-foot goal and not a six-foot goal in someone's backyard.

It's worth noting the definition of **standard**: "something that is set up and established by an **authority**; a rule that measures the quantity, weight, extent and the value or the quality of something." In our example, Kobe didn't set the NBA standards for the height of the goal, the distance of the free-throw line, the distance of the three point line, etc. He played within the **authorized standard** and was able to excel. The problem we are facing in Christianity today is some of us are thinking we are excelling, but we are doing it outside of God's standards; thus giving us a false illusion. In basketball, the NBA is the authority that sets the standards for who plays and how the game is played. In the spiritual realm, God is the creator and authority, and He sets the standards on how the game of life is played. Remember, God will allow you to fail until you realize that you have to play by His rules and not yours.

Things to keep in mind as you LevelUp:

- 1) **Our standards should be the word of God.** When someone is an authority on something, he was probably there before it happened and took into consideration everything that might happen when the standards were formed. John 1:1-3 confirms that God is the authority and He alone has the authority to set standards. We cannot pick and choose what areas and times to apply God's standards. They have to be in ALL areas at ALL times and not just in the areas and times where we feel comfortable. For long-time Christians, this point is difficult because, over time, we have developed bad habits and standards that are not of God and are difficult to release. Be mindful that Romans 12:2 warns us not to live by the standards of this world. Additionally, you cannot expect to receive the blessings of the kingdom if you are not living by the standards of the kingdom. And 1 Timothy 4:12 makes it clear that you are never too young to adopt standards. When we are elevating our standards to God's standards, it's normal for us to feel anxious or to doubt. But, through time and patience, it will become more routine. LevelUp!
- 2) **Getting stronger in God's standards requires sacrifices.** So what's the sacrifice? Here's the cheat sheet. Our Father only wants us to sacrifice three things: time, talent and treasure. That's it. The crazy thing about this request is that He gave us all of them and wants us to use them to grow His kingdom, not ours. (1 Peter 4:10) The conflict that we ALL struggle with is that we think the items given are ours and that we can adjust them to whatever standard we choose. Therefore, the problem that we are truly facing is one of stewardship. We fail to realize who these items truly belong to. Additionally, **the reason why many people don't achieve greatness is not because they don't have what it takes, it's because they won't GIVE what it takes.** When we LevelUp to God's standards, we have to commit to increase our levels of sacrifice. Are you prepared to sacrifice to become great? Your Father is calling you to greatness, so LevelUp! Romans 12:1 (MSG) states it best: *"So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your **everyday**, ordinary life - your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life - and place it before*

*God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing **you can do for him**. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God (the authority). You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and **quickly respond** to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity (i.e., living down to its standards), God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you."*

3) **What's your strategy for sacrificing in order to LevelUp?** The problem with many of us is that we get the standard and we are willing to sacrifice, but we do not have a strategy. You need a strategy because you are going up against opposition. Noted below are some scriptures that can assist us with developing a strategy plan:

- a. Living Clean Strategy - Psalm 119:9 (MSG): "How can a young person live a clean life? By carefully reading the map of your Word." (Hide yourself in the Word.)
- b. Spiritual Healing Strategy - James 5:16 (NIV): "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."
- c. Communication Strategy - Ephesians 4:29 (NIV): "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."
- d. Financial Strategy - Proverbs 3:9-10 (NIV): "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."
- e. Overall Life Strategy - Matthew 6:33 (NIV): "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Principle #1: What are you doing?

Are you at your spiritual potential? What gaps in your life have you identified that need improvement in order for you to perform at the level that God intended?

Some areas to consider: Servitude, visiting the sick, benevolence, hospitality, studying and praying.

Principle #2: What's your strategy?

As discussed above, in order to LevelUp to God's standard and to become great, an individual has to sacrifice in three areas: time, talent and treasure. Write down your strategy for becoming great in these three areas.