



Gaining By Losing

J. D. Greear

A Discussion Guide for Gateway Life Groups
Six Sessions

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Session 1: Introduction, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2

Session 2: Chapter 3 and 4

Session 3: Chapter 5 and 6

Session 4: Chapter 7 and 8

Session 5: Chapter 9 and 10

Session 6: Chapter 11 and 12

In the fall of 2017 the Gateway staff started to read and discuss the book *Gaining By Losing* by J.D. Greear. This book has been very impactful and challenging for all of us and has guided some of the decision making that we have made in terms of the future of Gateway Church. We want to be a sending church that trains up future leaders to be sent into the world to influence others for Jesus Christ and to help in the building of God's Kingdom. Therefore, the Connect Team decided that this book would be a good study for all Life Groups to do.

The format of this discussion guide is designed to be done in six sessions with two chapters being discussed per session or meeting. The discussion guide includes quotes from the book and then questions based on these quotes. Also page numbers are included so you can find these quotes in the book. Please feel free to use this as a guide and don't feel like you have to cover everything in all the chapters or cover everything in the discussion guide. This is meant to simply guide your discussion. We want all Life Groups to complete this study by the end of March 2019.

We also want to say a special "thank you" to the few people who helped put this guide together. We love seeing the different parts of the body of Christ working together.

Ed, Scott, and Connie
The Connect Team

Introduction

Principle of the Harvest & the Measure of Success: *“Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” (John 12:24)*

Planting always involves risk. We release control of something we need in the hopes that it will come back to us in multiplied measure. But once we let go of it, we forfeit any ability to use it for ourselves. Seeds you plant you can no longer consume. Yet without the act of planting, there will never be a harvest. (page 15)

- *Discuss this principle.*
- *If you looked at every one of your blessings as “kingdom seeds,” how many of them are you planting in the fields of God’s kingdom, and how many are you keeping in storehouses to use as “food”?*

Let’s be honest: Too often, we measure the success of our ministries by one criteria and one criteria alone: How large is it? How large is the attendance? How big is the budget? And so we spend all our money on things that will increase our attendance, our budgets, and our capacity. But if John 12:24 is true, then Jesus measures the success of our ministries not by how large we grow the storehouse, but by how widely we distribute its seeds. Jesus’ measure of the church is not seating capacity, but sending capacity. (page 16)

- *Do you tend to evaluate Gateway’s success by its attendance? How should we measure success for Gateway Church? How does God measure success for Gateway Church?*

Basic Questions:

There are two basic questions about discipleship that we have to ask ourselves over and over, in every new season of life and in regards to whatever resources God has given us stewardship over:

- Whose kingdom are we actually building: ours, or God’s?
- Do we really believe that Jesus grows his kingdom most as we “give away” what he’s given to us? (page 17)
- *In what ways do you find yourself building your own kingdom at the expense of building God’s?*
- *Do you really believe that Jesus grows his kingdom most as we “give away”?*

Somebody Else Will Do It

If you're not a church leader, I want you to understand the crucial role you play in the church's future. I believe that the future of Christianity lies in your hands, not in ours (that is, the hands of your church leaders)...the so-called "ordinary believer" — *you* are the tip of the gospel spear. The greatest gospel movements in history have been facilitated by ordinary people like *you*, not church leaders. (pages 17-18)

- *What examples from the Bible can you think of to back this up?*
- *Do you see sharing the Gospel as your responsibility as a Christ-follower, or do you see that as the job of the church staff?*

To Come And Die is Easier Said Than Done!

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously said, "When Christ bids a man to follow, he bids him come and die." Jesus did not say come and grow, but come and die. And he showed us what that means by his own example. When Christ calls any of us to follow him — whether he is speaking to us as individuals, or to our churches and ministries — he bids us, "Come and die." (page 20)

- *Read Mark 8:34-36. Practically, in what ways does Jesus call us to die?*

It's one thing to know these things, to believe they are true. It's another to implement them. That is what this book is about. What does it look like to live sent — in your personal life, in your ministry, or in the church that you lead? I will warn you: It's relatively easy to nod our heads at this point and say, "Yes, like Jesus, we live by dying." But to go to the next step — to invest some of your most cherished resources, or say goodbye to those whom you love as they go to begin something new — that is hard, and it never gets easier. Yet it's how God's kingdom grows. (page 21)

- *What examples from the Bible or from history can you think of in which somebody died to self for the greater good?*
- *How has Gateway experienced this truth or how might we experience it in the future?*

Chapter 1: Aircraft Carriers, Cruise Liners, and Battleships

The Alarming Statistics:

Study after study shows that most Christians have never even shared their faith — most indicating that 90 percent of evangelicals have never shared their faith with anyone outside of their family. According to a recent Lifeway Research study, in the next seven years 55,000 churches in the United States will close their doors, and the number of those who attend a church on the weekend in the United States will drop from 17 percent to 14 percent. Only 20 percent of churches in the US are growing, and only 1 percent are growing by reaching lost people. So 95 percent of the church growth we celebrate merely shuffles existing Christians around. (page 26-27)

- *Which of these statistics are most alarming to you and discuss their long-term impact.*
- *Have you ever shared your faith with someone outside your family. If so, share those experiences. If not, why not?*

Change In Thinking:

I believe we need a fundamental shift in how we think about the mission of the church. Let me illustrate, using three types of ships that represent how many Christians see church. (27-28)

- *Review the 3 types of ships on pages 27-28, or see the notes at the end of this chapter's study guide for a brief description of each.*
- *In what ways is Gateway like a cruise ship? a battleship? an aircraft carrier?*

We need a new metric for success beyond size. To evaluate something's success, we first need to understand its function. Churches that want to penetrate their world with the gospel think less about the Sunday morning bang and more about equipping their members to blast a hole in the mountain of lostness. (page 28-29)

- *Do you agree with this statement? What could "equipping our members" look like at Gateway?*
- *Read Ephesians 4:11-12. In these verses, who is doing the works of service? Who is doing the equipping for the work?*

Long-View Of Ministry:

Jesus took the long view of ministry. He understood the power of exponential multiplication, so he didn't just gather a mega-audience; he built a sending community. He didn't leave a throng of 10,000 congregants awestruck at his sermons; he commissioned 120 believers equipped to carry the gospel into the world. We need, like Jesus, the discipline to devote our energy into those things that will have the greatest, long-term impact on the world, even if it means having to wait years — maybe a lifetime — to experience return on our investment. Are you willing to take the “long view” of ministry and do those things that build long-term movements, even if they don't “feel” as gratifying or make you look as good in the short-term? If so, you will devote yourself to building leaders, not inflating audiences. (page 37)

- *In what ways have you experienced the value of taking the long-view to a specific aspect of your life? Have you ever written a mission statement for your life?*
- *Read John 13:15, 1 John 2:6. J.D. speaks of the “spiritual giants” in his life and how they influenced his faith. Who in your life have you modeled as you walk with Jesus?*

Additional Notes:

Cruise Liner: Offering Christian luxuries for the whole family, such as sports, entertainment, childcare services, and business networking. They show up at church asking only, “Can this church improve my religious quality of life? Does it have good family ministry facilities? Does the pastor preach funny, time-conscious messages that meet my felt needs? Do I like the music?” If their church ever ceases to cater to their preferences . . . well, there are plenty of other cruise ships in the harbor.

Battleship: The church is made for mission, and its success should be seen in how loudly and dramatically it fights the mission. This is certainly better than the “cruise liner”; however, it implies that it is the church institution that does most of the fighting. The role of church members is to pay the pastors to find the targets and fire the guns each week as they gather to watch. They see the programs, services, and ministries of the church as the primary instruments of mission.

Aircraft Carrier: Like battleships, aircraft carriers engage in battle, but not in the same way. Aircraft carriers equip planes to carry the battle elsewhere. Members need to learn to share the gospel, without the help of the pastor, in the community, and start ministries and Bible studies — even churches — in places without them. Churches must become discipleship factories, “sending” agencies that equip their members to take the battle to the enemy.

Chapter 2: Our (Painful) Journey Toward Sending

Tear It Down To Make It Better:

Throughout the Scriptures, before God built something great in the Spirit, he first tore down the efforts of the flesh...God has to take our eyes off our kingdom before he can build his. (page 41)

- *Read Genesis 15:1-6; 17:1-5, 17; 21:1-2 - How do we see this principle play out in Abraham's life?*
- *Can you give other examples of this from Scripture or your own life?*

His Kingdom – Not Ours:

Our prayer, as a church, changed from “God, let us reach lots of people and grow huge” to “God, let us bless and bring joy to this city.” What's good for the kingdom of God in Raleigh-Durham (Findlay) is not always good for the Summit (Gateway) Church, and what is good for the Summit (Gateway) Church is not always good for the kingdom of God. (page 43)

- *What does he mean by this?*
- *How does (or should) this challenge us?*

Selfish Ambitions: *He must become greater; I must become less. (John 3:30)*

Unlike John the Baptist, who prayed that Jesus must increase and I must decrease, my heart was “Jesus, I don't care if you increase, as long as I increase.” (page 43)

- *Can you see a little of this in your heart?*

And what if I answer this prayer [for a revival in your city]. . . and send a revival into Raleigh-Durham beyond all you've asked or imagined . . . one that they will talk about for hundreds of years . . . but I choose another church through which to do it? What if that church grows, and yours stays the same? (page 43)

- *How would you feel if Gateway's numbers decreased and another area church flourished with a major revival that brought glory to God for centuries?*
- *What is the cure for this pride in our hearts?*

A “Sending” Ministry:

Sending out people and giving away your resources, you see, will most often compete with your church’s “bottom line,” not benefit it. Sending means giving away some of your best leaders and letting go of needed resources. It means giving away opportunities in the kingdom, and watching others get credit for successes that you could easily have obtained for yourself. The only way you’ll be willing to do that is if you love Jesus’ kingdom more than you own. (pg 45)

- *How does this make you feel? Respond to this statement.*

God’s Will: *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. (Matthew 4:19)*

I had been asking God what his will was, telling others I was trying to “find God’s will for my life.” That has to be one of the dumbest phrases Christians use: “finding God’s will.” We don’t have to “find” God’s will, because it’s not lost. “The Lord . . . is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9 NKJV). His will is that we be involved in that mission. How would your life change if you assumed that you were already called and now needed to know only where and how? (page 47)

- *Do you tend to get confused when seeking God’s will for your life?*

- *Do you believe the question is “no longer if you are called, only where and how”? If so, where and how are you called missionally?*

Spiritual Fruit:

Sending is already in the DNA of any Jesus-following church. How and where you are sent will be revealed by God’s Spirit, but that you are sent has been declared once and for all in God’s Word. The closer you walk with Jesus and the more you understand what he did to save you, the more natural sending will become. Sending, like all spiritual fruits, grows out of a healthy gospel culture.(pg 51)

- *If you are to have a sending mindset, what is the best means of bringing that about?*

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