

ALL IN *equals* COMMITMENT

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Revelation 3:21 NKJV

INTRODUCTION

The first 3 sessions in this ALL IN study have focused on the components of a great decision: legacy, trust, and honor. In our case, God is at the center of each of these aspects of the 2-year commitment we're making. Knowing that God is at work to build a great legacy and inviting us to join Him; trusting Him as an expression of the relationship He wants to have with us; and honoring Him because we realize that as much as He has done for us up until now, there is more and even better ahead. Now we want to make sure that we're not being distracted or diverted from God's best. This session we want to think about the waiting part of commitments and the dangers offered by the shortcuts that will present themselves. As Pastor Miles puts it, we don't want to let the dead space tempt us into a way other than God's best. And His plan is to change us.

When Jesus took the aging apostle John aside and told him to write the 7 memos to churches that make up the first three chapters

of Revelation, one of His repeated promises to believers in any of the churches was directed to those who stayed the course, who made the commitment and then did not falter or wander from the way before them. He called them "overcomers." In our case, trusting and waiting on God presents an obstacle. We want the trusting to be easy and the waiting to be short. Instant and simple is the way we like it; but it is seldom God's way. While He wants us to overcome head-on, we are looking all around for a shortcut or a detour.

The way forward looks hard or even impossible—and it is. Real commitment isn't easy. It can make us nervous. But when we've run the course called ALL IN for the next two years, the great things that will happen will not be because we found a shortcut or a detour around the challenge but because we discovered God made a way where there seemed to be no way. To Him will be the glory... as it always is.

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COME TOGETHER

LIFE Group Host Note: Open your group with prayer. Then, begin your time together by using the following questions and activities to get people talking.

- 1 What does commitment mean to you? To what are you committed?
- 2 Who is the most "committed" person you know? To what are they committed?





WATCH THE VIDEO

You can watch the video online at sdrock.com/ALLIN or on the ALL IN DVD. This fourth session video will cover another significant aspect of ALL IN. The video discussion cuts to the heart of how we approach commitments and how we often get off track. After watching the video, have someone read the Scripture passage and questions in the Read section and direct the discussion among the group. As you go through each of the subsequent sections, ask someone else to read the questions and direct the discussion.





LEARN TOGETHER



This week is about confronting real, actual barriers that people have to giving and overcoming them.

Use the following questions to guide your discussion of the teaching and stories you just experienced, and the Bible passage on the next page. You may also want to refer to the study notes on page 62 to guide your reading and discussion.

READ: GENESIS 15:1-6

¹After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."² But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"³ Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"⁴ And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."⁶ And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. (NKJV)

READ: GENESIS 16:1-3

¹Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant

whose name was Hagar.² So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai.³ Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan.

- 3 What shortcuts did Abram and Sarai each come up with? Why?
- 4 In Abram's case, the shortcut was discussed between him and God; in Sarai's case, the plan was hatched between Abram and her. How did this make a difference in the outcome?
- 5 As Pastor Miles discussed shortcuts with the group in the video, what were some of the concerns or insights that stood out for you?



STUDY NOTES

I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward (15:1). As Pastor Miles has said, “God doesn’t need our money; He wants our hearts.” Whatever blessings He pours into our lives, nothing compares with the gift of His presence and His love for us. Abram was a little stuck on measuring things from this world’s limitations.

You have given me no offspring (15:3). Any time we leave out the word “yet” in a statement we make to God we are revealing a lack of trust or an attitude of impatience. God not only renewed His covenant with Abram, He gave him a glimpse of the future captivity of his heirs in Egypt only to be made into a nation to inherit the Promised Land (15:9-14).

He believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness (15:6). The New Testament (Rom. 4:3, 9, 22; Gal. 3:6) points to this passage as evidence of God’s saving people by faith, not by works.

God has restrained me from bearing children (16:2). Basically, Sarai was saying, “God put a road block in front of me, but I think I see a shortcut around it.” As illustrated by Pastor Miles and others who share on the video, God may allow us to pursue our detours, but the consequences and costs are high.



Both these chapters in Genesis (15 & 16) include fascinating details about God’s dealings with Abram and Sarai.

GROW TOGETHER

In this section, talk about how you will apply the wisdom you’ve learned from the teaching and Bible study. Then think about practical steps you can take in the coming week to live out what you’ve learned.

6 What has been your personal experience with considering or trying shortcuts?

7 When it comes to thinking about our finances, some people struggle with spending too much, and other people struggle with saving too much. Both are indicators of our desire to want to live the “American Dream” and control our situations rather than to turn them over to God. Does this resonate with you? Where do you struggle? And why?

8 Pastor Miles reminded us that God’s objective is ultimately a changed us. We’re a little like Abram in Genesis 15, who was nervous about what was going to happen with his stuff. Could you truly say that you are giving in a way that is changing you? Or has it become comfortable, routine, or stale? How does this question challenge you?

9 What makes you nervous as you think about making a 2-year ALL IN commitment? Where does this nervousness come from? How might this actually be a good thing?

Real commitment: if it was easy, everybody would be doing it. In this fourth session of ALL IN, everyone should be feeling the weight of the challenge. And no one can carry that weight alone. That’s why ALL IN is not just an individual or couples’ challenge, but one before the entire church. We’re ALL IN this together. And since God is with us, we need to faithfully acknowledge Him when we think and talk about the commitments He wants us to make.

DAILY DEVOTIONALS



There are six days of devotions. On the last day, read back over your responses and let that guide a final time of reflection.

Use these daily devotions to go deeper into this week's topic. Each day, read the verse given. Take your time. Ask God to speak to you through His Word. Notice which word or phrase stands out to you. Then take some time to journal your response back to him. You can write whatever is on your heart. Answer the "Reflect" question only if it's helpful. Feel free to go another direction, if you sense God leading you. On the first day, you may want to read over all the verses for the week to get the "big picture" of the passage. But then walk slowly, verse by verse. Listen to what God wants to say to you through His Word, and respond to Him as you meditate on the truths of Scripture.

After Day 3 of each week, you will have an opportunity to take what you have learned and put it into practice. These "Action Steps" will challenge you to respond to these truths in your daily life.

DAY 1

Read Luke 9:62

But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Reflect:

How will you keep from getting distracted or looking back during the next two years?

DAY 2

Read Revelation 3:21

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Reflect:

As the One who overcame, what help does Jesus offer to us as we seek to be overcomers?

DAY 3

Read John 16:33

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

Reflect:

If yesterday's verse was overwhelming, how does this one settle things a bit?

Action Steps:

Think about an area where you are tempted to take a shortcut. Pray for God's strength to wait on His promises.

DAY 4

Read Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Reflect:

As someone once said, "The only problem with a living sacrifice is that it keeps crawling off the altar." This verse is Paul's invitation to "ALL IN" commitment. What is keeping you from being a living sacrifice?

DAY 5

Read Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Reflect:

How might the next two years be the most transformative work of God in your life since you became a follower of Jesus? How does that possibility influence your willingness to be ALL IN?

DAY 6

Use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your reflection time this week.

APPENDICES

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

Tools to Help You Have a Great LIFE Group Experience!



- 1 Notice in the Table of Contents there are three sections: (1) Front Matter; (2) Sessions; and (3) Appendices. Familiarize yourself with these sections. Some of the Appendices will be used in the sessions themselves.
- 2 This is much more than a LIFE Group workbook. It has been designed as a constant companion for the ALL IN Initiative. What we do in worship, the messages we hear, and every aspect of our life together as Rock Church family will be guided by this Study Guide during the coming weeks.
- 3 If you are Hosting or co-hosting a LIFE Group, check out sdrockgroups.com and you will find some encouragement and help so you can avoid common obstacles to effective group meetings.
- 4 Use this Study Guide as an advisor. If the group responds to the lesson in an unexpected but honest way, go with that. If you think of a better question than the next one in the lesson, ask it.
- 5 Enjoy your LIFE Group experience. Have fun.
- 6 Pray before each session—for your group members, for your time together, and for wisdom and insights.
- 7 Read the outline for each session on the next pages so that you understand how the sessions will flow.

OUTLINE OF EACH SESSION

A typical group session for the ALL IN study will include the following sections:

INTRODUCTION. Each lesson opens with a brief thought that will help you prepare for the session and get you thinking about the particular subject you will explore with your group. Make it a practice to read these before the session.

COME TOGETHER. The foundation for spiritual growth is an intimate connection with God and God's family. You build that connection by sharing your experience with a few people who really know you and who earn your trust. This is helpful preparation for being able to share what Christ has done in your life with anyone you meet—which is what a disciple is ready to do. This section includes some simple questions to get you talking—letting you share as much or as little of your story as you feel comfortable doing. Each session typically offers you 2 options. You can get to know your whole group by using the icebreaker question(s), or you can check in with 1 or 2 group members for a deeper connection and encouragement in your spiritual journey.

WATCH THE VIDEO. When the study directs you to, you'll start the video and watch a short teaching segment. You can watch the videos online at sdrock.com/allin or with the ALL IN DVD available at each Rock campus. Each session's teaching will include biblical insights from Pastor Miles, interaction with brothers and sisters about aspects of the ALL IN life, and powerful worship music to lead us into God's presence. Space is provided in this study guide to take notes you can use in the discussion to follow.

LEARN TOGETHER. In this section, you'll have an opportunity to read a passage of Scripture and discuss both the teaching and the text. You won't focus on accumulating information but on how you should live in light of the Word of God. We want to help you apply the insights from Scripture practically and creatively, from your heart as well as your head. At the end of the day, allowing the timeless truths from God's Word to transform our lives in Christ should be your greatest aim.

STUDY NOTES. This brief section provides additional commentary, background, or insights on the passage you'll study in the Learn Together section.

GROW TOGETHER. God wants you to be a part of His Kingdom—to weave your story into His. That will mean change. It will require you to go His way rather than your own. This won't happen overnight, but it should happen steadily. By making small, simple choices, we can begin to change our direction. This is where the Bible's instructions to "be doers of the Word, not just hearers" (James 1:22) comes into play. Many people skip over this aspect of the Christian life because it's scary, relationally awkward, or simply too much work for their busy schedules. But Jesus wanted all of His disciples to know Him personally, carry out His commands, and help outsiders connect with Him. This doesn't necessarily mean preaching on street corners. It could mean welcoming newcomers, hosting a short-term group in your home, or walking through this study with a friend. In this study, you'll have an opportunity to go beyond Bible study to biblical living.

SHARE AND WORSHIP TOGETHER. This section will have a question or two that will challenge you to live out your faith by serving others, sharing your faith, and worshiping God.

SERMON NOTES. Bring your study guide with you each Sunday and take notes during the sermon in the provided blanks.

DAILY DEVOTIONS. Each week on the Daily Devotions pages we provide Scriptures to read and reflect on between sessions—a month's worth of reflections to keep God's Word near your heart. This provides you with a chance to slow down, read just a small portion of Scripture each day, and reflect and pray through it. You'll then have a chance to journal your response to what you've read. Use this section to seek God on your own throughout the week. This time at home should begin and end with prayer. Don't get in a hurry; take enough time to hear God's direction.

FAQs

About LIFE Groups

What do we do on the first night of our group?

Like all fun things in life—have a party! A “get to know you” coffee, dinner, or dessert is a great way to launch a new study. You may want to review the Group Agreement (page 101) and share the names of a few friends you can invite to join you. But most importantly, have fun before your study time begins.

Where do we find new members for our group?

The best way to grow your group is through personal invitation! Make a list of friends, coworkers, and family members, etc. that you can invite. And then make it a point to talk to at least five people every Sunday, asking if they’re in a LIFE Group, and then invite them to your group if they’re not already involved.

No matter how you find members, it’s vital that you stay on the lookout for new people to join your group. All groups tend to go through healthy attrition—the result of moves, releasing new hosts, ministry opportunities, and so forth—and if the group gets too small, it could be at risk of shutting down. If you and your group stay open, you’ll be amazed at the people God sends your way. The next person just might become a friend for life. You never know!

How long will this group meet?

The ALL IN Study lasts for 6 weeks, but we’d encourage you to prayerfully consider continuing your group after ALL IN is complete! At the end of this study, each group member may decide if he or she wants to continue on; some groups launch relationships for years to come and others are stepping stones into another group experience. Either way, enjoy the journey.

Can we do this study on our own?

Absolutely! This may sound crazy, but one of the best ways to do this study is not with a full house but with a few friends. You may choose to gather with another couple who would enjoy some relational time (perhaps going to the movies or having a quiet dinner) and then walking through this study. Jesus will be with you even if there are only two of you (Matthew 18:20).

What if this group is not working for us?

You’re not alone! This could be the result of a personality conflict, life stage difference, geographical distance, level of spiritual maturity, or any number of things. Relax. Pray for God’s direction, and at the end of this 6-week study, decide whether to continue with this group or find another. You don’t typically buy the first car you look at or marry the first person you date, and the same goes with a group. However, don’t bail out before the 6 weeks are up—God might have something to teach you. Also, don’t run from conflict or prejudice people before you have given them a chance. God is still working in your life, too!

Who is the host?

Most groups have an official host who facilitates the group. But ideally, the group will mature and members will rotate the leadership of meetings. We have discovered that healthy groups rotate hosts/leaders, on a regular basis. This model ensures that all members grow, give their unique contribution, and develop their gifts. This study guide and the Holy Spirit can keep things on track even when you rotate hosts. Christ has promised to be in your midst as you gather. Ultimately, God is your leader each step of the way.

How do we handle the childcare needs in our group?

Very carefully. Seriously, this can be a sensitive issue. We suggest that you empower the group to openly brainstorm solutions. You may try one option that works for a while and then adjust over time. Our favorite approach is for adults to meet in the living room or dining room and to share the cost of a babysitter (or two) who can watch the kids in a different part of the house. This way, parents don’t have to be away from their children all evening when their children are too young to be left at home. A second option is to use one home for the kids and a second home (close by or a phone call away) for the adults. A third idea is to rotate the responsibility of providing a lesson or care for the children either in the same home or in another home nearby. This can be an incredible blessing for kids. Finally, the most common solution is to decide that you need to have a night to invest in your spiritual lives individually or as a couple and to make your own arrangements for childcare. No matter what decision the group makes, the best approach is to dialogue openly about both the problem and the solution.

LIFE GROUP AGREEMENT

Our purpose is to talk about what it means to live a God-first life with a few friends.

Group Attendance

To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent. (Completing the Group Calendar on page 102 will minimize this issue.)

Safe Environment

To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved.

Respect Differences

To be gentle and gracious toward people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or “imperfections.” We are all a work in progress.

Confidentiality

To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.

Encouragement for Growth

Accept one another as we are while encouraging one another to grow.

Shared Ownership

To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.

