LifeGroup Leader Discussion Guide

Crashing Sukkot | Week: Grumbling Around God

Key Scripture: "Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly." John 7:24

Big Idea: Grumbling can distort how we see God, others, and our circumstances. When our hearts are focused on our own expectations rather than God's will, we can miss what God is doing right in front of us. Jesus invites us to move beyond appearances, personal agendas, and assumptions so we can recognize Him and follow the Father's will.

Sermon Summary

The Feast of Sukkot, or Tabernacles, reminded Israel of their wilderness years, when God lived among His people and provided for them day by day. Families built temporary shelters and gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate God's presence and faithfulness.

Yet during this very celebration, Jesus stood in the temple teaching, and many people failed to recognize who He truly was. The irony was striking: they celebrated the God who had dwelt among them, while judging the very One God had sent to live among them.

Their grumbling, assumptions, and unwillingness to do God's will blinded them to the truth. Jesus challenged them to look beyond outward appearances and judge rightly. The same challenge faces us today: will our frustrations, expectations, and preconceived ideas keep us from recognizing God's work in our lives?

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for bringing us together as a LifeGroup. Thank You for your faithfulness and for the reminder that You are present with us, even when life doesn't unfold the way we expect.

As we talk about grumbling, give us honest hearts. Help us recognize the frustrations and assumptions that may be shaping how we see You and others. Give us humility to listen, courage to obey even when we don't have all the answers, and wisdom to see beyond appearances. Help us become people who seek your glory rather than our own and who follow Jesus faithfully in every season.

Holy Spirit, guide our conversation and help us encourage one another toward greater trust and obedience. May we leave tonight more aware of your presence and more willing to do your will.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Discussion Questions & Leader Insights

1. What did you find interesting or have questions about from the sermon?

Leader Insights:

- Begin with an open conversation that gives everyone an opportunity to reflect on what stood out to them.
- The Feast of Sukkot provides a powerful backdrop to John 7. The people were celebrating God's presence and provision, yet many failed to recognize Jesus, God in their midst.
- Encourage people to share questions, uncertainties, or points of tension rather than feeling they need to have the right answer.
- Listen for themes that may connect naturally to the later questions: grumbling, timing, obedience, judgment, and recognizing Jesus.

Leader Tip: Don't rush to answer every question. Sometimes the best starting point for spiritual growth is an honest question that invites the group to look more closely at Scripture.

2. John uses the wilderness grumbling word for their muttering (John 7:12). What grumble is running in the background of your life right now, and how is it colouring what you see?

Leader Insights:

- Grumbling is more than expressing frustration. It can become a background attitude that shapes how we interpret everything around us.
- In the wilderness, Israel repeatedly struggled to trust God's provision and direction. In John 7, people's muttering about Jesus reveals a similar struggle to recognize God's work.
- Our grumbling might concern relationships, work, family responsibilities, church, unanswered prayer, or circumstances that seem unfair.
- A frustration may be legitimate, but if we continually rehearse it, it can become a lens through which we interpret God, other people, and our future.
- Help the group distinguish between honestly bringing a concern to God and allowing resentment to take root.

Follow-up prompts:

- What does your recurring complaint reveal about what you expect God to do?
- How might gratitude or trust change the way you see this situation?

Leader Tip: Model honesty without encouraging a cycle of complaining. The goal isn't to shame people for frustration, but to help them bring it honestly before God and consider how it is shaping their hearts.

3. Read John 7:6. Jesus lives by the Father's clock; his brothers can go any time because they carry no divine mission. Where are you feeling pressure to force something — a decision, a door, a timeline — that God has not opened yet? What is driving the urgency?

Leader Insights:

- Jesus was not controlled by public expectations or the pressure of His brothers. He acted according to the Father's purposes and timing.
- There is a difference between faithful initiative and trying to force an outcome because we feel anxious, impatient, or afraid of missing out.
- Our urgency may be driven by comparison, fear of failure, a desire for control, people's expectations, or discomfort with uncertainty.
- Waiting on God does not mean passivity. We can pray, seek wise counsel, prepare, and take responsible steps without demanding that everything happen on our preferred schedule.
- God's timing is not always easy to understand. The invitation is to trust Him while discerning what faithfulness requires today.

Follow-up prompts:

- What are you afraid might happen if this takes longer than you want?
- What is one faithful step you can take without forcing the outcome?

Leader Tip: Avoid telling people that every delay is necessarily God's direct instruction to wait. Help them discern the difference between a closed door, an unresolved situation, and a difficult but necessary step of obedience.

4. Read John 7:7. Jesus is hated because truthful testimony exposes, not because he is abrasive. When have you felt pushback for telling the truth, and when have you been disliked just for being abrasive? How do you tell the difference, honestly?

Leader Insights:

- Jesus' testimony exposed the world's evil and challenged people who did not want their actions brought into the light.
- Truth can create tension when it confronts wrongdoing, challenges assumptions, or calls people to change. Being opposed does not automatically mean we are right, however.
- Sometimes people resist truth because it is uncomfortable. At other times, our delivery, attitude, lack of compassion, or unwillingness to listen makes a difficult conversation unnecessarily hurtful.
- Jesus demonstrates both truth and grace. He did not compromise the truth to gain approval, but neither should we use truth as an excuse for pride or harshness.
- A helpful distinction is whether we are seeking the other person's good and God's glory, or simply trying to win, prove ourselves right, or release our frustration.

Follow-up prompts:

- Can you speak the truth with humility while remaining open to correction yourself?
- How might you communicate the same truth with greater love and respect?

Leader Tip: Keep the discussion from becoming a justification for being unkind. Encourage participants to examine both the truth of their message and the spirit in which they delivered it.

5. Read John 7:17. Obedience comes before full understanding. Where are you waiting for a complete explanation before you will obey? What would obeying first look like?

Leader Insights:

- Jesus teaches that a willingness to do God's will helps a person discern whether His teaching comes from God.
- We sometimes want certainty before obedience. We may want to know how everything will work out before forgiving someone, serving, giving generously, pursuing reconciliation, or taking a step of faith.
- God often gives us enough light for the next step rather than the entire journey. Trust grows as we respond to what He has already revealed.
- Obedience is not blind impulsiveness. We should test what we believe God is asking of us against Scripture, seek wise counsel, and consider our responsibilities.
- We don't obey to earn God's love. We obey because we trust the One who loves us and know that His ways are good.

Follow-up prompts:

- Is there something Scripture has already made clear that you are postponing?
- What small, practical act of obedience could you take this week?

Leader Tip: Bring the conversation back to specific actions. Encourage people to identify a next step rather than leaving with only a general desire to trust God more.

6. Read John 7:18. Jesus says the test of a teacher is whose glory they seek. In a world of influencers and hot takes, how do you tell who is pointing to the Father and who is collecting a following? Who do you listen to, and why?

Leader Insights:

- Jesus contrasts those who speak for their own glory with those who seek the glory of the One who sent them.
- A person's popularity, confidence, charisma, or online following does not establish that they are speaking truth.

- Consider whether a teacher faithfully handles Scripture, points people toward Jesus, demonstrates humility, welcomes appropriate accountability, and encourages obedience to God.
- Be cautious of voices that cultivate outrage, demand unquestioning loyalty, manipulate fear, or make the teacher's status more important than the truth.
- This question also invites personal reflection: we can become attached to teachers who tell us what we already want to hear.

Follow-up prompts:

- Do the voices you listen to challenge you to become more like Jesus, or mainly reinforce your existing opinions?
- How do you check a teaching against Scripture rather than accepting it because you like the person delivering it?

Leader Tip: Avoid turning the conversation into criticism of particular personalities or groups. Focus on biblical principles for discernment and the responsibility each of us has to test what we hear.

7. Read John 7:24. Appearances said: unlettered Galilean, Sabbath-breaker. Reality said: the Sent One doing the Father's work. Who — or what situation — have you judged by appearances lately? What would judging correctly, with humility and truth, look like there?

Leader Insights:

- The crowd formed conclusions about Jesus based on incomplete knowledge, familiar assumptions, and their understanding of what the Messiah should look like.
- We can do the same when we judge someone's character by their appearance, background, social status, mistakes, reputation, or first impression.
- Judging rightly does not mean abandoning discernment or pretending that harmful behaviour is acceptable. It means looking carefully at the facts, considering context, applying God's truth, and avoiding premature conclusions.
- Humility means recognizing that we may not know the whole story. Truth means being willing to see what is actually there, even when it challenges our assumptions.
- Jesus is the ultimate example: His words and actions must be understood in light of His mission and the Father's will, not merely the crowd's expectations.

Follow-up prompts:

- What might you be assuming without having enough information?
- What would it look like to extend grace without ignoring truth?

Leader Tip: This is an opportunity to encourage reconciliation and healthier relationships. Invite people to consider a specific assumption they may need to revisit, while respecting the privacy of those involved.

8. Read John 7:27–29. "We know where this man comes from," the Jerusalemites say — and that familiarity becomes their barrier. They know the earthly facts and miss the Sender entirely. What do you "know" about Jesus that might actually be keeping you from knowing Him: a Sunday-school version, a cultural version, a version that never challenges you?

Leader Insights:

- The crowd believed they understood Jesus because they knew something about His earthly origins. Their partial knowledge became a barrier to recognizing His true identity and mission.
- Familiarity with Christian language, Bible stories, church services, or religious traditions does not automatically mean we are growing in relationship with Jesus.
- We can reduce Jesus to a comforting teacher, a moral example, a cultural symbol, or someone who agrees with our opinions.
- The real Jesus both welcomes us and challenges us. He offers grace, but He also calls us to repentance, surrender, love, and obedience.
- Growing in faith means continually allowing Scripture to correct our assumptions and reveal more of who Jesus truly is.

Follow-up prompts:

- Is there an area where you like Jesus' comfort but resist His authority?
- What teaching or encounter with Jesus has challenged your assumptions recently?

Leader Tip: Keep this invitation personal rather than theoretical. The goal isn't simply to identify misconceptions about Jesus in society, but to ask how our own image of Him might need to change.

9. Read John 7:31. Belief and opposition grow side by side. Following Jesus does not require a friendly environment. Where is your faith actually growing right now, even in a hostile or confusing season? What signs of life do you see?

Leader Insights:

- John 7:31 shows that despite the opposition and confusion surrounding Jesus, many people believed in Him.
- A difficult environment does not mean God is absent or that faith is failing. Sometimes trust deepens precisely when we cannot see how everything will work out.

- Spiritual growth may appear in small but meaningful ways: choosing forgiveness, praying honestly, resisting temptation, showing kindness to someone difficult, remaining faithful in uncertainty, or asking for help instead of withdrawing.
- Faith does not require pretending that hardship is easy. We can acknowledge doubt, grief, disappointment, and opposition while continuing to turn toward Jesus.
- As a LifeGroup, we have the privilege of helping one another recognize signs of God's work that may be difficult to see on our own.

Follow-up prompts:

- What is one way you are responding to difficulty differently because of your faith?
- How can this group pray for or encourage you in the season you are facing?

Leader Tip: Make room for people whose growth feels slow or whose circumstances remain unresolved. Celebrate faithfulness and small steps of trust, not only dramatic breakthroughs.

Closing Reflection: From Grumbling to Trust

Take a few moments for everyone to reflect quietly on these three questions:

- Recognize: What grumble, assumption, or expectation might be distorting the way I see God?
- Respond: What truth from Jesus am I being invited to trust or obey?
- Act: What is one practical step I can take this week to follow Jesus more faithfully?

Invite anyone who wishes to share one of their responses with the group.

- This LifeGroup Leader Discussion Guide has been generated by ChatGPT AI and edited and formatted by Jeff Austen.