

You Can't Please Both — Small Group Leader Guide

Big idea: You can't live for the crowd and live for Christ at the same time; the fear of man traps, but trust in the Lord frees.

Aim

Help your group identify where people-pleasing is shaping their choices, confess it to the Lord, and take one concrete step of public, courageous faith this week.

Leader Prep (5–10 min, before group)

- Pray for boldness (Acts 4:29) and a gentle, non-shaming tone.
- Read the passages and the message outline; note where you feel tempted to please people.
- Prepare one short personal story (2 min) about choosing Jesus over approval at work/school/family.

Opener (5 min)

- Quick poll: Where do you feel the strongest pressure to please people—home, work, school, online?
- One-sentence share per person.

Read the Word (5–7 min)

- Read aloud: Acts 4:19–20 (ESV); Proverbs 29:25 (ESV); Galatians 1:10 (ESV).
- Optional add-on (if time): John 12:42–43; Romans 8:31–34.

Discuss (30–35 min)

- Head — Understanding the Text
 - 1) In Acts 4:19–20, what convinces Peter and John to speak despite pressure? What do they say they “cannot but” do?
 - 2) How does Proverbs 29:25 picture the fear of man? What’s the contrast it offers?
 - 3) According to Galatians 1:10, why can’t the approval of people and the service of Christ both be ultimate?
- Heart — Bringing It Home
 - 4) Where do you most feel the “snare” (Prov. 29:25)—whose opinion has outsized power in your heart?
 - 5) John 12:42–43 shows people who believed but stayed silent. What keeps otherwise sincere Christians quiet today?
 - 6) Romans 8:31–34 anchors us in God’s verdict. How does Christ’s finished work free you from living for applause?
- Hands — Practicing Bold Faith
 - 7) What’s one setting this week (classroom, jobsite, family text, locker room) where you could name Jesus or live a conviction without softening it?
 - 8) What’s a wise, non-combative way to do that? (e.g., offer to pray, share why you follow Jesus, invite to church, speak truth kindly.)

- 9) Who can band together with you for courage (a classmate, coworker, spouse)? Make a plan together.

Leader tip

Keep tone grace-forward. We're after freedom from a trap, not guilt trips. Celebrate even small steps of courage.

Practice It This Week (2 min)

- One Courageous Step: Choose one concrete action of public discipleship (share your faith story with a friend; bring a Bible to work and read at lunch; post a Scripture with a sentence of why it matters).
- One Accountability Text: Pair up and text each other the day and time you'll do it.

Next Steps

- Public Confession: If someone is following Jesus but hasn't gone public, invite them to plan for baptism or membership interview.
- Memorize: Pick one—Proverbs 29:25 or Galatians 1:10—memorize it and pray it daily.
- Invite: Identify one person who might come to church or group next week if you simply asked.

Prayer (8–10 min)

- Praise God that in Christ we already have the only approval that matters (Rom. 8:33–34).
- Confess specific places you've chosen applause over obedience.
- Ask for Spirit-given boldness and love to speak and live for Jesus this week (Acts 4:31).
- Pray for lost friends by name.

Optional Breakouts

- Students: Where is it hardest to be open about Jesus at school? What could banding together look like this semester (Bible club, prayer huddle, sit together at lunch one day a week)?
- Adults: What conviction at work you've softened? What would it look like to hold that line kindly and clearly?

Leader Coaching & Guardrails

- No shaming. Many carry church hurt or social risk; keep reminding: Jesus bore our rejection so we can walk free.
- Model vulnerability. Share your own approval-cravings honestly.
- Confidentiality. What's shared in group stays in group, unless safety is at stake.
- Timebox. Aim for 75–90 minutes total: 5 opener, 7 reading, 35 discussion, 10 prayer, buffer.

Big Idea

You can't please both. Choose the One whose opinion is eternal—and be free.