



community groups

A FAMILY OF DISCIPLES
ON MISSION WITH JESUS

community group foundations

A GUIDE TO BEING A FAMILY OF DISCIPLES ON MISSION WITH JESUS

welcome!

We are grateful you have decided to join a community group and excited to welcome you to this *Community Group Foundations* guide. We believe the church isn't a building but a body of people following Jesus as we learn to love God, one another, and the city.

This guide is intended to assist you and your group in establishing (or re-visiting) what it means for you to be a family of disciples on mission with Jesus. In the coming weeks, you will study Scripture, share stories, and prayerfully plan how you will practice following Jesus together.

Let's take a look at what this guide entails.

GETTING STARTED

We ask that every group begins by reading through the "Getting Started" section together. This opening portion of the guide will clarify goals and expectations and will assist you in planning the practical elements of going through this guide together.

WE ARE A FAMILY OF DISCIPLES ON MISSION WITH JESUS

The majority of the Foundations guide will explore being a family, being disciples, and being on mission with Jesus. Each of these sections will include several sessions covering different aspects of these core identifiers. Each session has four parts: Introduction, Discussion and Scripture, Exercise, and Prayer.

- The Introduction will present the concept we're exploring that day.
- Discussion and Scripture will look at God's word and facilitate a conversation on how the day's theme applies to our daily lives.
- Exercises are activities to do together and may include journaling, prayer, or planning.
- Prayer is a way to close out your time together by asking God to take what has been discussed and apply it to your hearts by the power of his Spirit.

CELEBRATION AND COMMITMENT

The guide concludes with discussions about what's next for your community group. These sessions will include planning next steps, a communion meal, and a common agreement to commit to relational intentionality in the group.

We are excited you have joined a group you can grow with! We pray God's grace will refresh and strengthen you as you invest in your community and live continually with them as a family of disciples on mission with Jesus.

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1. getting started

We're here to grow as a family of disciples on mission with Jesus.

To begin, read *Matthew 12:46-50*.

After a moment of reflection, have someone pray for the group.

Having begun in God's word and by asking him to move among us, let's now talk about what we're doing and why we're here.

Community Group Foundations is designed to walk a community group (new or old) through discussing, praying, and planning how to be a family of disciples on mission with Jesus. Throughout the process you will grow together by...

1. Connecting with God,
2. Connecting with one another,
3. And planning how your community group will function.

First, let's get to know one another. Go around the room and share three things about yourself. If you're stumped about what to share, here are some ideas:

- Where you grew up.
- Why you wanted to join a community group.
- Your favorite thing to do for rest and enjoyment.
- Your favorite book or movie.

HOW DO WE USE THIS GUIDE?

Now that the ice is officially broken, let's talk about how the guide itself works.

This "Getting Started" session is here to help everyone in your group get on the same page about what to expect from your time exploring this guide together. We encourage you to read straight through it, discussing the questions as you go.

The rest of the guide can be used in much the same way, as it is designed to carry the weight of facilitating discussion. It is also meant to be flexible. You may not get through every question in a session. That's okay. Prioritize reading and discussing Scripture, doing the exercise, and following the prayer prompts.

WHAT'S THE PLAN?

Next, let's make sure we're all on the same page about what we'll be doing with our time together for the next fifteen weeks or so.

1. Discuss when and where you will meet together for the duration of this guide. The time and place may change later, so this isn't a forever decision, but knowing where you'll be through at least your time in this guide will help everyone know what to expect.
 - We recommend getting together at least once a week, covering one session per meeting. That said, be adaptable. If there is a session your group needs more time with, take an extra week to pray and study that topic together.
 - The fourth session of this guide is about sharing our stories and will take at least two weeks, so plan

accordingly. Some groups even do a retreat to have devoted time for getting to know one another.

2. Plan to eat together. Meals are an easy and often-overlooked opportunity to share life, pray together, talk about Jesus, and meet one another's needs for food and friendship.
3. Commit to going through the guide together. Life happens and some people may miss a few sessions. If you have to miss, simply let someone know and make time to catch up on what the group talked about.
4. Consider setting a time limit for the discussions. Each section should take about an hour to talk through. Having clear, agreed-upon boundaries will be helpful for everyone involved.
5. Discuss any upcoming vacations, schedule shifts, or holidays. How will you adjust together?
6. Should your group desire to talk about it, there is an appendix at the end of this guide addressing group size and multiplication.

What about the kids?

If there are kids in your group, decide how your group will care for them during your weekly discussions. This is totally up to your group's needs and abilities, but here are a few ideas:

- Partner with another CG to trade off caring for the other group's kids each week.
- Pool money to hire a babysitter(s).
- Decide at what age kids could actually join the discussion.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME?

- Be patient. Living in a way that reflects healthy, Christian family is something we have to learn together. Show the grace and kindness of Jesus to one another as the Lord grows all of you in various ways throughout this process.
- Be faithful. Do what you can to be present each time your community discusses the Foundations content. If you need to miss a discussion, give someone a heads-up and schedule time to review what the group discussed.
- Listen to the Holy Spirit. Be attentive to God's comforting voice and correcting hand in your life (John 14:15-17).
- Listen to others. We are learning to love one another as Christ has loved us (John 13:12-17). Ask him to help you listen to others with compassion as they share their stories, expectations, sins, and disappointments (James 1:19).
- Love in word and deed. Seek to enter each interaction with your community looking for an opportunity to serve someone else (Philippians 2:1-5). Speak encouragement and correction as if all your words were worship to the Lord (Colossians 3:16).
- Pray! The only way a group of people can be established in the gospel and knit together in love is by the power of God. Ask him to heal, convict, restore, lead, and strengthen your community through this process.

SPACES OF COMMUNITY

Committing to a community of disciples is about more than one night a week. While this regular time together is an important part of community, it is not the whole. The goal is to do life together.

Over time, your group will learn how to function in different spaces. The table is a helpful metaphor for thinking how being and making disciples applies in different contexts. Keep these “tables” in mind as you prayerfully plan to live more like a family and less like a weekly event.



Dinner table

The dinner table is where the whole community group meets to eat, pray, and learn as a family of disciples. Consider this a closed-door time. Others are welcome, but it is by invitation and for the purpose of taking part in what the group has planned to do together.



Coffee table

The coffee table is where we meet in smaller groups to intentionally build meaningful relationship. This is a highly flexible concept. The coffee table may be a weekly meeting with one to four others in your group for Bible study, confession, and prayer. It could also be a one-time game night with a few neighbors. The distinguishing mark of the coffee table is small size and high intentionality.



Banquet table

At the banquet table, community groups gather with neighbors, co-workers, and friends to celebrate and recreate. This is any open-invitation event you may have such as watch parties, housewarmings, wedding showers, etc.

YOUR TABLE

Your group may already have regular gatherings that fit these descriptions. For instance, your group’s regular discussion of this material is a dinner table space. You may also have prayer meetings and game nights scheduled that operate as coffee tables.

If you’re not there yet, that’s okay. Start with establishing your dinner table and keep the other tables in mind as you grow and plan over the next few weeks.

GETTING STARTED SUMMARY

We know this has been a lot of reading, and reading in groups can get awkward. We promise the rest of the guide is more interactive. (Really! Look ahead and see.)

Here is what we have discussed today and want to have completed and decided before we conclude:

- When will we meet to talk through this guide? Where? How often?
- How will we organize food for our time together?
- How will we take care of the kids?
- Are there any vacations or holidays coming up that need to be accommodated?
- We’re eager to see what God does in us as we move forward!

PRAYER

Ask God to help you grow as a family of disciples on mission with Jesus.

NEXT WEEK

For the remainder of this guide, you will need your Bible and a journal or notebook for study and discussions.

WE ARE FAMILY

2. sons and daughters

Through the good news of Jesus, we are not only reconciled to God, we are adopted into his family. This means we have God as our Father in heaven and we are his beloved children.

Being family means we have to do away with any notion of Christianity as “just me and Jesus.” Our relationship with God is personal but not private. We need one another, and by God’s grace we have one another. Because Jesus laid down his life for us, we are children of God, sons and daughters of the King.

Much like our families of origin, we do not get to choose who is in the family. This is one of the beauties of the good news of Jesus: God is making a new community unified not by nationality, ethnicity, or social class, but by the love of God.

SCRIPTURE & DISCUSSION

What is the most tight-knit community you’ve ever been part of? What made it so tight?

What is unique about family versus other kinds of community (co-workers, teammates, etc.)?

Read *1 John 3:1-3*. What are some ways being the beloved of God could change the way we live?

EXERCISE

In Christ, we are defined by the love of God our Father. And yet, there are many things competing to define who we are. Take a few minutes to write down what competes for your primary identity (for example: accomplishments, talents, relationships, etc.). Try to think of what is appealing to you about those things. Be ready to share.

PRAYER

In groups of two or three, share one of the things that competes for your heart. In effect, this is confession. As you pray for one another, ask God to help you comprehend and be redefined by his love.

WE ARE FAMILY

3. sisters and brothers

Jesus has reconciled us to God, making us his sons and daughters. In his death and resurrection he has also overcome the sin and suffering that divided us from one another. As beloved children of God we have become brothers and sisters in Christ.

As we discussed before, our relationship with Jesus is personal but not private. We show the world that we belong to Jesus by loving one another. This familial love is meant to be both emotional and practical. It takes time to build rich relationships that reflect the emotional depth of family. However, we can quickly learn to love one another practically by sharing food, loading moving trucks, paying medical expenses, etc. It is large and small expressions of committed love over time empowered by the Holy Spirit that will build friendships that reflect familial love between us.

SCRIPTURE & DISCUSSION

Read *John 15:9-17*.

Why does this passage draw connection between our love for one another and God's love for us?

How has God expressed his love for us? How might that love shape how we seek to love one another?

EXERCISE

One useful framework for thinking about how we love one another is the five "love languages": words of affirmation, acts of service, quality time, receiving gifts, and physical touch.

Each of us receives love differently. Read the descriptions of the five love languages from the appendix at the end of this guide. Then have each person write down their first and second languages. Go around the room, having each person share what they wrote down and why.

What are some practical ways you can begin to express love for your brother or sister in their love language, even if it's not your own?

PRAYER

Have someone read this prayer for the group: Jesus, you command us to love one another as you have loved us. And you loved us by pouring yourself out, setting aside your own rights and preferences, and putting yourself in our shoes. Teach us your way, and show us how to love our brothers and sisters in you by putting ourselves in their shoes and communicating our love in the language of their hearts for their sakes. Amen.

4. **sharing stories**

We all long to be known and loved. If someone professes loves for us but doesn't know us, then it feels cheap. If they know us but don't love us, then it's hurtful. But to be known and loved is the key to genuine, healthy relationships.

This week, we're going to look at why and how to share our stories. Then everyone will take some time to prepare to share a 10- to 15-minute version of their story next week.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Your story is what has shaped your beliefs about God, the world, and yourself. The themes that dominate our stories will often be patterns for how we define ourselves and view our relationship to God. Knowing the events and relationships that have shaped our lives will help us know and understand one another.

The best part is that God is the master storyteller. He is driving the whole narrative of creation to an exciting conclusion where sin, Satan, and death are removed forever and Jesus is glorified over a fully renewed creation. And he's weaving your story into that master narrative.

As we get to know one another's stories, we are invited to participate in God's work of making those stories new. We love one another by participating in the new parts of the narrative where Jesus is bringing conviction, healing, peace, and hope to us day-by-day.

Telling others about your life may stretch your vulnerability. That's okay! Maybe this whole idea freaks you out a little bit. That's okay, too! Simply begin your story by sharing what you're experiencing. You could say, "I don't like talking about myself, so this is hard for me," or "I'm going to give the overview, but there are things in my story I'm not ready to share." This will help your group listen, pray, and love you better.

LISTENING

For many of us, listening to stories can be almost as difficult as sharing them. Our first inclination will be to make someone else's story about us by relating it to our own stories or responding out of our own discomfort. The most important thing to remember as you listen to the stories of others is that their story isn't about you, it's about what God has done and is doing in them. Jesus is the hero of our stories.

After someone shares, reflect back one detail, event, or emotion that seemed important to them. "Reflecting" is part of listening: it can be as simple as repeating back key things you heard, or summarizing something that was said in a way that honors the other person's experience. Doing this shows others you are listening and invites connection.

After one or two people reflect what they heard, ask, "How can we pray for you and how can we be a support to you in the future?" Then pray before the next person shares.

STORY GROUPS

If your group is larger than eight people, have everyone break into smaller groups (three to four). These will be your "story groups." Once you have established story groups, everyone should still make efforts to hear the stories of those in other story groups. For example, you could invite three or four people over for brunch or dessert to share stories and pray. As more people join your group in the future, find ways to share stories with them as well.

Story groups are not the only way to share our stories. We have provided group leaders with a primer including other possible approaches, but if you have a suggested approach of your own, feel free to share it

with the group.

SCRIPTURE & DISCUSSION

Read *Acts 22:3-21*. How does Paul's example help us think about telling our stories?

EXERCISE

Together (or in story groups), look over the templates in the appendix at the end of this guide offering some different approaches you can take to telling your story. Talk about any nervousness or excitement you're feeling, then pray for one another.

Take time to prepare for sharing a 10- to 15-minute version of your story.

PRAYER

Pray for God to knit you together in his love.

SHARING

If there's time, start sharing your stories (if anyone feels ready). Conclude at your agreed-upon time by giving thanks for how Jesus has revealed himself in our stories. It's okay if only a story or two is shared: you will continue sharing next week.

Take the entirety of your next session to continue sharing, making sure everyone tells their story.

JESUS IS THE HERO OF OUR STORIES

We recommend reading the following aloud after everyone in the group has shared:

Everyone (at this table / in this room) has a story that shapes our beliefs, emotions, and behaviors. God has invited us to share in his work of redeeming our stories and reshaping us. Let's keep these things in mind as we learn together what it means that we are a family of disciples on mission with Jesus:

All of us have joy, pain, disappointment, and hope mixed into our stories. But Jesus has stepped in and begun to unite us with his greater story of redemption in all the earth. Our greatest life-pivoting moment was when we were amazed by grace and turned from our sin to follow Jesus.

He is the hero of our stories. He is the hope we look forward to. He has filled us with his Holy Spirit to learn how to love God, one another, and our city. Let's pray that God will help us know his love in a way that brings us healing, joy, freedom, and hope.

WE ARE DISCIPLES

5. what is a disciple?

In the New Testament, followers of Jesus are called “Christians” three times, “believers” 15 times, and “disciples” 235 times. Since the Bible mainly identifies people following Jesus as disciples, let’s make sure we understand what that means.

The term “disciple” comes from a Greek word meaning “student” or “learner.” In the ancient world, students didn’t go to a building, sit in classrooms, listen to lectures, and write papers—at least, that’s not all they did. Students followed a teacher. Everywhere. All the time.

They ate meals together, traveled together, and witnessed how the teacher lived out his teaching. Disciples were followers. Along the way they would have been expected to put what they learned into practice. They were *with* their teacher in order to *learn* from their teacher so they could *become like* their teacher.

To be a disciple of Jesus is to:

- Be with Jesus
- Learn from Jesus
- Become like Jesus.

SCRIPTURE & DISCUSSION

How is a disciple of Jesus different from the common perception of Christians in our culture?

Who are people in your life who have helped you grow as a disciple of Christ?

What rhythms and practices in your life cultivate intimacy with Jesus?

Read *Luke 9:22-26*.

What about this teaching challenges or scares you?

EXERCISE

Our mission as a church is to make disciples of Jesus who love God, one another, and our city. In other words, we want to see people who are far from Jesus become followers of Jesus in a way that shapes their whole lives.

Of the three categories of loving God, loving one another, and loving our city, where do you think you are strong? Where do you need growth?

After a few minutes of thinking and writing, break into groups of two and share what you wrote.

PRAYER

Read *Hebrews 13:20-21* as a launching point for prayer over your group.

WE ARE DISCIPLES

6. sharing life

As a family learning to love God, one another, and our city, we share life together. This is more than getting together once a week. It means committing to one another in a way that impacts our whole week. Sharing meals and stories is a great beginning to that.

When we share life, we create a mutual space between us, which in turn becomes an invitational space for others. This means to love one another as a family of disciples is also to live on mission with Jesus. Jesus tells us, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (*John 13:35*). This directly connects discipleship with both our mutual love and with all people!

SCRIPTURE & DISCUSSION

Read *Acts 2:42-47*.

Practically speaking, how did the disciples' commitment to community play out in daily life?

What are practical ways your community group can share life throughout the week?

What connection do these verses make between the early church's shared life, their growing numbers, and their “favor with all the people”?

EXERCISE

What is a fun tradition or experience you had with your family growing up or with a past community?

Choose two of the experiences shared and make plans to do them together in the next two months.

Have everyone commit to one way, big or small, that they will connect with others in the group over the course of the coming week.

PRAYER

Read this prayer, inspired by Philippians 2:1-8, aloud:

Heavenly Father, help us be of the same mind, having the same love, being in harmony and of one mind with one another. Keep us from selfish ambition and conceit. Give us the grace we need to look not only to our own interests, but also to the interests of others. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray together, amen.

WE ARE DISCIPLES

7. praying

A family of disciples prays for and with one another. This is at the heart of Christian community because we know that every good thing comes from God our Father, who meets us in prayer and acts on our requests.

The one lesson Jesus' twelve disciples requested was how to pray. There was something in Jesus' prayer life that was different from what they had learned. We can often assume prayer is something we know how to do instinctively, but learning to hear from and speak with the immortal, invisible, triune God is something that comes through practice.

SCRIPTURE & DISCUSSION

What makes group prayer awkward or difficult?

Where did you learn to pray?

Is it easier for you to pray alone or in a group?

Read *Matthew 6:9-13* (the Lord's Prayer).

What is the significance of Jesus starting the prayer with "our" Father?

How does addressing God as Father shape the way we pray?

EXERCISE

The Lord's Prayer is both a prayer in its own right and a teaching tool Jesus used to instruct his disciples how to pray.

Read the first line of the Lord's Prayer out loud, then have each person write a short prayer of their own based on the implications of that line.

Repeat for each line of the Prayer.

PRAYER

Break into small groups. Share the prayers you just wrote, then pray out loud together, continuing to let the Lord's Prayer shape your own prayers.

WE ARE DISCIPLES

8. talking about Jesus

We have found life in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we seek to abide in his love. Part of this is learning the good news of Jesus so thoroughly that we begin to see all of life through the lens of the kingdom of God. This is more than agreeing to a statement of faith, though that is certainly part of it. It means allowing the person and work of Jesus to affect the way we think about our jobs, talk to our spouses, comfort grieving friends, discuss politics, etc.

Like prayer, bringing the gospel to bear on all of life is something we need to learn together. But it won't be a one-time discussion. We need to continually talk about Jesus, learning to apply the gospel and the truth of Jesus to every area of life.

SCRIPTURE & DISCUSSION

What makes talking about Jesus hard for us?

Read *Ephesians 4:11-24*.

Who builds up the body and how is that done?

What is the benefit of this "building up," and what is the truth the passage encourages us to speak?

EXERCISE

Break into groups of two or three and assign one topic below to each group. Feel free to assign the same topic to more than one group if needed.

- Recent job loss
- Chronic illness
- Racism
- Deep guilt from past sin
- Shame from past hurt or neglect

Take five minutes to apply the gospel to the assigned topic/situation. After five minutes is up, have each group share what they came up with.

If you struggle with this, that's okay. We're learning this together. Consider coming back to it after hearing what others have said and giving it another shot.

PRAYER

Use *Ephesians 3:14-21* as a guide for your closing prayer.

WE ARE DISCIPLES

9. meeting needs

Jesus said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (*Mark 10:45*). He stepped into our greatest need and held nothing back. As his followers, we are called to love one another in the same way. There are many needs in our community: emotional, relational, practical, and otherwise. By seeking to meet the holistic needs of everyone in the group, we show the love of Christ among us and glorify our Father in heaven.

SCRIPTURE & DISCUSSION

What makes sharing our needs with others difficult?

Read *Luke 16*.

Luke shows us Jesus meeting all kinds of needs in this chapter of his gospel. Are there any examples from *Luke 16* that remind you of your own needs?

Are there any ways the community group can support you?

EXERCISE

Discuss the abilities or resources you have that could be of help to others in the group, such as skills, tools, spiritual gifts, schedule availability, or passions.

PRAYER

Pray over any needs that have presented themselves tonight or over the past few weeks.

WE ARE ON MISSION

10. to the lost

Jesus is on a mission to save people from sin and death and reconcile all things to himself. As children of God and disciples of Christ, we are following him on that same mission. This is more than trying to get people to come to a Sunday gathering or pray a prayer. We are seeking to show the love of God to people who are far from him, and invite them to follow Jesus as their Savior and King.

SCRIPTURE & DISCUSSION

What happened the last time you talked with a non-Christian about Jesus?

Read *John 1:35-50*.

How does this text shape our understanding of mission?

Who brought you to Jesus? How did that impact your understanding of evangelism?

EXERCISE

Take five minutes and write down the names of people you interact with regularly who do not yet know Jesus.

PRAYER

Have everyone share about one person on their list. Pray for them to come to see the love of God in Jesus Christ.

WE ARE ON MISSION

11. to the hurting

Our commitment to one another is not insular. Our familial love is to overflow as care and kindness for all people. Throughout the Scriptures, God pursues heartbroken, marginalized, and suffering people with his abundant mercy. The bible reminds us we ourselves once did not have mercy, but have now received mercy in Jesus Christ.

As we follow Jesus on his mission to the lost and the hurting, we imitate him by sharing life with those in pain and loving them the way he loves us.

SCRIPTURE & DISCUSSION

When you think of “living on mission,” what comes to mind?

Read *Luke 10:25-37*.

How is love for others displayed in Jesus’ parable?

What does this act of mercy cost the Samaritan?

EXERCISE

What moves you to compassion? Share specific instances when your heart was moved to act on someone else’s behalf. As you listen to others’ stories, write down some ways you identify with people in need of mercy.

Choose two of the shared instances and plan a distinct way you can show kindness to each of those people (or to those in similar situations) sometime in the next two months.

PRAYER

Pray that God will show you specific ways you can show love to hurting people around you and how the gospel is the answer to their pain and hardship.

WE ARE ON MISSION

12. to the marketplace

Our career can often become an idol—something that we find our purpose or identity in. However, the gospel frees us from trying to prove or define ourselves through our hard work or “success.” Instead, as we follow Jesus our vocation becomes a calling from God to use our gifts and talents to glorify him and serve others.

As we learn to love God and our city, we see that where we work (our marketplace) becomes a mission field ripe with opportunities to display the love of Jesus through our service and our love for our co-workers (even the most difficult ones).

Whether you work in an office building, school, or at home, the way you work is an opportunity to worship God and witness to his great love.

SCRIPTURE & DISCUSSION

How does our culture view work?

Read *Daniel 1*.

What about Daniel’s actions were glorifying to God?

How could you apply this example of honoring God in vocation to your job or craft?

EXERCISE

Martin Luther famously connected the prayer “Give us this day our daily bread” with what today would be over 30 different vocations, each doing their part to grow grain and get it to our homes in the form of bread.

Take five minutes to write down the ways your vocation serves our city. Be ready to share your list.

PRAYER

Have someone read this prayer over the group: Our Father in heaven, thank you for calling us into your mission through our daily work. Teach us to labor with all diligence by the power of your Spirit, and keep us from neglecting sabbath rest. Where we have fallen short in our work, give us grace to mend the relationships we’ve harmed. Where we have excelled, Father, be glorified. In all we do, let us worship our Lord Jesus. Not to our names, but to his be the glory. Amen.

PLANNING

13. what's next?

We've talked about what it means to be a family of disciples on mission with Jesus. By now your group has heard one another's stories and begun to practice sharing life, praying together, talking about Jesus, and meeting needs.

Now you will begin to plan how your group will function—where and when you'll meet and who you will pray for and reach out to on mission.

SCRIPTURE & DISCUSSION

Reread our very first passage: *Matthew 12:46-50*.

How has the meaning of these verses changed or developed in your mind over the course of your time in this guide? Are there any changes you've made in your life as a result?

EXERCISE

In the "Getting Started" session at the beginning of this guide, we looked at three tables as helpful imagery for thinking of our lives together with Jesus. Review those three tables together now.

After reading the descriptions of the tables, brainstorm together where the following practices may take place for your group and how different settings, or "tables," could shape how that practice is done:

- Bible study
- Prayer
- Talking about Jesus
- Confession of sin
- Sharing financial needs
- Discussing current events
- Celebration (any kind)
- Seeking resolution to relational strain in the community group

PRAYER

Thank God together for the ways he has shaped you into a community over the course of your time going through this guide!

PLANNING

14. celebration and commitment

Before his crucifixion, Jesus gave his disciples a new tradition we now know as communion or the Lord's Supper. Every time we eat a meal together, we have an opportunity to remember the gospel of Christ: that what we need for life has been provided by Jesus. Bread and wine (or juice, whichever is better for your group) are the specific elements of the meal that call our hearts to remember his body broken and his blood shed for forgiveness of our sins.

SCRIPTURE

Read *Matthew 26:26-30*.

EXERCISE

After your meal, use a loaf of bread and either juice or wine to remind one another that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is as real as the bread and cup you take:

Step 1

Person A shares a confession of sin or a point of suffering from his or her week.

Step 2

Person B will reflect back what was heard. After confirming that Person A has been heard, Person B will hand Person A a piece of bread and a cup of drink, speaking gospel truth as it applies to the particular circumstance shared. If Person B struggles, the group can help by reflecting, suggesting gospel themes, or contributing applicable gospel truth.

Step 3

Person A takes communion. Then Person B shares a confession of sin or point of suffering from his or her week and Person C will reflect back what was heard. Repeat until the group has all received the good news of Jesus or until your agreed-upon time boundary.

(This practice can be vulnerable and intimidating. It's okay to laugh nervously or let your group know what you're experiencing as you share the Lord's Supper in this particular manner.)

PRAYER

Pray that each member of the group is able to receive the grace of Christ even as they have received the tangible symbols of that grace here in this meal.

When you are finished, complete the commitment agreement on the next page.

commitment agreement

You have shared stories, prayed, and planned together. You have begun to learn and relearn how to practice the way of Jesus together.

This commitment agreement is here to help you know who is committed to the relationships and contextualized mission of your community group.

While no one is expected to share life with this group of people exclusively, joining a community group is a commitment to intentionally sharing life, praying, talking about Jesus, and meeting needs together.

COMMITTED COMMUNITY

We believe God has made us part of this community and are ready to make these relationships a priority in our lives. We will revisit this commitment on _____ and discuss what, if any, adjustments we should make then to how we function as a family of disciples on mission with Jesus.

Write names below.

COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

We believe God has made us part of this community and called us to lead as examples of what it means to follow Jesus. We are ready to be among the first to pray, repent, forgive, and celebrate.

Write names below.

Our deacon/coach is _____ .

APPENDIX 1

regarding numbers and multiplication

HOW BIG SHOULD OUR GROUP BE?

While there's no magic number or biblically-mandated group size, we suggest six to fifteen people. Within that, we recommend a leadership team of three to five people (if your leadership team is more than a quarter of the group, consider defining roles, commending faithful commitment, and deciding on a smaller group of leaders).

If your group is larger

Talk together about how you will approach group discussion. It is important that everyone is able to participate and be heard. Will you start together, then break into smaller groups? Will you go more slowly through the content to ensure everyone is heard? Is there another idea the Holy Spirit is leading you toward?

If you have a large group and a large leadership team, consider whether that might be God moving your group to multiply.

DOES OUR GROUP HAVE TO MULTIPLY?

The goal of a community group is to grow in Christ together as you go on mission. We're not here to multiply for the sake of having more community groups. We are here to make disciples for the glory of Jesus. The result of God's Spirit moving through his people in our city will be new disciples of Jesus and new community groups reaching more people in the city.

Disciples make disciples, who go on mission by starting new community groups. In this way, multiplication is a fruit of maturity, but not the goal of groups.

If at any point there are people in your group who feel compelled toward starting a new group, connect with your deacon for guidance and support in the process.

APPENDIX 2

the five love languages

The five love languages are a concept developed by Gary Chapman and published in his book, *The 5 Love Languages*. They provide a valuable framework for considering how we receive and communicate love from and for one another. They are:

Words of Affirmation

Compliments or appreciation expressed in spoken or written form.

Acts of Service

Finding ways to provide for another's need(s), either spoken or unspoken.

Quality Time

Prioritizing others in our schedule and with our attention.

Receiving Gifts

Giving others tangible objects or meaningful experiences.

Physical Touch

Appropriate physical proximity or contact. This does not have to be romantic or sexual: physical touch can include handshakes, high fives, friendly hugs, clapping someone on the back in congratulations, or being a shoulder to cry on.

HEALTHY EXPRESSION

In fact, while physical touch might be the most obvious, there are appropriate and inappropriate ways to use each of these languages in any given relationship.

Your group may want to spend some time discussing what healthy boundaries for and expressions of each of these languages might look like, especially in the context of the biblical declaration that we are all siblings in Christ.

WHAT'S MY LANGUAGE?

When considering what your first and second love languages may be, ask yourself the following questions:

1. How do I express love most often to those around me?
2. What do I request most often from those I'm in relationship with?
3. What do I complain about most often regarding my relationships? This could indicate a way I prefer to receive love, but don't feel like I'm receiving it.

APPENDIX 3

sharing your story: dynamic plot

In the beginning... Where did you grow up? What is an example of what it was like growing up in your home? Did the spiritual temperature encourage rule-keeping or recklessness?

Which led to... How did your home dynamics, or perhaps a shift in them, shape your view of yourself? How did that manifest in your attitudes and behaviors? What was the fruit of those attitudes and behaviors?

But God... What set you on your current trajectory? What was the event that brought you to where you are now? How did that speak into or modify your previous understandings of yourself?

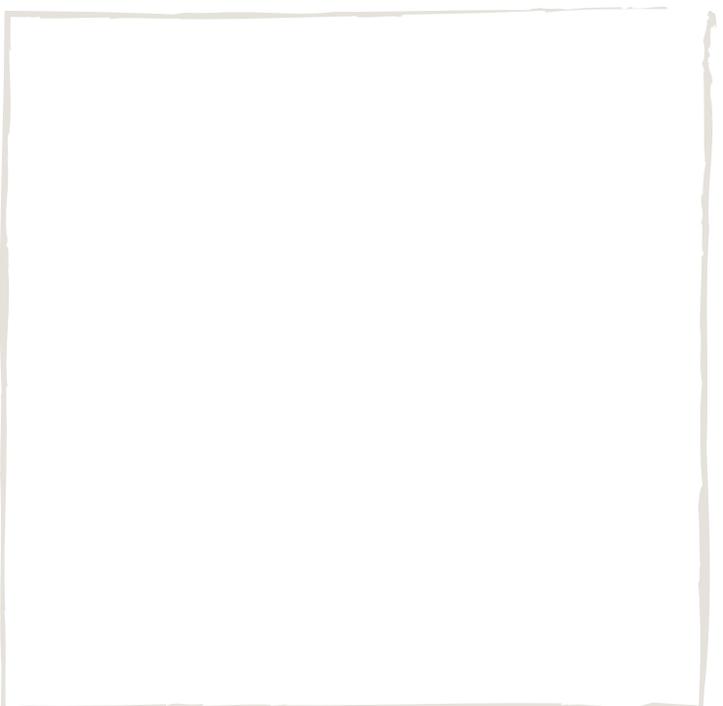
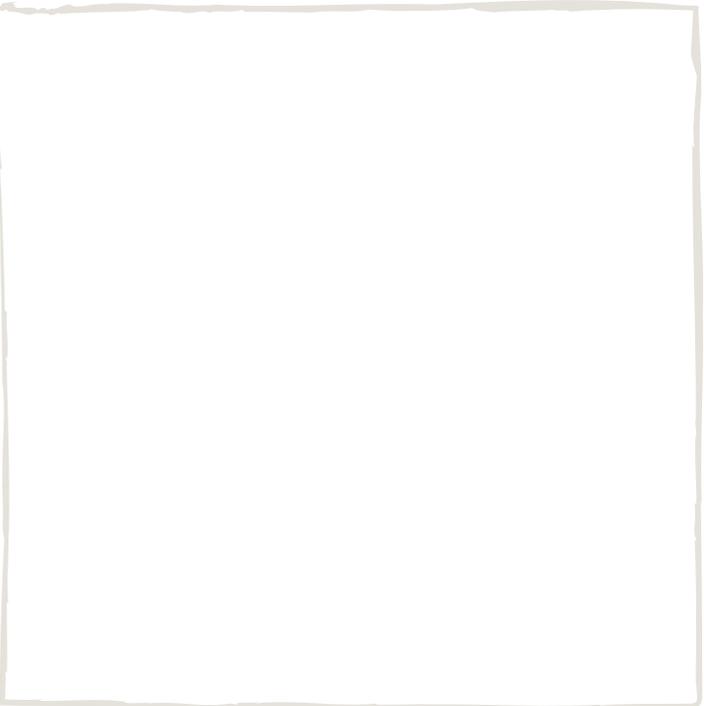
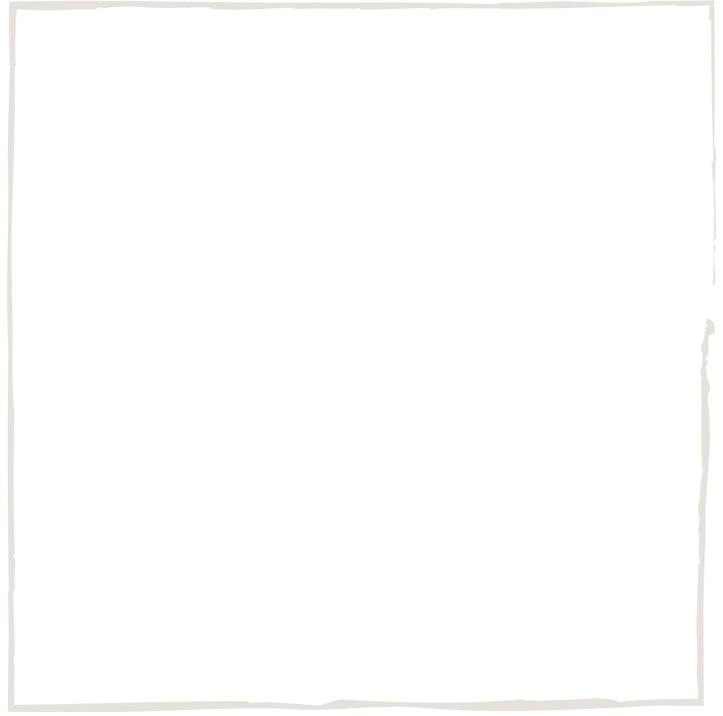
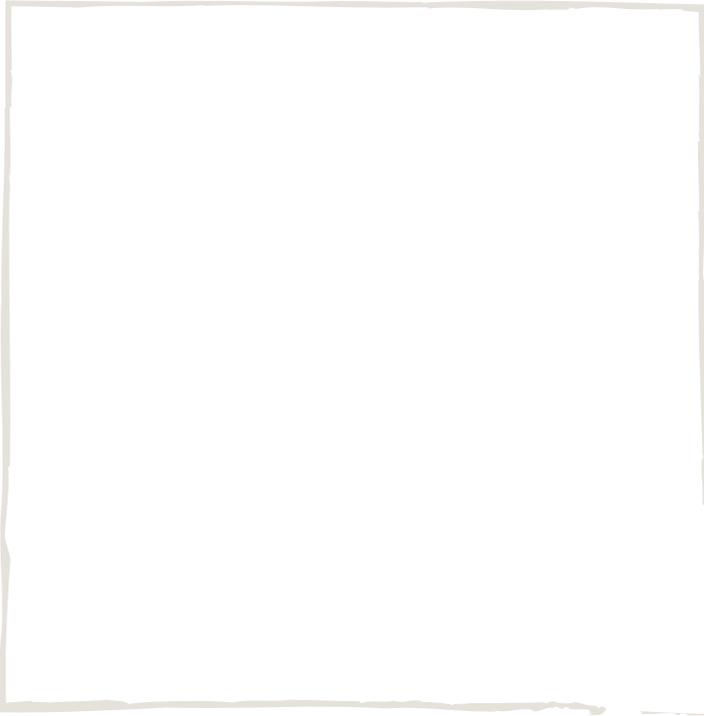
What I hope for... What struggles are you still wrestling with? What future are you longing for or working toward?

Sharing the emotional impact of these events and relationships can be difficult. Check the next appendix for a list of emotion words to help you articulate your experience.

sharing your story: instastories

The four frames below represent four stages of your life. Draw still-frame pictures capturing the essence of each stage or event in your life. Prepare to share each image with your community, explaining why those moments or seasons were shaping for your understanding of God, yourself, and others.

Sharing the emotional impact of these events and relationships can be difficult. Check the next appendix for a list of emotion words to help you articulate your experience.



sharing your story: timeline

Take 10-15 minutes to create a timeline of your life that includes the following elements of your story. Feel free to make an actual timeline that helps you communicate your story. It can be drawn as a line on paper with dates, events, and doodles or be a bulleted list for you to read to your group. Do whatever helps you share.

After making your timeline, plan to share with your group for about 15 minutes. This obviously isn't enough time to cover your whole story, but it will be enough to let the members of your group know you better.

Sharing the emotional impact of these events and relationships can be difficult. Check the next appendix for a list of emotion words to help you articulate your experience.

HEROES

Share two people who have had a great positive impact on you. These could be parents, teachers, mentors, or others who shaped and inspired you.

HIGH POINTS

Share one or two great moments in your life that have shaped you. These could be events, achievements, or seasons of blessing.

HARD TIMES

Hard times may be particularly painful events or seasons of life that were marked by ongoing difficulty. Share one or two of the struggles that have shaped you.

HOPES

Each of us has things we're looking forward to in the future, or at least hoping will come to fruition. Share a hope you are currently holding.

APPENDIX 4

emotion words

Emotions are natural, internal responses to our circumstances. All of us have them. We even have emotions about our emotions. Sometimes sharing them with others can be complex. We hope this list of emotion words will help you express yourself as you share your story, talk about expectations, pray, and worship with your community.

<u>ANGER</u>	<u>SADNESS</u>	<u>JOY</u>	<u>FEAR</u>	<u>CONFUSION</u>	<u>SHAME</u>	<u>LONELINESS</u>
Bothered	Down	Secure	Uneasy	Uncertain	Awkward	Out of place
Irritated	Somber	Content	Apprehensive	Unsettled	Self-conscious	Disconnected
Displeased	Hurt	Satisfied	Hesitant	Perplexed	Embarrassed	Cut off
Annoyed	Disappointed	Refreshed	Anxious	Flustered	Sorry	Insignificant
Frustrated	Mournful	Encouraged	Distressed	Dazed	Remorseful	Neglected
Fuming	Grieved	Thrilled	Afraid	Bewildered	Ashamed	Removed
Irate	Crushed	Elated	Overwhelmed	Lost	Belittled	Isolated
Outraged	Empty	Overjoyed	Terrified	Baffled	Violated	Abandoned
Furious	Despairing	Ecstatic	Numb	Blindsided	Degraded	Forsaken

a guide to being a
family of disciples on
mission with Jesus