



EST. **NORTHVIEW** 1980
COMMUNITY CHURCH

Community Group Leaders' Guide: Sept 30 / Oct 1, 2023

This guide is designed to help you be and become “deeply rooted followers of Jesus” by contributing to increasingly authentic and loving relationships with one another and with God.

You will find that it's not possible to fully cover each of the sections (Gather, Grow, and Go) in this guide. Prayerfully consider how much from each would be right for your group week to week.

GATHER

Deeply rooted through a *community based context*. This section is meant to heighten your awareness of God's presence in your time together, and give one another space to talk about what's really going on in life.

Leaders note: the five bullet points below are valuable things to give attention to every meeting.

We won't adjust this section often.

- Pray. Thoughtfully acknowledge God's presence in the room. Commit your time together to him.
Leaders note: This is a helpful place to start an organized discussion time and calibrate everyone to this essential reality.
- What practical needs should everyone know about? What can we do as a group to help?
- What decisions are you facing? Is there any input you'd like from us as a group?
- What are you praying about right now? How can we as a group join you in prayer?
- Does anyone have a story of where you've seen God at work? Is there something we can join you in celebrating?
Leaders note: This could be a way to follow up with the application plans from a previous group discussion. We'd love to celebrate these stories, too!
(Please get permission and pass them on to us as regularly as possible.)

GROW

Deeply rooted through *biblically based content*. This section is meant to overlap with the current weekend teaching at your Northview campus and position you, as a group, to be formed by studying Scripture.

- Pray - acknowledge God's presence, and ask for his help to hear what he's saying.
- Revisit the weekend sermon. Is there something the Holy Spirit highlighted for you?

Leaders note: discussing the sermon people heard may take considerable time.

Don't feel pressure to rush through this guide and move on.

- Facilitate a guided reflection on Scripture. **The primary text from the weekend sermon was John 12:35-50.**

Leaders note: There's always more in the text than we'll be able to put into a guide.

We've chosen a few items to draw your attention to.

- **Step 1: Read + Observe The Text**

Familiarize yourself with the section of verses.

- **Step 2: Understand Their Story**

Ask questions to observe what the author is communicating to the original audience.

- You may have heard of the term "FOMO" (fear of missing out). Have you ever "missed out" on something that, if you had a second chance to do things differently, you'd make sure you didn't miss? (Anyone wish they'd actually got those tickets to Coldplay last weekend?)
Leaders note: You may want to select this question to have an "icebreaker" effect in your group by giving people insight into the lives of one another while also thinking about a similar dynamic in the text (i.e - "missing out on the light" (v.35-36) or missing the right belief in Jesus despite his signs (v.37) as the next observation questions below will cover.
- Try and imagine how this scene builds off of all that came before it in the weeks and years previously as you examine John 12:37-38.
 - Quick hit questions: What term does John use to describe what Jesus had been doing (v.37)? **Signs**. What was the people's response (v.37)? **Unbelief**. Why does he point back to the prophet Isaiah (v.38)? **To show that something that was predicted was now, hundreds of years after Isaiah, coming true and being "fulfilled". This fulfillment explains the experience.**
- Read John 12:39-43.¹ Why are people reluctant to confess their "belief" in Jesus?
 - Is this still an issue for people today? **(We'll reflect further on this in the application section, too.)**
- Jesus says some significant and direct things to the crowds in 12:44-50.
 - What does Jesus say about the authority behind his teaching here?
Leaders note: Jesus claims that belief in him is equivalent to belief in God the Father (v.44). Jesus claims that seeing him is the same as seeing God (v.45). He claims his authority is from the Father, and that he's only saying what the Father is saying (v.49-50).

¹ As you read these verses the first time, don't get sidetracked by the prophecies about unbelief! We'll talk about that in STEP 3 (the "Connect to His Story") section, as we read other biblical texts to help us figure out what John is saying.

- Based on what you see in this passage regarding his authority, does this challenge or contradict other views you've encountered about the identity of Jesus? How could this passage reinforce your beliefs about who Jesus is?

Leaders note: Most would agree that Jesus is a historical figure. But, not necessarily "divine". John (and the rest of scripture) assert that Jesus IS divine!

○ Step 3: Connect To His Story

Ask questions to understand how this text fits in the larger gospel story.

- John quotes the prophet Isaiah in 12:38-41. This text may appear to create difficulty for us today as we think about why some people don't believe. Check out the context of Isaiah's prophecy for some starting points to think more deeply about this.
 - For the reference in John 12:38, read Isaiah 53:1-12
 - In context, what is Isaiah prophesying about who Jesus is and what he would do? **There's lots here. Some examples: He would have no form or majesty that was attractive (53:2), he would be despised and rejected by men (53:3), he would carry humanity's grief and sorrow (53:4), would be pierced and crushed for humanity's sins (53:5), he'd be oppressed, led to slaughter, and would make many to be accounted righteous as he pours out his soul to death by bearing their sins (53:7-12).**
 - What is he prophesying about how humanity would respond to him? **People would not desire him (53:2), they'd despise and reject him (53:3). The rest of the passage also comments on the sinfulness of humanity and our need for rescue from transgression.**
 - What do we see John saying in 12:37-43 about how people are responding to Jesus? What is the "human responsibility" component of their unbelief? **They did not believe (12:37); they could not believe (12:39); they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God (12:43). For more texts which identify what factors contribute to unbelief see John 3:19-21, John 5:39-40, John 8:43-44, Genesis 6:5, Jeremiah 17:9, Psalm 14:1-3, 2 Corinthians 4:3-6.**
 - Build off of these observations and look up the reference to Isaiah 6:9-10 in John 12:40.
 - In context, what type of people is God "blinding" and "hardening" here? Look up some key places that come before Isaiah 6 for answers: Isaiah 1:2-5, **(these people have a history of rebelling against God, they are full of evil, they've forsaken the LORD)** 2:6-8, **(these people have filled their land with wealth and idols and worship them instead of God)** 3:13-15 **(these people's leaders have harmed the poor and crushed God's people)**, and 5:20-24 **(they call evil good, they call light darkness, they have rejected and despised God's law and his word)**. How does this shape our understanding of humanity and God's response to humanity? **What we see here is that God isn't blinding or hardening people randomly or arbitrarily. They have repeatedly and severely rebelled against the God who had made them his people (see Romans 1:21-32 for how this blinding or hardening could play out).**

○ Step 4: Apply To Our Story

Ask questions to discern what God is telling us to do with the help of the Holy Spirit.

- There's a tension in Christian theology between "God's sovereignty" and "human responsibility". John 12:37-43 may have surfaced this for you. Christian theologians have debated where to draw

firm conclusions here and land in various places. But this isn't just an academic exercise. There are real lives and destinies in the mix.

- Regardless of where you land, and the tensions you feel here about the “specifics” of this topic, what “general” gospel truths about God’s heart for the world from John 12:35-50 can you carry into your prayers and interactions with unbelieving loved ones and friends?
Leaders note: Jesus implores people to walk in the light (12:35), believe in the light (12:36), that he’s come to save the world (12:47), and that God’s “commandment” is “eternal life” (12:50). May this be an encouragement to share the good news and pray for those who don’t yet follow Jesus!
- Reflect on John 12:42-43.
 - Where do you sometimes relate to the “authorities” who believe in Jesus but don’t confess it?
 - Is there something this text motivates you to think differently about in order to shift your perspective of “the praise/glory that comes from God?” Human glory/praise? How can you act on this?

GO

Deeply rooted through *culturally relevant applications*. This section is meant to prompt practices that bring the life of God’s kingdom into us and out to others.

- Pray for your group’s **5x5x5** lists!
Leaders note: This is something that we’re putting deliberately at the top here. Every time. If you don’t know what these are, “5x5x5 cards” are available at each campus on the weekend, or at <https://northview.org/5x5x5/>
- Is there something that seems especially relevant for us to do personally based on our discussion?
Leaders note: This is something that may overlap with the “Apply To Our Story” step in the “GROW” section above, but here it is meant to help narrow down a specific thing that people actually plan to commit to doing.
- Is there something we as a group should plan to do together based on our discussion?
Leaders note: Depending on the applications you’ve discussed in the “GROW” section, there could be opportunities to serve others as a group. This could be at a Northview Campus, as part of a Northview project, or something in our city. Reach out to the Community Groups team if you’re looking for ideas.
- Is there something we as a group should plan to do to spend time with someone who doesn’t yet follow Jesus?