



EST. **NORTHVIEW** 1980
COMMUNITY CHURCH

Community Group Leaders' Guide: Oct 7/8, 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.

*There's a *new* additional note in the “GO” section this 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 (which paused the Gospel of John series for a special "Global Focus Weekend"). 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 Matthew 25:14-30.**

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 The Text**

Familiarize yourself with the section of verses.

- **Step 2: Understand Their Story**

Ask observation questions to understand what the author is communicating to the original audience.

- Describe a time you attempted something (perhaps something "risky") without a guaranteed outcome. You could tell a story where that choice led to something good or to something disappointing. (Could be anything from asking someone out on a date to attempting wakeboarding.)

Leaders note: *You may want to select this question to: a) have an "icebreaker" effect in your group by giving people insight into the lives of one another, while also: b) thinking about a similar dynamic in the text (i.e - investment choices that led to a variety of outcomes) as the observation questions below will cover further.*

- Quick hit observation questions:
 - What is this parable illustrating? Compare 25:14 to the 25:1 and 25:13. ***It is likely illustrating what the Kingdom of Heaven is like and/or what the coming of Jesus in judgment will be like as part of the Kingdom's arrival.***
 - What terms does the master use to describe the first two servants in v.21 and v.23? ***Good and faithful.***
 - What terms does he use to describe the third in v.26? ***Wicked and lazy/slothful.***
 - What reason does the third servant give for his actions in v.25? ***Fear.***
- Try and imagine the weight of the "stakes" - both good and bad - for managing the Master's money¹ here. **Leaders note: *You may encounter tension here. Other questions about God and the gospel may surface. Bring those with you as you can work your way through Step 3 afterwards.***
 - What results from proper use? ***Entering the master's joy and sharing in the master's abundance (v.21, v.23, v.29).***

¹ Most scholars believe that just 1 "talent" was an exceedingly large sum of money. Perhaps 15-20 years worth of annual minimum wage (in today's terms, one talent might reasonably be estimated at \$670,000 based on the minimum wage in B.C. right now). The point being: the master is extremely wealthy and has entrusted a gigantic sum to each servant.

- What results from improper use? ***Losing what the master gave and being cast into darkness (v.29-30).***

○ Step 3: Connect To His Story

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

- Jesus' words in 25:29 are very similar to something he said previously in Matthew's gospel. Look up Matthew 13:1-23.
 - In combination with the parable from Matthew 25:14-30, reflect on how these parables shape our perspective of discipleship.
 - What characterizes faithful discipleship? ***Doing something with what we've been given!***
 - ***In Mt. 25: "doubling the master's money"***
 - ***in Mt. 13: "producing a crop of various proportions" (100x, 60x, 30x).***
 - What factors contribute to inauthentic discipleship?
 - ***In Mt. 25: fear, a skewed perspective of our master (notice the servant basically blames the master for his actions in 25:45-25)***
 - ***In Mt. 13: the activity of the "evil one" (13:19), no "root" which means they fall away in times of trouble or persecution (13:21), the cares of the world and deceitfulness of wealth (13:22)***
- Christians have often struggled with the relationship between "faith" and "works" when it comes to salvation. The "Parable of the Talents" may have surfaced that tension. Several New Testament texts contribute to a biblical perspective on this. One to consider this week is Ephesians 2:4-10.
 - What does this tell us about how people become "saved"?
 - ***God's great love and mercy lead to new life through Christ (2:4-5).***
 - ***By grace, through faith (2:5, 2:8).***
 - ***Not by works (2:9).***
 - What does this tell us about what saved people do?
 - ***Good works through Christ that God prepared in advance for us, his handiwork (2:10).***
- All of this taken together, how should we view "good works" as Christians?

Leaders note: the gospel shows us that it's God's activity that leads to our identity. It's our identity that then leads to our activity. We don't do good works to be saved, but because we're saved, we do good works. Authentic belief will always lead to proper use of our "talents". (You could also refer to Galatians 2:15-20, or John 15:1-6, or James 2:14-26.)

○ Step 4: Apply To Our Story

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

- Consider your relationship with Jesus compared to the servants with their master in this parable.
 - Reflect on what you have been given by God. What are the last things you'd be willing to give up for his Kingdom/mission? If comfortable, share these things and share "why" the discomfort is there for you.
 - Think of those you know that don't know you're a Christian currently. What makes us afraid to "hide" or "bury" what we have from God (perhaps our personal testimony)?
 - What would motivate or empower us to "double" what the master has given us?

Leaders note: The parable appears to indicate that what the servants do with the money reflects how they view their master. For us, if we view Jesus as supremely worthy of our efforts to bring him glory, that will likely lead to one type of lifestyle. As one commentator puts it: "The servant's misperception of the master has produced alienation, mistrust,

fear, and then personal sloth. Had he truly loved his master, he would not have attempted to place the blame on him but would have operated out of love.”²

Do we really know him and believe in the one who loved us and gave himself for us to the degree that our life choices naturally flow from this?

- Is there something that you’ve recently sensed the Lord is calling you to invest in more thoroughly for his glory? Or give up for his kingdom? Or pursue more intentionally for his mission?

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.

**An upcoming event that might be fun to do is register for our Kids Ministry’s “Trunk or Treat” event*!*

*Details at northview.org/kids.**

- Is there something we as a group should plan to do to spend time with someone who doesn’t yet follow Jesus?

**NEW* Leaders note: Think of the upcoming dates on the calendar: Thanksgiving, Halloween, Christmas. Is there something you could do to interact with your neighbours, or others who don’t have a church home? It doesn’t need to be something big or overly “evangelistic”.*

Think: “what are people already engaged in that we could leverage for connection?”

For example, regardless of your enthusiasm for “Trick-or-Treating,” could your group set up a Hot Chocolate table (or something) in a front yard so you are present in your neighbourhood and could interact with others that evening? Or, could your group do a prayer walk around a neighbourhood that evening?

² Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 807.