



EST. **NORTHVIEW** 1980
COMMUNITY CHURCH

Community Group Leaders' Guide: Nov 18/19, 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.

****NOTE: There are updated parts of 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.

- Pray. Thoughtfully acknowledge God's presence in the room. Commit your time together to him.
Leaders note: This is a helpful way to start an organized discussion 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 share and celebrate stories from our Community Groups to honour God and encourage one another! (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. Be sensitive to this, but indicate your plan to move through the other sections of the guide below. It might be helpful to say something like: "we want to take a few minutes to hear what God highlighted for you in the message, and then in a few minutes we'll be moving into a guided reflection on the Scripture passage the speaker used."*

- Facilitate a guided reflection on Scripture. **The primary text from the weekend sermon was John 15:1-17.**

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.

- **Icebreaker:** John 15 records the last of seven "I AM" statements of Jesus in John's gospel with "I am the true vine" (John 15:1). We'll discuss what this means further in step 3, but for now, share from your life to get a feel for this dynamic in the text (while also helping others get to know you).
 - Describe a time where the newer version of something you have was far superior - a huge upgrade - to the previous version and/or maybe replacing something that didn't work as well as it could be. (A new vehicle with better fuel economy?)
 - (With Christmas coming, perhaps you're hoping for a "new" thing to replace a faulty, outdated, or insufficient old thing - or perhaps last Christmas you got such a new thing as a gift! A new phone with a better camera? New socks that don't have holes?)
- Try to imagine what's happening in this scene through these observations.

You will hopefully find these simple to answer. They are here to a) highlight some key details that contribute to the questions in the later steps ahead, and/or b) help you look deeper at something that might be easy to miss.

 - The idea of "bearing fruit" is central to this passage.
 - What does Jesus say the source of fruit is? (15:1-5)
 - ***It comes from Jesus as the "vine" (15:4-5)***
 - ***It comes through God's pruning work as the "vinedresser" (15:1)***
 - What happens to branches that don't bear fruit? (15:2, 15:6)
 - ***They're "taken away" (15:2)***
 - ***They're "gathered, thrown in the fire, and burned" (15:6)***
 - What happens when branches do bear fruit? (15:2, 15:8)
 - ***They're pruned to produce more (15:2)***

- **The Father is glorified (15:8)**
- **We're shown to be true disciples (15:8)**

- Observe Jesus' motives in this passage. What are they in...
 - ...15:11? **He wants his disciples to have "his" joy in them, fully!**
 - ...15:17? **He wants his disciples to love one another.**
- Keep these observations in mind as you proceed to the next 2 steps.

○ **Step 3: Connect To God's Story**

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

- The imagery of the "Vine" has many Old Testament connections.
 - Look up Isaiah 5:3-7 and Jeremiah 2:21.
 - Who are these verses towards?
God's people, Israel.
 - What similar language from John 15:1 is used?
The imagery of a vine.
 - What is different from these verses in comparison to what Jesus says about himself in John 15?
 - **Isaiah 5: Although it was planted by God, it didn't yield grapes.**
 - **Jeremiah 2: This vine is "corrupt" and "wild", in contrast to "fruitful".**

Leaders note: As God's chosen people, Israel was meant to "bear fruit" for God's glory. Though Israel was the vine God transplanted from Egypt and planted on a hillside, it became a vine that was cut down (see an additional reference in Psalm 80 for more. For Jesus to proclaim himself as the "true" vine, demonstrates his identity as one who would fulfill Israel's purpose to obey the commands of God and bear fruit.

- Look up 1 John 4:13-21. How does John's writing expand on or clarify what Jesus is saying in John 15:1-17?
 - **Whoever confesses that Jesus is the son of God experiences God "abiding" in them by the Spirit (4:13-15)**
 - **God abiding in us helps us come to know and believe the "love" God has for us (4:16-18)**
 - **Our love for others flows out of God's love for us, and is connected to our love for him (4:19-21)**

Leaders note: Notice the parallel language and connected realities to John 15! For example, Jesus desires that we understand God's love, and "abide" in it (15:9). Or another example is the parallel between John 15:10 and 1 John 4:21 - loving God is connected to us loving others.

- What you've discussed here can shape your thinking in step 4.

○ **Step 4: Apply To Our Story**

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

- What "fruit" do you think God currently wants to produce in your personal life and/or sphere of influence?

Leaders note: there's been much scholarly discussion about what Jesus means by "fruit". But for the purposes of your discussion it's probably helpful to think in general terms: whatever fruit

specifically looks like, it will always be classified as either experiencing life with God and/or bringing that life to others. I.e - knowing God, loving God, and loving one another.¹

- How does the knowledge that Jesus produces the fruit help you as you consider your weaknesses?
Leaders note: Sometimes we may end up discouraged that our inadequacies and weaknesses can't overcome the spiritual needs we see. For example: How could we possibly serve our church family by leading a Community Group? We may feel we lack what is needed to bear fruit. Consider the great encouragement John 15 is. Our job is to abide, Jesus' job is to bear fruit.
- Is there anything from this text that has encouraged you to "remain" or "abide" in Jesus with increased intentionality this week?

There are a number of profound truths that can stir us to give God more of our attention and obedience.

- *God's glory! (15:8)*
- *God's love! (15:9)*
- *God' joy! (15:11)*
- *God's friendship! (15:14-15)*

Leaders note: There's also the negative side: being taken away and burned (15:2, 6). While we ought to be careful to see this as a performance metric to salvation, Jesus is teaching that connection to him "will" result in fruit. No fruit may cause us to consider if we're actually connected to Jesus in faith.

- Loving others is a way we abide (15:10, 12, 17). But to do this, we must live in community with others.
 - How has the repeated call to love one another the past several weeks been used by God in your relationships?
 - Where are you struggling with this? What ways could you pray "in Jesus' name" (15:7, 16) - a way that is aligned with what God desires (as expressed in his word) - to see new fruit?

Leaders note: If you'd like to discuss "praying in Jesus' name" or the connection between "loving God by keeping his commandments" further, the past 2 weeks of Group Guides covered these topics because they came from the previous sections in John's Gospel.

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.

¹ Additional commentary help: "...this fruit is the consequence of prayer in Jesus' name, and is to the Father's glory (vv. 7, 8, 16). This suggests that the 'fruit' in the vine imagery represents everything that is the product of effective prayer in Jesus' name, including obedience to Jesus' commands (v. 10), experience of Jesus' joy (v. 11—as earlier his peace, 14:27), love for one another (v. 12), and witness to the world (vv. 16, 27). From D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 517.

- 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.

****CHRISTMAS AT NORTHVIEW** - With Christmas rapidly approaching, our team has rallied around several projects to serve our city: Christmas Hampers, and Toy Drive! These are ideally suited to do with your Community Group! Check out northview.org/Christmas/ for more information.**

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

Christmas time can create some natural connection points with your neighbours and others in our community.

For example, what social events could your group plan that would be easy to invite someone to?

- **Christmas movie night?**
- **Glow Christmas in Langley?**
- **Mt. Lehman Christmas Home Tour? <https://www.mtlehmanchristmashometour.com/>**