



Community Group Leaders' Guide: January 27/28, 2024

This guide is designed to help you and your group be **deeply rooted followers of Jesus**.

Leaders note: Feel free to take different approaches week to week.

Take 10-15 minutes and map out an approach for your next meeting in advance.

Here's a few examples:

1 - BALANCE GATHER + GROW + GO.

Our hope is that by the end of each semester, you've given attention to all 3 discipleship categories: *Gather*, *Grow*, and *Go*. But you won't be able to do the entirety of each of the 3 sections in 1 meeting. If you want a balanced approach in this meeting, select one or two items from the Gather and Go section in advance, and condense the Grow section (perhaps skip the sermon recap, and prioritize a few things from each step). You can also choose a different order (for example, maybe it works better to start with "grow" and end with "gather" + "go").

2 - EMPHASIZE BIBLE STUDY.

If you want this meeting to have a higher "study" feel, skip the "gather" section, and work through the "grow" section. Then, at minimum, take one thing from the "go" section: *prayer for the lost*.

3 - EMPHASIZE SHARING LIFE.

If you want this meeting to have a higher "relational" feel, work your way through the "gather" section, and leave the "grow" section for this week. But try, at minimum, to take *prayer for the lost* from the "go" section.

You don't have to spend hours preparing like a scholar that "teaches".

You can spend your week a) walking with God to lead out of the overflow of that relationship, and b) taking 15 minutes familiarizing yourself with this guide to be a shepherd that "cares" and "facilitates".

GATHER

Deeply rooted by sharing life seeking the presence of God.

This community based context can 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.
Start here. This is an important way to start an organized discussion and calibrate everyone to this 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?

This can be a way to revisit application plans or prayers from a previous group meeting.

**We'd love to share and celebrate stories from our Community Groups to honour God and encourage one another!
(Please get permission to pass them on to us as regularly as possible.)**

GROW

Deeply rooted by being formed through the word of God.

This biblically based content overlaps with the current weekend teaching at your Northview campus and positions you, as a group, to be shaped by studying Scripture.

- **Pray.** Acknowledge God's presence, and ask for his help to hear what he's saying.
Leaders note: you could ask one other person to do this. A sample prayer: "Father, thank you for this time we have. We acknowledge that you are here with us and we ask for your help to hear what you're saying through your word by your Spirit. We commit our time to you for your glory and our good. Amen."
- **Share a takeaway from the weekend sermon.** Is there something the Holy Spirit highlighted for you?
Leaders note: Be sensitive to time by indicating upfront if you plan to move through the other sections of the guide below. It might be helpful to say something like: "we want to start by hearing one thing God highlighted for you in the message, and then in a few minutes we'll move into a short study of the Scripture passage the speaker used."
- **Facilitate a guided reflection on Scripture.** The text from this past weekend was **John 17:20-26**.

Start with an "Icebreaker"

In this passage we get a unique window into the prayer of Jesus which emphasizes "oneness". We'll discuss what this means further in the steps below, but for now, share from your life to get a feel for this dynamic in the text (while also helping others get to know one another).

Icebreaker Question: Who in your family would you say you are the most "like" in terms of personality and preferences?

- *(For example: Maybe you're more like your dad (or his side of the family) - you like the same things, have the same mannerisms, sense of humour etc. Maybe you and a sibling are basically twins.)*

Step 1: Read The Text

Familiarize yourself with this section of verses.

Step 2: Understand Their Story

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

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.

- We're looking at the end of Jesus' prayer in this chapter. According to 17:20, who is he praying for?
 - **Both his first disciples, and "those who will believe" in Jesus through "their word".**

- Jesus repeatedly expresses the desire “that they may be one”. 17:21 and 17:23 indicate *why* he desires this. Look for the “so that” statements. What do you see?
 - **“...so that the world may believe that you sent me” (17:21)**
 - **“..so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me” (17:23)**

- What things does Jesus want his disciples to experience in regards to...
 - His “glory”? (17:24?)
He desires them to see the glory he had before the foundation of the world by being *with* him.
 - His “love”? (17:26)
He desires that the same love that Jesus has from the Father would be *in* them.

Leaders note: These might be familiar ideas, but they aren't casual ideas. Aren't these things deeply profound to ponder!?

- 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.

We've selected a few connections that are here to a) expand on the content of the passage, and/or b) clarify the content of the passage.

- “...that they may become perfectly one...” - What Jesus prays for becomes true as people believe in him and come to experience life *in* him. People who share life in God become God's family and this new identity creates specific activity. For example, how does Ephesians 4:1-6 describe who we are and what we're to do?
 - **We're urged to walk in a manner “worthy of our calling” (4:1)**
 - **We're urged to be completely humble and gentle (4:2)**
 - **We're urged to be patient, bearing with one another in love (4:2)**
 - **We're to be eager to maintain “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:3)**
 - **Our new identity is rooted in the reality that there is one body and one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father who is in us. (4:4-6)**

Leaders note: We sometimes misunderstand being “one”. The witness of the New Testament, as indicated in this prayer of John 17, is that the “oneness” is a oneness based on a) believing in the word that the disciples pass on (17:20), and b) sharing in the life of the Father and the Son (17:21). Being “perfectly one” then, isn't about “agreeing about everything” or prioritizing “unity” at the expense of the truth. People throughout history have been unified in false belief!

- If Ephesians 4 further describes some of what we ought to be united in, Ephesians 5:1-11 offers some helpful biblical categories for what we ought *not* to attach ourselves to. What types of things are we to have “nothing to do with”?
 - **We're to be imitators of God and walk in love (5:1). This means we cannot “be partners” with those who engage in sinful disobedience (5:3-7), or have anything to do with “fruitless deeds of darkness” (5:8-11). You can build off of this in step 4 below.**

- “...that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them ” - Look up Galatians 2:20. How does Paul further describe what the Christian life looks like as a result of the Father answering Jesus' prayer?

- **We have a new identity: “I no longer live, but Christ in me”**
- **We live by faith**
- **We live with a grateful awareness that the one *in us* is the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us!**

- What you’ve discussed above 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.

- The idea of “unity” can be difficult to navigate. Jesus wants his followers to be “perfectly one”, but as we’ve seen above, there are things this *does mean* and also things this *does not mean*.
 - How do we know which things to be unified in and which not? Is there something you’re currently noticing in church or culture we should not attach ourselves to?
Revisit step 3 if you need a biblical guide here.
 - Is there a situation in your life where God might want you to fight for unity? How would you do that?
- It is clear that when we become believers, we can say we are now *in Jesus* and Jesus is *in us*. This is a glorious truth, perhaps the reason why Jesus says “I have given them the glory that you gave me” (v.22).
 - How has the reality of Christ being in you changed how you live? (Where would you be today if this were not true?)
 - Remember, the answers to Jesus; prayer have a “mission” element to them - he wants the world to know who he is! Is there someone who needs to hear your first-hand testimony of what God has done to see the glory and love of the Father?
 - You can also use these answers to fuel prayers of thankfulness and encourage one another in your group time.

GO

Deeply rooted by participating in the mission of God.

These culturally relevant applications are meant, with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, to prompt actions that bring the life of God's kingdom into us and out to others.

- Pray for the "lost" in your sphere of influence. Use the **5x5x5 cards** as a tool.
Leaders note: This is something that we're putting deliberately at the top here. Every time.
("5x5x5 cards" are available at each campus on the weekend.)
- 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. Or, perhaps to gather for worship, prayer, and/or equipping together.
Consider some upcoming Northview events that might be especially helpful to attend as a group!
 - **Short-Term Mission Trip?** Have you considered participating in short-term missions? Plans are underway for a trip this summer! Join us as we travel to South Asia alongside our Northview-supported global workers, with opportunities to share the Good News, work with children in education programs, take part in leadership development, and encourage young adults and leaders who are learning and serving there. Go to northview.org/short-term-trips to learn more. Application deadline is January 31, 2024. For more info or questions, email globalmissions@northview.org
- Is there something we as a group should plan to do to spend time with someone who doesn't yet follow Jesus? Or to make/strengthen connections with our neighbours?