



Community Group Leaders' Guide: February 3/4, 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 another 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 18:1-14**.

Start with an "Icebreaker"

In this passage Jesus enters into the darkest part of the story in order to accomplish the ultimate good. 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: Describe something you initially thought wouldn't be good, but turned out to be a pleasant surprise.

- *(For example: Maybe it was something simple like: you've had low expectations for a movie or a restaurant, but it turned out to be one you really enjoyed. Maybe it was something more serious, like an inconvenience or hardship that God used to develop deeper trust in him.)*

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.

- The terribly painful climax of Jesus' story enters a new stage in John 18. According to 18:4, what is Jesus' perspective?
 - **"Knowing all that would happen to him" he came forward. He didn't run away.**

- How does John describe the group Judas brings to arrest Jesus according to 18:2-3?
 - **He brings a “band of soldiers” and “officers from the chief priests”.**
- How does this group respond to Jesus’ words regarding himself in 18:6?
 - **They “drew back and fell to the ground”.**
- How does Jesus care for his outnumbered disciples?
 - **He makes sure they are not arrested with him and gets the opposition to let them go.**
- Look at 18:11. What imagery does Jesus use to describe the ordeal he is entering?
 - **He describes the coming events as drinking “the cup” the Father has given him.**
- 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.

- 18:4 - “Jesus said to them, “I am he”. In our English translations we can miss what Jesus is alluding to by his response. However, Jesus is making a claim about his identity that becomes clearer with some Old Testament understanding. Read Exodus 3:13-14.
 - What name does God give for himself to Moses?
 - **“I AM WHO I AM”.**
 - In light of this, what do you think Jesus is alluding to when he says “I am he”? Read 18:6 again and consider how this connection may inform our understanding of what Jesus says and how the group physically responds.
 - **Jesus is saying, he is the “I AM”, with all capitals! He shares the name of God because he is the Son of God (See also John 8:58-59 and 20:31). For all the numbers and force that Judas and his band show, they physically collapse at Jesus’ declaration of his divine identity. What a detail to remember at the moment of his arrest!**
- 18:11 - “Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me?” Jesus knows everything that is about to happen to him and he knows why he must allow it to happen. In the Old Testament the image of a “cup” carried a specific meaning. Read Isaiah 51:22, for example.
 - In light of this, what is the cup Jesus believes he is drinking?
 - **In Isaiah God made a promise that he would not make his people drink the cup of his wrath. Little did Isaiah know it was God himself who would drink the cup instead, through Jesus on the cross!**
- 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.

- In this week's passage we see that even in the darkest moments of history, despite what it may look like, God is in control, cares for his disciples, and works to accomplish his good purposes.
 - Is there a way in which this passage increases your trust in God amidst what you're experiencing in life right now? (Perhaps you're in a dark place where you feel overwhelmed, like the disciples did here, and it looks like God isn't in control.)
 - Is there a way you could use this passage as a guide to pray for one another or someone outside your group amidst what they are going through?
For example: "Jesus, we see here that you ensured that your disciples were taken care of - even when it looked like they were in danger that they couldn't escape. Would you help ____ in the same way?" Or "Thank you Lord for the reminder that you relentlessly pursue our good. You did it at great cost to yourself. We ask that you'd accomplish your good purposes in ____"
- For Jesus to "drink the cup" that the Father gave him means that we don't have to.
 - What was it like when you first understood what Jesus went through - *willingly and knowingly!* - for you?
 - Who is in your life that doesn't yet follow Jesus? Is there a truth about Jesus from this passage that you'd especially want them to know?

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.
- 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?