



Community Group Leaders' Guide: February 10/11, 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 18:15-27**.

Start with an "Icebreaker"

In this passage Jesus, the tension rises in the final moments of Jesus' life. We get a window into one of his disciples' experiences alongside his own.

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: What is something that most people wouldn't know about you unless you told them?

- *(For example: It might be a hobby, a rare "fun fact", a "guilty pleasure", or an interest that only those closest to you know. Maybe you secretly play an instrument, maybe you're bi-lingual, maybe you're related to someone famous.)*

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.

- How does Peter respond to the question about him being one of Jesus' disciples? (18:17)
 - **"I am not".**

- How is Jesus treated in this scene? (18:19-24)
 - **He is questioned.**
 - **He is struck by an officer.**
 - **He is bound and led away.**

 - What do you notice about his response amidst these things? (18:19-24)
 - **Jesus continues to proclaim the truth, without fear or hostility. How different that would likely be for us if we were in such an unjust and scary situation!**

 - How does Peter respond to the next two questions? (18:25-27)
 - **He denies being a disciple. (18:25)**
 - **He denies being with Jesus in the garden. (18:26-27)**
- 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.

- 18:27 - "...at once a rooster crowed." John's description here is short in comparison to other gospels. Examine this scene with additional detail:
 - Read Luke 22:31-34. What did Jesus tell Peter - called "Simon" here - in advance of his arrest?
 - **Jesus says that he's prayed for him, that his faith may not fail.**
 - **Jesus encourages him to strengthen his brothers after he's "turned back".**
 - **Peter said he'd lay his life down for Jesus, but Jesus knew that he would deny Jesus three times.**
 - Now look at Matthew 26:69-75. What additional information does Matthew's account provide?
 - **Matthew adds extra detail about Peter's denial (he "denied it with an oath", "he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear "I do not know the man".") and also Peter's response to hearing the rooster crow ("he went out and wept bitterly").**

- Look up Acts 4:1-13 to see a later part of Peter's life.
 - Who is present according to 4:1 and 4:6?
 - **Some of the same people appear to be present from the same night that John 18 records: Annas the high priest in particular, perhaps also the "captain of the temple guard".**
 - Peter's response to the questions in Acts 4 is different than in John 18. What differences are there in Acts 4:7-13?
 - **He's filled with the Holy Spirit.**
 - **He doesn't deny Jesus, but clearly testifies to who Jesus is and what Jesus did.**

- **They recognize him as one who had been with Jesus (4:13), in a similar way as some people did in John 18 (18:26). But now instead of being fearful, they see “boldness” (4:13).**

- Discuss “denying” Jesus further. Compare Matthew 10:32-33 with 2 Tim 2:11-12.
 - What is the warning in these passages?
Don’t “deny” Jesus.
 - What is the hope?
Jesus is faithful when we aren’t.

Leaders note: a helpful interpretation is that Peter’s “denial” in John 18 isn’t a denial of Jesus’ identity. Peter doesn’t recant on his original confession about *who* Jesus is - see Matthew 16:16. His denial is about *himself* as one of Jesus’ followers in the presence of opposition. Pulling this whole Step 3 section together then, Jesus’ prayer (Luke 22:32) is answered and God was faithful (2 Tim. 2:12) to keep Peter and empower him (Acts 4) to more fully live in alignment with his original confession before opposition.

- 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.

- It’s clear that Peter denies being a disciple in a pressurized, scary setting of opposition. How often we can relate!
 - What are some common reasons we justify hiding our association with Jesus?
 - Is there a difference between hiding our faith vs denying our faith?
 - Where do you feel a need for increased boldness this week? How can we increase our boldness?
- Similar to last week, we’ve looked at a scene where it may appear that Jesus is not in control. But as we’ve observed his confidence amidst interrogation (in contrast to Peter’s!), Jesus has willingly placed himself in this painful situation.
 - Is there something happening in your life right now that makes it feel like God isn’t in control? How can this text encourage your faith and prayers?
 - A sample prayer to pray: *“Jesus, it feels like you aren’t doing what I expected you to do. It doesn’t look like you’re in control of this situation because it’s not getting better. Help me to see the story you are writing and the power you have to keep me, like you kept Peter, even in my weakness and doubt.*

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?