



Community Group Leaders' Guide – EASTER WEEKEND (March 30/31, 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:

APPROACH #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").

APPROACH #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*.

APPROACH #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 primary text from this weekend's message was **John 20:1-18.**

Start with an "Icebreaker"

In this passage, John describes the first interactions Jesus' followers have with his empty tomb, and Mary's first encounter with the risen Jesus. We'll discuss this further 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: We all have stories we wish ended differently. Describe one - true or fictional - that you wish you could re-write for a better ending. (Maybe you'd make it so that your favourite sports team didn't lose the championship game - 49ers winning the Superbowl instead of Kansas? Maybe you'd make it so that a beloved character has a better ending - Boromir doesn't die in the Lord of the Rings?)

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.

- What happened to John in 20:8 as a result of seeing the “linen cloths” lying in the tomb with no body?
 - **He “saw and believed”.**

- What was the state of Jesus’ disciples according to 20:9?
 - **They did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.**

- What is Mary’s emotional state according to 20:11?
 - **She is “weeping”**
 - Follow up reflection question: Given her state, look at how she responds to both the *angels* and to Jesus himself.
 - What is she focused on in 20:13?
 - **The missing body of Jesus**
 - Who does she initially perceive Jesus to be in 20:15?
 - **The gardener**
 - **Leaders note: her grief seems to have prevented her from recognizing that she was in the presence of both supernatural beings and of the risen Jesus himself!**

- What words does Jesus use to describe God in 20:17?
 - **“My father and your father”; “my God and your God”.**
 - **Leaders note: He could’ve used fewer words. Like: “I’m ascending to the Father.” Instead there’s an added weight to hearing “and your Father”, “and your God”.**

Keep these observations in mind as you proceed through step 3.

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.

- 20:9 says “he must rise from the dead” according to Scripture.
 - One potential text this could point to is Isaiah 53:10-12. (Look this up and try reading in several different translations.)
 - Why is this servant suffering according to 53:10?
 - **It was the Lord’s will, and he was making his life an offering for sin/guilt**
 - What does 53:11 indicate will happen *after* God’s servant has suffered?
 - **The NIV says “he will see the light of life”**
 - **The ESV says “he shall see and be satisfied”**
 - **Leaders note: this messianic prophecy about Jesus indicates that there would be an experience beyond death!**
 - Also refer to Luke 24:25-27.
 - What does Jesus tell these disciples about what the Messiah had to experience?
 - **“He had to suffer these things and then enter his glory”**

- How does Luke tell us he explained this to them?
 - **Jesus takes them through the Scriptures - from Moses to the Prophets to show how this, in John 20:9's language, "had to rise"**
- In 20:18, Mary tells the disciples: "I have seen the Lord"
 - Look up Acts 1:1-3.
 - What do these verses tell us about what Jesus was doing immediately following his suffering and death?
 - **He "presented himself" alive to them and "appeared to them" over a period of 40 days!**
 - Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.
 - How does Paul describe the activity of Jesus after the resurrection?
 - **He appeared to Cephas, he appeared to the Twelve, he appeared to more than 500, he appeared to James and all the apostles, he appeared also to Paul.**
 - **Leaders note: we're pointing you here to show how from the earliest days of Christianity, the apostles and disciples consistently affirmed that they saw Jesus. It wasn't just an empty tomb that shaped their belief in a resurrection. It was his *appearing* that they bore witness to. Starting with Mary Magdalene!**

Take these reflections with you into Step 4 below.

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 scene we've seen the combination of both *fact* (the tomb is empty) and *personal encounter* (Mary sees Jesus alive).
 - Reflect further on Mary's response. She has an emotional experience that leads to testifying to the risen Jesus.
 - What in your life (or someone else's you know) is making it hard to believe in the "bigger story"?
 - Is there a way in which the reminder of Scripture being fulfilled - even when it didn't initially *feel* like it - could help you in your own story or in someone else's this week?

Leaders note: If we interpret life through the lens of our circumstances or feelings instead of the lens of Scripture, we might end up feeling - perhaps as the disciples initially did - like "this whole Jesus thing wasn't true after all". Try and think about how this scene shows us that when we need somewhere to turn, we should turn to God's word because God always follows through with what he says (20:9).

- If there's time, you could also reflect further on John's response. He "believes". Is there a way in which this Easter has given you fresh confidence in the gospel?
- Jesus is alive! The resurrection can change everything about our identity. Is there a way to pray with adoration and thankfulness together in light of what Jesus says is now true of you in John 20:17?

Leaders note: there's such security and joy in having God as our Father! This ought to give cause for gratitude amidst all the other things that might undermine our sense of significance and peace.

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.)

Note: We'll be hosting "Alpha" starting April 22. Is there someone from your life you could bring?

- 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?