



EST. **NORTHVIEW** 1980
COMMUNITY CHURCH

Community Group Leaders' Guide – Feb 22/23, 2025

This guide is designed to help you and your group be **deeply rooted followers of Jesus**.¹

You can take different approaches week to week - plan for your next meeting in advance.

IDEA #1 - BALANCE GATHER + GROW + GO.

The healthiest groups will give attention to all 3 discipleship categories: *Gather*, *Grow*, and *Go*.

You can't cover each of the 3 sections fully in 1 meeting. For balance, select one or two items from the Gather and Go sections in advance, and condense the Grow section (perhaps just do the sermon recap).

You can also choose a different order (e.g., start in "grow", then hit "gather" + "go").

IDEA #2 - EMPHASIZE BIBLE STUDY.

Want a deeper "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*.

IDEA #3 - EMPHASIZE SHARING LIFE.

Want 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 well-prepared shepherd that "cares" and "facilitates".

¹ If you don't know your group very well, we recommend starting with our "First Four" discussion guide before this one.

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.

- "Let's start with prayer."
Thoughtfully acknowledge God's presence in the room. Commit your time to him. Start by calibrating everyone to this reality. Could be one person that opens your time in this way, or several.
- What is one thing you're really grateful for right now? Take turns and share one by one.
- Does anyone have a story of where you've seen God at work? Is there a life situation or answered prayer we can join you in celebrating? (This can be a way to revisit prayers or plans from a previous meeting.)
We'd love to share and celebrate stories from our Community Groups to honour God, encourage one another, and contribute to cultivating a culture of prayer across Northview! (With permission, share them with us!)
- What is one thing you're really burdened with right now? If comfortable, take turns and share one by one.
Idea: be specific. "Is there a practical need or decision you're facing that you'd like the group's help with?"
- What are you praying about right now? How can we join you thanking God or seeking God?
Idea: get one person to share, and then get one person to volunteer to pray for them. Repeat this process until everyone is covered.
- End with prayer, or move to the Grow and/or Go sections in the pages below.

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 + ask for his help to hear what he's saying through the text.
Idea: 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 Feb 22/23 sermon.** "Is there something the Holy Spirit highlighted for you?"
For each person to share an insight they got or an action step they are taking from the sermon could use up your time. This might be a good use of your time, but if you want to go further into the study of the text below, indicate this upfront.

- **Facilitate a brief study of 1 Corinthians 8:1-13**

Start the conversation with an "Icebreaker."

In today's passage, Paul addresses a new topic that seemingly interrupted the growth and flourishing peace in the Corinthian Church. Let's not forget that they dragged their own brothers and sisters in front of unbelieving courts and judges. It is with this in mind that Paul casts a vision for how to deal with disagreement in the church.

Share from your life to get a feel for this dynamic in the text - while also helping others get to know one another - by using this **Icebreaker question: Share an experience from your life, or a scene from a movie where a stronger party looked out for someone weaker and helped them, perhaps even at their own expense .** (What about this "heroic" act makes this memorable?)

Study Step 1: Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Familiarize yourself with this section of verses.

Study Step 2: Understand Their Story – (With answer key + leaders notes)

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

- **Take a look at 8:1-10.**
 - Paul tackles a new issue in the church of Corinth. What is the central idea about knowledge Paul articulates in verse 1?
 - **"knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up. (8:1)**

- It is safe to say that Paul is not against wisdom and accumulating knowledge (e.g education), after all he prays in Col. 1 that the church would grow in knowledge of God's will. The knowledge referred to here is particularly in the context of eating foods offered to idols.² What do you learn about idols in 8:4-6?
 - **An idol has no real existence (8:4).**
 - **There is no God but one (8:4). "We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one..."**
 - **Many people have so-called gods in heaven or on earth (8:5).**
 - **Some regard these so-called gods as real and worship them (8:5).**
 - **For believers, there is only one true God, the Father, from whom all things exist (8:6).**
 - **There is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things exist and through whom we live (8:6).**
- 8:7-11 Paul introduces two categories of Corinthians with regard to the specific knowledge described in 8:4-6 (that idols have no more bearing). Therefore, two kinds of consciences of eating meat sacrificed to "gods". Find out verse by verse what Paul teaches about eating this food and how this relates to one's conscience and sin?³
 - **Some eat food as sacrificed to an idol, defiling their weak conscience (8:7).⁴**
 - **Food does not bring us closer to God; eating or not eating makes no difference (8:8).**
 - **Do not let your freedom in eating become a stumbling block (8:9).**
 - **A weak believer may be encouraged to eat idol food by seeing others eat (8:10).**
- **Take a look at 8:11-13.**
 - Paul challenges how the Corinthians related to one another in their different approaches to knowledge. How were they supposed to live, love and treat one another, what are the dramatic consequences?
 - **A weak believer may be destroyed by another's knowledge (8:11).**
 - **Sinning against weak believers wounds their conscience *and sins against Christ* (8:12).**
 - **If eating causes a brother to stumble, it is better to never eat that food again (8:13).**
 - *Reflection question. This passage introduces us to the challenge of not putting a "stumbling block" in other Christians paths (those who have a weaker conscience). Since we don't necessarily deal with food offered to idols anymore, what could be some examples in today's world, where Christians have different consciences? (e.g tattoos, drinking alcohol).*
- Take these observations into the next step below.

² The way one ought to "know" is related to love. Probably, in light of 13:12, the point is that the Corinthians are infatuated with abstract theological or philosophical knowledge but remain woefully deficient in their knowledge (and love) of God. True theological understanding, and certainly true knowledge of God, does not lead one to act in a way which is insensitive to others and offensive to God. - Ciampa, Roy E., Rosner, Brian. *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC))

³If you need a hint, read Jas. 4:17, Romans 14:14

⁴Some, who because of their pagan past are accustomed to idols, cannot eat known idol food with the strength of conviction that such eating is harmless. It is, in fact, not harmless, since their "weak" conscience is defiled by eating. For them there is no conviction that an idol is nothing in the world. - Mark E. Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, New American Commentary

Study Step 3: Connect To God's Story – (With answer key + leaders notes)

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.

- In 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 Paul talks about idols and although he acknowledges that eating food sacrificed to idols is not sin in itself, it is worth looking at why some Corinthians have a "weak conscience" around the topic of idolatry.
 - **Skim Isaiah 44:9-20.** What does Isaiah say idols are like? How does this align with Paul's statement that idols are nothing at all and yet there are many?
 - **Idols are worthless, and those who make them gain nothing (44:9).**
 - **Idol makers are blind and ignorant (44:9).**
 - **Idols cannot see or know anything (44:9).**
 - **People shape idols from metal or wood, but they are just man-made objects (44:12-13).**
 - **The same wood used for an idol is also used for firewood to cook food, showing its absurdity (44:15-17).**
 - **Those who worship idols are deceived and cannot recognize their foolishness (44:18-20)**
 - **Now look at Deuteronomy 6:4-9.** What is the clear contrast?
 - **"The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (6:4) – There is only one true God, unlike the many false idols.**
 - **Love God with all your heart, soul, and strength (6:5) – True worship is wholehearted, not divided among lifeless idols.**
 - **Teach and remember God's commands (6:6-7) – Worship of God shapes daily life, unlike idols that offer no real guidance.**
- Paul stresses that eating the food was not the issue but rather, the conscience behind it. Let's see what else Paul says about Christian freedom!
 - Get different people to look up and read **Galatians 5:13-14, 1 Peter 2:16 and 1 Corinthians 10:23-24.** What do you learn about freedom? And how does it relate to sin?
 - **Freedom is not for indulging the flesh but for serving others in love (Galatians 5:13).**
 - **Love fulfills the law, as loving others sums up God's commands (Galatians 5:14).**
 - **Freedom should not be used as a cover-up for evil, but as a way to honor God (1 Peter 2:16).**
 - **Not everything that is permissible is beneficial; true freedom seeks the good of others, not just personal gain (1 Corinthians 10:23-24).**
 - **Freedom is not a license to sin but a call to love and righteousness.**
 - On the flipside there is a danger in putting one's conscience on others and creating "rules" for others that would impact their conscience! Read **Matthew 23:4, 13.** What did the Pharisees legalism look like and what were the consequences?
 - **The Pharisees burdened people with difficult rules they were unwilling to help carry (23:4).**
 - **They closed the kingdom of heaven to others, preventing them from entering (23:13).**

- **They were hypocrites, focusing on outward appearances instead of inward purity (23:13).**
 - *Reflection: How does the gospel help in navigating “disputable” matters?*
 - What the Corinthians needed to learn is *that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak*⁵. The language of *rights* probably comes from the Corinthians themselves. Paul encourages Christians to love one another and steward their conscience well. Look up **Romans 14:1-23** and consider what the outworking of the gospel looks like in our conduct with other believers..
 - List all the commandments that Paul gives to the church in this passage!
 - **Accept those who are weak in faith (14:1).**
 - **Do not quarrel over disputable matters (14:1).**
 - **Do not despise or judge your brother or sister (14:3).**
 - **Be fully convinced in your own mind (14:5).**
 - **Live for the Lord, not yourself (14:7-8).**
 - **Do not pass judgment on your brother or sister (14:10).**
 - **Do not put a stumbling block or obstacle in the way of another believer (14:13).**
 - **Walk in love (14:15).**
 - **Do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil (14:16).**
 - **Pursue righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (14:17).**
 - **Serve Christ in a way that is acceptable to God and approved by others (14:18).**
 - **Make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification (14:19).**
 - **Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food (14:20).**
 - **Do not eat or drink in a way that causes your brother or sister to stumble (14:21).**
 - **Keep your convictions between yourself and God (14:22).**
 - **Do not act against your conscience (14:23).**
 - *Reflection: Which of these challenges you the most and why?*

Step 4: Apply To Our Story

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

- Are there areas in your life in which you might tempt others to stumble? Are there attitudes or rules you have created that might tempt you to look down on others?
- How can the church grow in true knowledge of God and love for one another?
- Share some stories of people who have navigated “disputable matters” well! Can you think of someone who limited their “freedom” in order to prevent someone from stumbling?
- How should we pray in light of today’s discussion?
 - Thank God for real freedom and the church community in which we look out for one another.
 - Go back to the list in Romans 14. Pick a specific command and pray that we as a church would live in light of the gospel.

⁵ Ciampa, Roy E., Rosner, Brian. *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC)

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 those far from God that you personally know, by name.
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, and our "Loving The Lost" group prayer guide is attached to our weekly group leader email.)
- 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?