



CULTIVATE

Growing a Grace Community Group



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CULTIVATE

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1

Welcome

CREATED FOR RELATIONSHIP

We all need friends! The need for life-giving relationships is part of our God-given design. It's what we are made for. Yet, many of us are lonely and isolated. In fact, loneliness has become a modern epidemic across the globe.

As followers of Jesus, we have been welcomed into a relationship with God and with His people, the Church. In the New Testament we learn that believers are actually called brothers and sisters, siblings in God's historic, global, eternal family. That's a lot of relatives!

Read Ephesians 2:19-22, Romans 12:4-5

DISCUSS

1. Share about a time when you felt really connected to a group of people. What was it like?
2. Have you ever experienced a season of isolation or loneliness? What was it like?
3. How would you describe biblical community?

GROUP STRUCTURE

At Grace Bible Church, our groups are designed around three essential components. These components help to provide a framework for our groups gathering time. They also are building blocks that help us to become spiritually mature followers of Jesus.

CONNECT RELATIONALLY

We believe that biblical community is built on a foundation of authenticity and intentionality. We welcome and love one another as Jesus has welcomed and loved us. A group of believers is a unified family of diverse people following Jesus together in the power of the Spirit.

GROW BIBLICALLY

The Bible is foundational to our relationship with God because it tells us the big story of who God is and who we are in relation to Him. We know it can be all too easy to rely on what others teach about God, so we encourage everyone to consistently "feed themselves" from God's Word. By the Spirit's power, we then put into practice what we are learning, partnering with Him toward our spiritual maturity.

ENGAGE MISSIONALLY

As we connect relationally and grow biblically, we are also called to engage our world with God's love and truth, pointing people to Jesus. We desire each group to challenge each other to make disciples, praying for and supporting each other to reach the people in our spheres of influence and beyond.

DISCUSS

1. Which of these three components resonates with you the most? The least?
2. What happens if one component is consistently overemphasized or neglected in a group?
Only Connect? It's a party or social club.
Only Grow? It's a class.
Don't Engage? It's a dead-end street, going nowhere.
3. Do you agree with this? Have you ever experienced this?

TYPICAL GROUP MEETING

While meetings may vary from time to time, we will aim for our group to spend approximately one-third of our meeting on each of these components. Here are some ideas about what our group time could look like:

CONNECT

- Meal/food - an easy and natural way to get the conversation started!
- Get-to-know-you questions and conversation
- Authentic life updates, highs/lows, life stories
- Praying for one another

GROW

- New content - Scripture studies, topical studies, sermon series discussion, etc.
- Group discussion - discovering, listening, questioning, learning

ENGAGE

- Application - individual and group action in response to the Spirit's leading
- Praying for people who are far from God but close to us
- Disciple-making - pointing others to Jesus
- Service - blessing people and participating in service opportunities together

DISCUSS

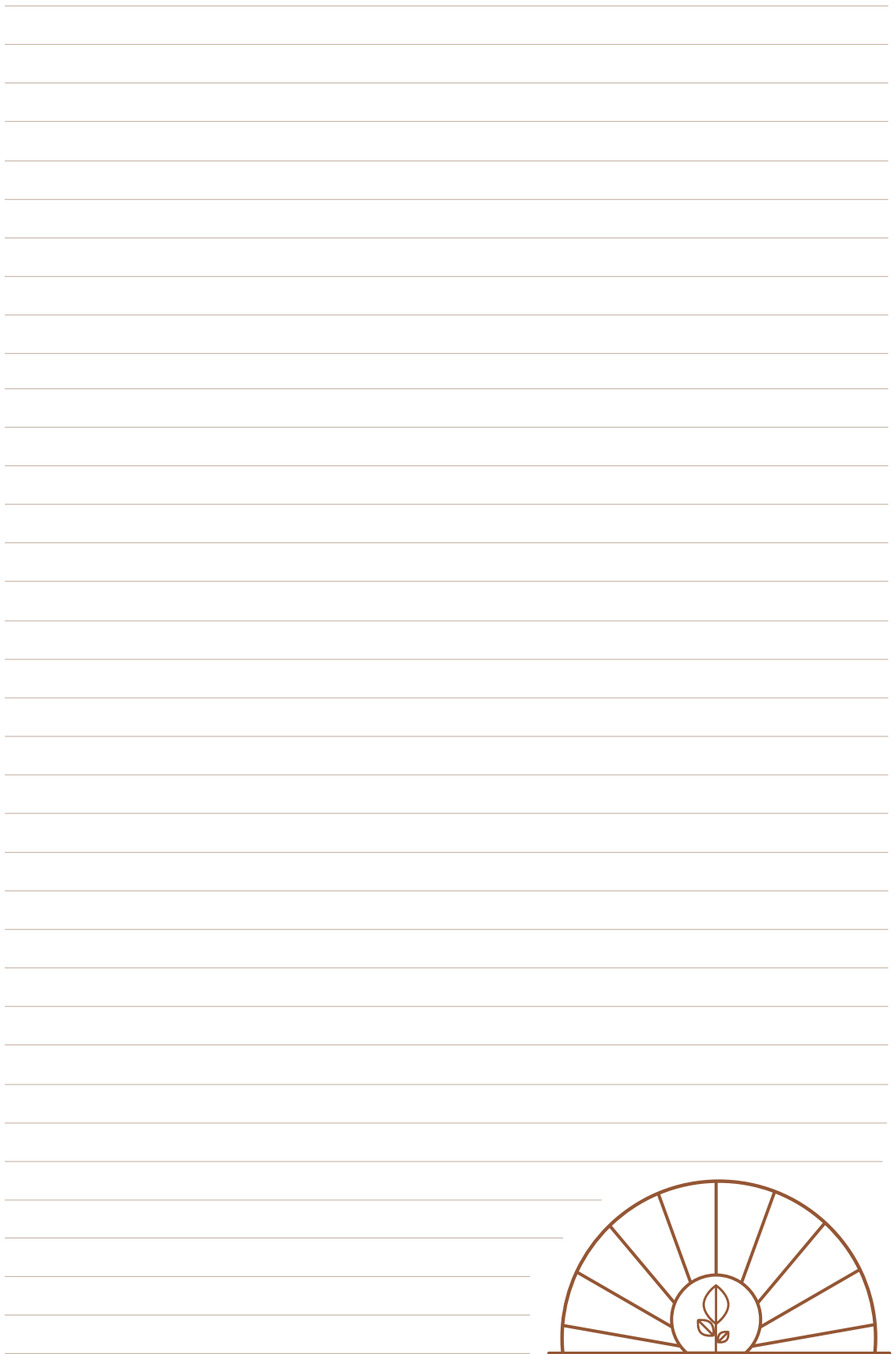
1. What are your thoughts about this meeting framework for our group?
2. What are you hoping to experience in our group?

Prayer - Spend some time praying for your group, asking the Lord to reveal what your group can be like and to unite you in His love and grace. Pray for His wisdom to balance the components of connecting, growing and engaging. Acknowledge the challenges that you may face as a group. Acknowledge your dependence on the Spirit's power to enable your group to flourish.

Communication - Spend a few minutes deciding on the best way for our group to communicate important information - email, group text, GroupMe?

COMING UP

In our next six meetings, we will continue to explore the group components Connect, Grow, and Engage. We'll look at Scripture and discuss the values and practices that will help us to cultivate healthy biblical community. In our final meeting, we'll plan the next steps for our group.





CONNECT

Relationally

2

Commitment

BARRIERS FOR RELATIONSHIP

For most of human history, living alone was not an option. Instead, people lived in groups, cooperating with others for survival and safety. Much of today's world has radically changed! In many ways, depending on others has become optional. But is this good for us? What are some of the obstacles to belonging in a life-giving community that we typically encounter in today's culture?

DISTRACTION

Most of us face a barrage of digital distractions every day through our smartphones and screens.

We can easily escape our embodied lives and the actual people around us through these devices.

INDIVIDUALISM

Much of the global West has experienced the shift to radical individualism over the last 400 years.

We now have the capacity to make choices and to meet our basic needs independently. We may even subconsciously view others as competition rather than essential community.

BUSYNESS

Modern cultural narratives shape us toward the values of achievement, performance, and image.

We begin to believe that we don't have time for the "important" (people and relationships) as we rush to take care of the "urgent" (tasks and goals).

DISCUSS

1. Which of these barriers to belonging do you experience the most in your life?
2. How have these barriers impacted Christian community you have been a part of in the past?

THE ANCIENT WAY

The book of Acts provides us with some of the earliest glimpses of the New Testament Church. In Acts 1-2 we learn that following His resurrection, Jesus instructed believers to wait in Jerusalem to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. On Pentecost (a Jewish harvest feast), the Holy Spirit came in power, resting on each of the gathered believers (~120 people). He filled them and enabled them to speak in other languages.

Jews from many nations who lived in the city heard these Jesus followers speaking in their own languages about the great deeds God had done. Peter (one of the 12 apostles) publicly proclaimed that the crucified and risen Jesus is both Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:14-36). What happened as a result?

Read Acts 2:41-47

DISCUSS

1. What activities were central to the early Church's experience together?
2. What were some of the results of their fellowship together?
3. What parts of this passage seem attractive and desirable to you?
4. What parts of this passage seem uncomfortable to you?

Let's look at two practices we can put into place to build commitment in our group.

SHARE AUTHENTICALLY

By the time we reach adulthood, most of us have figured out how to present ourselves in workplaces, friend groups, and social settings. Sometimes, in order to fit in, we have also learned how to hide some of the real parts of ourselves.

Read Romans 12:9-13, 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

DISCUSS

1. Romans 12 says to love sincerely or without hypocrisy. What is hypocrisy and why does it derail authentic relationships?
2. Paul said that he not only shared the gospel with the Thessalonians but with his life as well. What does it take for you to feel safe enough to share struggles and triumphs in your life?

INVEST INTENTIONALLY

As Christians, we know the importance of prioritizing our individual relationship with God. But sometimes we treat our connection to fellow believers in community as an option rather than an essential.

Read Hebrews 10:19-25

DISCUSS

1. How does it affect the group if some members don't prioritize it?
2. What are some practical ways our group can become a life-giving experience for us?

Commitment - Make a list of 3-4 expectations our group is committing to as we go forward.

Confidentiality - How can we protect one another's confidentiality as we authentically share our lives?

Prayer - Pray together for God's spirit to draw us into genuine commitment to each other in the coming weeks.

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3

Unity + Conflict

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

There's an old saying in relationships that "opposites attract." Initially, we are often intrigued and curious about people who think and act in ways that are new to us. But eventually these differences can begin to create tension in our relationships. Instead of viewing our differences as a good thing, we can begin to view differences as a problem often resulting in conflict. So, for our group, the question is probably not "will conflict happen among us?" but rather "what will we do when conflict happens?"

DISCUSS

1. How did your family of origin handle conflict?
2. When it comes to conflict, are you a "fight" or "flight" kind of person?

WHY IS UNITY IMPORTANT?

Followers of Jesus come from many different backgrounds, experiences, and cultures. We also have widely different perspectives and personalities. This is part of the beauty of being a member of God's global family! For believers, maintaining *unity* within our *diversity* not only brings about peace within the body of Christ, it winsomely represents God to the world around us.

Read Ephesians 4:1-3, 2 Corinthians 13:11, John 13:34-35

DISCUSS

1. How can we be "like-minded" when we have different opinions?
2. Are believers called to create unity or maintain unity? What is the difference?

COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

The goal of all healthy communication is mutual understanding. In times of conflict, four typical communication patterns often become our default response.

WITHDRAWAL & AVOIDANCE

We physically leave or emotionally check out. This can create relational distance and even feelings of abandonment. While it might be wise to take a break during conflict, relational health is developed by staying in the conversation, facing the conflict, and addressing the issues.

ESCALATION

We respond harshly or defensively, leading to increased hostility and negativity. This might result in a fight or withdrawal from the other person. A better thing to do is to call for a "time out" and allow emotions to calm before revisiting the issue.

NEGATIVE INTERPRETATION

We consistently ascribe or exaggerate negative motives to the other person. This creates an unfair prejudice toward a person and can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. We should believe the best in

the other person. We may need to address areas of insecurity in our own lives that are causing us to look through a distorted lens.

INVALIDATION

We invalidate someone's perspective by downplaying it, dismissing it, discrediting it, or even vilifying them, as a person. A better way of handling conflict is by respecting each other's opinions and each other as people.

DISCUSS

1. Which of these communication patterns is your default when you are with family or close friends?
2. What about when you are in a more public setting (work, social or church)?

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

It is important to view conflict as an opportunity for growth and understanding. We can learn so much from each other if we view people who are different from us as a gift from God. How can we engage in conflict in a healthy and God-honoring way?

ACTIVE LISTENING

Listening is a learned skill. It may not come easily or naturally to us but we honor one another by seeking to gain mutual understanding through listening well. **Read James 1:19-20**

CONFRONTING GENTLY

It may seem loving to overlook an offense. But, if that offense is causing distress or relational distance, it will probably not resolve itself and could even get worse. It is important to go directly to the person who hurt us and approach them in a loving and gentle manner. **Read Matthew 18:15-16**

FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER

Forgiveness is a mark of people who have experienced God's gracious forgiveness themselves. Forgiveness is not saying what happened was okay. It's not saying it didn't cause damage or that there aren't consequences for actions. Forgiveness is releasing the person from the debt of the offense against you and trusting God with. **Read Colossians 3:12-14**

DISCUSS

1. Why is active listening so hard to do in the midst of conflict?
2. What has God taught you about forgiveness in your relationships?
3. In what ways have you seen conflict strengthen or destroy a relationship?

Prayer - Pray together for God's Spirit to grow our self-awareness and appreciation of differences in others. Pray that He will convict us when we respond negatively and prompt us to respond to people in love.

Communication Challenge - This week pay attention to how often you default to a negative communication response: Withdrawal, Escalation, Negative interpretation, and Invalidation. Pray for God's Spirit to convict us when we respond negatively and prompt us to respond to people in love.

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GROW

Biblically

4

Become like
Jesus

SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Have you met someone who has “never grown up”? Someone who has grown old in years but has not matured? We probably all know people like this. But, while it might be easy to see immaturity in other people, the real question becomes, do we notice it in ourselves? In the New Testament, followers of Jesus are regularly exhorted to grow from being “infants” in Christ to mature believers by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Read Ephesians 4:14-16

DISCUSS

1. Share about a time in your life when you experienced noticeable growth in your faith.
2. What were some of the experiences or practices that helped you grow toward spiritual maturity?
3. What have been some factors in your life that contributed to a lack of spiritual growth?

BECOMING LIKE JESUS

Growing biblically involves much more than an accumulation of biblical facts or “head knowledge.” The apostle Paul regularly exhorted and prayed for believers to be radically transformed from the inside out. He called them to live lives that mirrored the self-giving love of Jesus in the power of the Spirit. We are called to become like Jesus.

Read Romans 8:28-30, Ephesians 1:15-19, Ephesians 3:16-19

DISCUSS

1. In Romans 8, how does Paul describe God’s purpose for those who love Him?
2. What do you think about that goal? How does it make you feel?
3. What are some of the specific things Paul prays for the Ephesian believers?
4. What is the difference between knowing about God and knowing God?

SHAPED BY THE WORD

For Christians, our foundational source of truth is God's Word, the Bible. It is essential in our relationship with God because it tells us the big story of who God is and who we are in relation to Him. Through consistent time in His Word, we can experience life-changing encounters with God Himself through His Spirit who guides us into all truth.

Read John 16:12-13, Acts 17:11-12, 2 Peter 1:19-2:3

DISCUSS

1. What role does the Holy Spirit play in your engagement of God's Word?
2. What particularly made these Bereans more "noble-minded" than those in Thessalonica?
3. What analogies does Peter use to describe the Word of God? How do these analogies explain what role the Bible should play in our everyday lives?
4. What are some approaches to reading, studying, and applying the Bible that you have found helpful?

SHAPED BY PRACTICE

We know that growing to maturity in Christ is a lifelong journey full of ups and downs. To become like Jesus takes time, intentionality, and trust in the Holy Spirit's guidance and empowerment. What are some ways we can intentionally cooperate with the Spirit in our growth?

Read James 1:22-25, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Acts 2:41-42

DISCUSS

1. What happens if we merely hear God's Word but fail to put it into practice?
2. How does the story of Scripture equip us for good works?
3. What do we learn from the example of the first Jesus followers in Acts?
4. Think back to Jesus' earthly life. What are some of the spiritual practices that He modeled for us? How can we imitate the priorities of Jesus' life?

Prayer - Pray together for God's Spirit to illuminate the Word as we engage with it and to empower us to practice the way of Jesus in the coming weeks.

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5

**Press on
Together**

SIDE BY SIDE

Typically when runners run alone, they tend to run at a slower pace. They don't realize how much they slow down when there is no one to push them or challenge them. Bottom line: it's difficult to keep pace alone.

The New Testament writers often use the analogy of running a race to describe the believer's journey of following Jesus. Hebrews 12:1 says to "run with endurance the race set before us" indicating that our journey is a lifelong endurance race, more like a marathon than a sprint.

Interestingly, the apostle Paul almost always uses the plural "you" or "y'all" when describing the life of the church. Paul assumes that a group of people are carrying out his instructions rather than individuals in isolation. It's so easy for us to primarily read and apply scripture personally and forget about applying it collectively.

Read Colossians 3:12-14, Ephesians 2:19-22

DISCUSS

1. Share about a time when a group significantly challenged you and spurred you forward in your faith.
2. What can prevent groups of believers from "running together" toward spiritual maturity?

SHARPENING ONE ANOTHER

Did you know that a dull knife is actually more dangerous than a sharp one? Here's why: A dull blade needs more pressure to cut, increasing the chance that the knife will slip with greater force behind it. When a dull knife is being sharpened, the fine pieces of metal that cause it to be dull are shaved away.

Proverbs 27:17 reminds us that "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." In Spirit empowered community, we can learn to sharpen one another as our rough edges rub against each other, shaving away the parts of us that do not look like Christ. This sharpening process is not always comfortable but it is essential for our growth.

One reason that sharpening is both painful and good is because each of us has blind spots. These are areas in our lives that we cannot see. We may be unaware that they even exist. As we grow in relational trust with others, we can learn to gently point out and uncover our blind spots.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:14, Hebrews 3:13-15

DISCUSS

1. The basic meaning of the word “encourage” is to “put courage in” to someone else. Share about a time when you experienced genuine encouragement.
2. Has anyone ever helped you discover a blind spot? Or have you helped someone else? What was that like?
3. What are the dangers of having no one to tell us about our blind spots?

GOING BENEATH THE SURFACE

Deep relationships take time and trust. The way in which a group responds when a person shares something deep or personal is critical to building trust in the group. Is our first response to offer advice, to quote Scripture, or to assure them that “everything is going to be okay”?

While it is important to show support, a crucial first step is to be present and listen to each other’s stories. The power of sharing a story, with all its broken and messy pieces, comes from God’s ability to redeem and heal what is broken. Our part is to create spaces where people feel comfortable to tell their stories, both the good and the hard.

Read Romans 12:9-13, 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

DISCUSS

1. Typically, what is your first response when someone shares something hard or vulnerable about their lives?
2. What practices does the passage in James suggest for coming alongside those in challenging circumstances? What are the desired outcomes?

Prayer - Spend some time discussing prayer in your group. How can we effectively pray for one another? How will we prioritize prayer instead of letting it slip through the cracks?

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ENGAGE

Missionally

6

Love Courageously

OTHERS ORIENTED

As we connect relationally and grow biblically, we believe that God's Spirit will increasingly prompt us to engage missionally with people around us. We know It can be very tempting to stick to our familiar relationships and to stay in the comfort zone of PLM - People Like Me. Our cultural narratives are aggressively pushing us toward this tribalized mindset. But that is not the way of Jesus!

In story after story in the Gospels, Jesus sought out and welcomed all people including His culture's outsiders, marginalized and forgotten. Each of us has unique places and spaces where we live, learn, work and play. These places are filled with people who truly are "just like us." We are all people in need of the life-giving love and grace of God.

Read Matthew 9:35-38, Philippians 2:1-4

DISCUSS

1. What is the posture toward others that Jesus modeled and taught to His followers?
2. What are some of the circles of people that you encounter regularly?
3. What are some of the barriers that you have to overcome in order to lovingly engage with people around you?

LISTEN AND LEARN

We know that right below the surface of most people's lives (including our own) are unique joys, sorrows, opportunities, uncertainties, dreams and struggles of all kinds. We also know that what most people need is simply the embodied, loving presence of a friend to bear witness to their story.

Again, Jesus is our exemplar for lovingly engaging people. One of His greatest skills was asking questions. The Gospels record Him asking hundreds of questions—far more than He answered. In fact, He often responded to a question with another question!

Here are some of Jesus' most poignant questions:

What are you looking for? _____ To two of John's disciples (John 1:35-38)

Why are you afraid? _____ To His disciples in a storm at sea (Matthew 8:23-27)

What do you live for? _____ To the crowd and His disciples (Mark 8:34-38)

Why do you worry about your life? _____ To His disciples (Luke 12:25-31)

What do you want Me to do for you? _____ To Bartimaeus, a blind beggar (Mark 10:46-52)

Read Matthew 5:14-16

DISCUSS

1. What are some ways we can sacrificially enter the worlds of our neighbors, coworkers, friends, and family? What questions can we ask? How can we be fascinated by their stories?
2. How can we guard against treating people as projects to be managed instead of friends to be loved?
3. How does it change your view of dark situations knowing that your calling in Christ is to “shine light”?

As believers, we can love because He first loved us. We can extend grace and offer hospitality because He welcomed us into His family when we were far from Him. We can give what we have received even when it seems challenging.

Read Luke 6:27-36, Luke 10:25-37

DISCUSS

1. How does your experience of the love of Christ compel you to love people, even your “enemies”?
2. What does the parable in Luke 10 teach us about neighbor love?

Prayer - Pray together for God’s Spirit to open our eyes and hearts to people in need around us. Pray that He would spur us to courageously love people in the coming weeks.

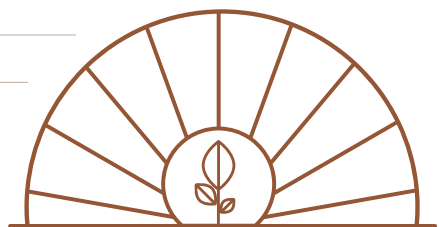
Serve Together - discuss how your group can creatively come alongside neighbors, coworkers, friends, family. What can we do to meet physical, emotional and spiritual needs?

Here are a few ideas to jump start your thinking:

- Are there any friends you can invite to the group?
- Commit to learning the names of your immediate neighbors. Seek out opportunities to befriend them.
- Is there a person or family connected to your group that you could serve together by meeting a need in their life?

Make a plan to serve together at Grace non-profit Community Partner this semester.

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7

**Help People Find
and Follow Jesus**

POINTING PEOPLE TO JESUS

We all need guides along the way - parents, teachers, friends, coaches, mentors, bosses, and counselors. People who are a little further down the road than we are. People who have gained wisdom and maturity through experience and suffering. The same is true in our journey of following Jesus. And, while all believers *need* guides, we are also called *to be* guides for others as well. In fact, the New Testament often portrays scenes of people helping others to find and follow Jesus.

Read John 1:35-46

DISCUSS

1. How would you describe the way in which these first disciples joined the Jesus movement?
2. What is compelling about an invitation to “come and see”?

SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS

During His life on earth, Jesus told stories from everyday life that created an interest in His Kingdom. He also spoke of the real needs people have for peace, truth, love, forgiveness, security and reconciliation to God. He told them that He was the answer they were looking for and that true life was found in Him.

We know that people need Jesus, but sadly, we have become conditioned to put on a filter and not speak of Jesus in everyday conversations. We imagine that it is awkward, pushy, or politically incorrect. What would it be like to take off this filter and grow in boldness by lovingly sharing stories about who Jesus is and what He has done for us?

Read Luke 8:26-39

DISCUSS

1. How do you typically respond when someone shares a story about something amazing they have experienced? Do you think most people are willing to listen to others?
2. What prevents you from talking about Jesus in the course of your daily life?
3. Share about a time when a conversation led to spiritual things. What happened?

One of the joys of belonging to the body of Christ is to learn the way of Jesus from those who have gone before us and then to pass along what we have learned to those coming behind us.

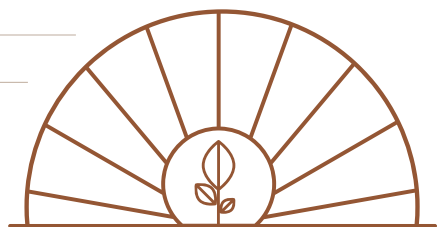
Read Psalm 145:3-4, Colossians 1:3-8, Colossians 1:28-29

DISCUSS

1. Share about a time when you helped someone grow in their faith in Jesus. What was it like?
2. What are some barriers you face when considering how you might help someone in their faith journey?
3. How do you maintain a posture of humility and an attitude of being a co-learner when helping others?

Every Neighbor Map - The absolute starting point of helping people find and follow Jesus is prayer. We must rely on the Holy Spirit's power and prompting. Take some time now to discuss and fill out this relational map of people you know that are in need of God's love and grace. Share at least one name with your group and pray for each one. Commit to regularly asking about and praying for these friends during your group time.

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8

Celebration

NEXT STEPS

We did it! Our group is about to finish *Cultivate* and we've gotten a taste of what a group centered around biblical community can be like. This final meeting will include a brief review and then lead us through planning next steps for our group.

THE FOUR STAGES OF COMMUNITY

Groups are like other relationships in that they tend to go through stages of development. Here are the typical stages of a community group:

Stage 1: Honeymoon - "This is awesome..."

Stage 2: Differences - "Wow, we ARE different..."

Stage 3: Acceptance - "These differences are good..."

Stage 4: Community - "We need and love each other..."

DISCUSS

1. What are your thoughts on the four stages of community outlined above? Do you agree with this sequence? Have you experienced something similar in other groups?
2. How could knowing these stages be helpful for our group moving forward?

CONNECT, GROW, ENGAGE

Here's a quick review of the group structure and values we have covered. Everytime our group meets, we will aim to connect relationally, grow biblically and engage missionally.

CONNECT Commitment

CONNECT Unity + Conflict

GROW Become Like Jesus

GROW Press On Together

ENGAGE Love Courageously

ENGAGE Help People Find and Follow Jesus

DISCUSS

1. Look back through the previous meetings. Which topic or value stood out to you?
2. Have we already begun to experience any of these? Which ones?
3. Which one seems like it will be the most challenging for our group? Why?

GROUP OWNERSHIP

A healthy group is one in which all of us take ownership and share responsibilities. Let's decide now who will take on the following in the next season of our group:

Communication

Host

Lead Discussion

Prayer

Fun + Fellowship

Service

GROW BIBLICALLY

Now let's discuss together what curriculum or content will be the focus of the next season of our group. What are the options? What are the interests and needs in our group? What do we feel the Spirit is leading us toward?

GROUP CHECK-IN RHYTHM

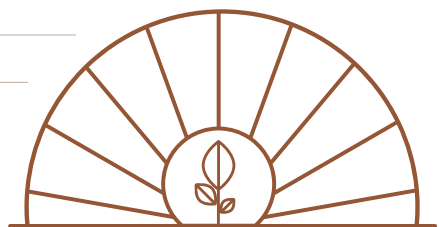
The final thing we want to put in place is a time for us to check-in and evaluate how we are doing as a group. Ideally we will do this at the end of the next study or semester.

Here are some questions we will consider:

- How are we doing at sharing the ownership of our group? Is anyone carrying too much?
- Is everyone still prioritizing commitment to the group?
- Have we experienced deeper trust and vulnerability with each other?
- How have we dealt with any conflict?
- How have we challenged and spurred each other toward becoming like Jesus in character and lifestyle?
- What has been the impact of God's Word in our lives?
- In what ways have we loved and served others together?
- How have we pointed people to Jesus?
- Will we stay together for another season?
- Will some of us launch a new group?

Prayer - Spend some time thanking God for the last few weeks together. Pray for wisdom and discernment as you move forward as a group.

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Leader Guide

Overview

Leader Guide Overview

Thank you so much for your willingness to help launch a Grace Community Group!

Here are just a few things to keep in mind as you get started:

- The best preparation for leading a group is *following* Jesus closely yourself. Healthy leadership is ultimately an overflow of your personal relationship with God.
- Pray regularly for God's Spirit to unify and establish Jesus at the animating center of faith, hope and love in your group.
- Prepare ahead of time by reading through the *Cultivate* material you will be discussing and make a plan for your group time. Discuss this with your co-leader if you have one.
- Remember, you are a *facilitator* of discussion rather than a *teacher*. See yourself as a co-learner with your group.
- Check in with your Grace ministry leader regularly especially if you have any questions or concerns.
- Trust in the Holy Spirit's work in your life and in the lives of your group members.

The *Cultivate* content is primarily a discussion guide. It is written in a sequence of:

1. Short paragraphs
2. Scripture passages
3. Discussion questions

To get everyone participating, ask if anyone would like to read the paragraph, then ask if anyone would like to look up and read the verses. Then lead the group through the discussion questions.

Note: some people may not like to read aloud in a group so calling on someone to read is not advised unless you know the person well.

Meeting 1: Welcome

GOAL 1 - BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Go out of your way to make people feel welcome and to help people get to know each other.

- Make sure everyone knows each other's names! Take the lead on making introductions.
- Eat a meal together - it's an easy and natural way to put people at ease and to get the conversation started!
- Share life basics by asking:
 - How do you spend your days?
 - Who do you live with?
 - How long have you been in our community?
 - Do you attend Grace? For how long?

GOAL 2 - DISCUSS CULTIVATE CONTENT

Introduce the idea of building biblical community together.

- Make sure every person or couple has a Cultivate booklet.
- Read and discuss Meeting 1 on pp. 6-9.
- **Prayer** - Beginning in this first meeting, establish the practice of praying together and depending on the Lord to build your group.
 - Ask the Lord to reveal what your group can be like and to unite you in His love and grace.
 - Pray for His wisdom to balance the components of connecting, growing and engaging. Acknowledge the challenges that you may face as a group.
 - Acknowledge your dependence on the Spirit's power to enable your group to flourish.
 - Pray for God's Spirit to knit your group together in unity in the coming weeks.

GOAL 3 - COMMUNICATION

Decide how your group will communicate with each other (email, group text, GroupMe, etc.).

- Make sure you have everyone's contact information.

BEFORE NEXT MEETING

- Check in with anyone who missed the meeting.
- Send an encouraging reminder message prior to your next group meeting.

Meeting 2: Commitment

GOAL 1 - BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Continue to go out of your way to make people feel welcome and to help people get to know each other.

- Make sure everyone knows each other's names! Take the lead on making introductions.
- Eat a meal or some yummy snacks together.
- **Icebreaker question:** How old were you when you got your first smartphone? (To get conversation started on distraction and busyness)

GOAL 2 - DISCUSS CULTIVATE CONTENT

Introduce the importance of commitment in your group.

- Read and discuss Meeting 2 on pp. 12-15.
- **Prayer** - Pray together for God's Spirit to draw us into genuine commitment to each other in the coming weeks.

GOAL 3 - COMMUNICATION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Discuss how your group will prioritize commitment to group expectations and confidentiality.

- Lead the group through making a list of 3-4 things that members are committing to, e.g., coming prepared, missing very few group meetings, praying for one another, getting together outside of group time, incorporating men's and women's times. The last meeting of *Cultivate* has time for planning next steps for your group as well.
- Lead the group to commit to keeping what is shared in your group confidential.

BEFORE NEXT MEETING

- Send an encouragement and reminder message prior to your next group meeting.
- Check in with anyone who missed the meeting.

Meeting 3: Unity + Conflict

GOAL 1 - BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Continue to go out of your way to make people feel welcome and to help people get to know each other.

- Eat a meal or some yummy snacks together.
- Share some highs and lows of the week.
- **Icebreaker question:** What is your Enneagram number or other personality type? It can be helpful to make a note of everyone's answers!

GOAL 2 - DISCUSS CULTIVATE CONTENT

Introduce the importance of unity and conflict resolution in your group.

- Read and discuss Meeting 3 - Connect on pp. 16-19.
- **Prayer** - Pray together for God's Spirit to convict us when we respond negatively and prompt us to respond to people in love.

GOAL 3 - COMMUNICATION CHALLENGE

Challenge your group to pay attention to how often they default to a negative communication response: Withdrawal, Escalation, Negative interpretation, and Invalidation.

BEFORE NEXT MEETING

- Send an encouragement and reminder message prior to your next group meeting.
- Check in with anyone who missed the meeting.

Meeting 4: Become like Jesus

GOAL 1 - BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Continue to go out of your way to make people feel welcome and to help people get to know each other.

- Eat a meal or some yummy snacks together.
- Catch up on how people are doing. Ask about the Communication Challenge from last time. Did anyone learn something about themselves?
- **Icebreaker question:** When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

GOAL 2 - DISCUSS CULTIVATE CONTENT

Introduce the importance of spiritual maturity in your group.

- Read and discuss Meeting 4 on pp. 22-25.
- **Prayer** - Pray together for God's Spirit to illuminate the Word as we engage with it and to empower us to practice the way of Jesus in the coming weeks.

GOAL 3 - CHOOSING CURRICULUM FOR YOUR GROUP

Our Grace ministry staff and leaders are eager to help you and your group grow biblically. It's not too early to think about what your group will focus on next. Be sure to consult with your ministry leader regarding options for future studies, books, and topics that might be the next right fit for your group.

Based on the group needs and maturity, we highly recommend following this *Cultivate* study with either *Rooted* or *Essentials* which can be found here: www.grace-bible.org/resources. Both of these studies discuss the basic beliefs and practices of faith in Jesus. Doing one of these studies next allows your group to align around and build upon a common foundation of doctrine and practice. It is also a great way for you as a leader to gain insight into your group members' faith journey and ways you might be able to encourage and shepherd them.

BEFORE NEXT MEETING

- Send an encouragement and reminder message prior to your next group meeting.
- Check in with anyone who missed the meeting.

Meeting 5: Press on Together

GOAL 1 - BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Continue to go out of your way to make people feel welcome and to help people get to know each other.

- Eat a meal or some yummy snacks together.
- Catch up on how people are doing. Is anyone celebrating something or shouldering something?
- **Icebreaker question:** Generally speaking, are you an introvert or an extrovert?

GOAL 2 - DISCUSS CULTIVATE CONTENT

Introduce the importance of creating a culture of loving support and challenge in your group.

- Read and discuss Meeting 5 on pp. 26-29.
- **Prayer** - Pray together for God's Spirit to show us how to sharpen one another and bear witness to each other's stories in the coming weeks.

GOAL 3 - PRAYER

Decide how your group will prioritize prayer with and for each other.

- Will you use text or GroupMe to share life updates and prayer requests?
- Who will take the lead on prayer in our group?

BEFORE NEXT MEETING

- Send an encouragement and reminder message prior to your next group meeting.
- Check in with anyone who missed the meeting.

Meeting 6: Love Courageously

GOAL 1 - BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Continue to go out of your way to make people feel welcome and to help people get to know each other.

- Eat a meal or some yummy snacks together.
- Catch up on how people are doing.
- **Icebreaker question:** What's the first question you usually ask someone when you meet them? Why?

GOAL 2 - DISCUSS CULTIVATE CONTENT

Introduce the importance of intentionally sharing the love of God with others.

- Read and discuss Meeting 6 on pp. 32-35.
- **Prayer** - Pray together for God's Spirit to open our eyes and hearts to people in need around us. And that He would spur us to courageously love people in the coming weeks.

GOAL 3 - SERVE TOGETHER

Discuss how your group will prioritize serving together.

Check in with your ministry leader to find out more about your campus's non-profit Community Partners. There are some incredible opportunities available for your group to make a difference in the lives of people locally.

- Who will take the lead on service in our group?

BEFORE NEXT MEETING

- Send an encouragement and reminder message prior to your next group meeting.
- Check in with anyone who missed the meeting.

Meeting 7: Help People Find and Follow Jesus

GOAL 1 - BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Continue to go out of your way to make people feel welcome and to help people get to know each other.

- Eat a meal or some yummy snacks together.
- Catch up on how people are doing. What have been some highs and lows since we last met?
- **Icebreaker question:** Who first introduced you to Jesus?

GOAL 2 - DISCUSS CULTIVATE CONTENT

Introduce the importance of creating a culture of intentionally pointing people to Jesus.

- Read and discuss Meeting 7 on pp. 36-39.
- **Prayer** - Pray together for God's Spirit to prompt us to pray for and point people to Jesus in the coming weeks.

GOAL 3 - PRAYER

Discuss the importance of praying for people who are close to us but may be far from God.

- Provide copies of the Every Neighbor Map for your group found on this page: <https://www.grace-bible.org/disciplemaker>
- Take time in your group to fill them out. In groups of 2-3, pray for at least one name per person.

GOAL 4 - PLAN MEETING 8: CELEBRATION MEAL

The next meeting will finish the Cultivate material. We suggest you have a fun celebratory meal to mark the occasion! Take some time at the end of this meeting to make a plan.

BEFORE NEXT MEETING

- Send an encouragement and reminder message prior to your next group meeting.
- Check in with anyone who missed the meeting.

Meeting 8: Celebration and Next Steps

GOAL 1 - CELEBRATE

Plan a fun celebration meal as you finish the first 8 meetings of your group! Try to involve everyone in the planning and execution.

- Eat and catch up on how people are doing.
- **Icebreaker question:** What's the best party you ever attended? Or What's the best meal you ever ate?

GOAL 2 - DISCUSS CULTIVATE CONTENT

Review the big ideas of Connect, Grow, Engage and plan together for the next season of your group.

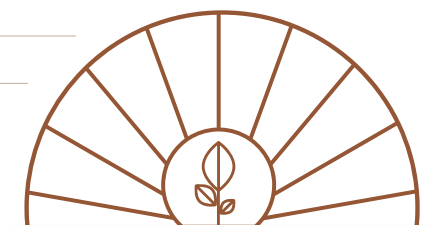
- Read and discuss Meeting 8 on pp. 40-43.
- **Prayer** - Spend some time thanking God for the last few weeks together. Pray for wisdom and discernment as you move forward as a group.

GOAL 3 - SERVE TOGETHER

Before your group meets for Meeting 8, be sure to check in with your ministry leader to talk through ideas for what's next for your group. Remember, we highly recommend following this *Cultivate* study with either *Rooted* or *Essentials* which can be found here: www.grace-bible.org/resources. Both of these studies discuss the basic beliefs and practices of faith in Jesus. They provide a great foundation on which to build future content.

- Build group ownership by planning for the next season of your group together.
- Send an encouragement and reminder message prior to your next group meeting.
- Check in with anyone who missed the meeting.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 25 horizontal lines. The first 24 lines are evenly spaced. The final line at the bottom is a thicker baseline, and a decorative illustration is placed on it.



For more resources visit

GRACE-BIBLE.ORG

