

STUDY GUIDE

game
CHANGER

Five Game-Changing Commitments

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game CHANGER

Five Game-Changing Commitments



HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

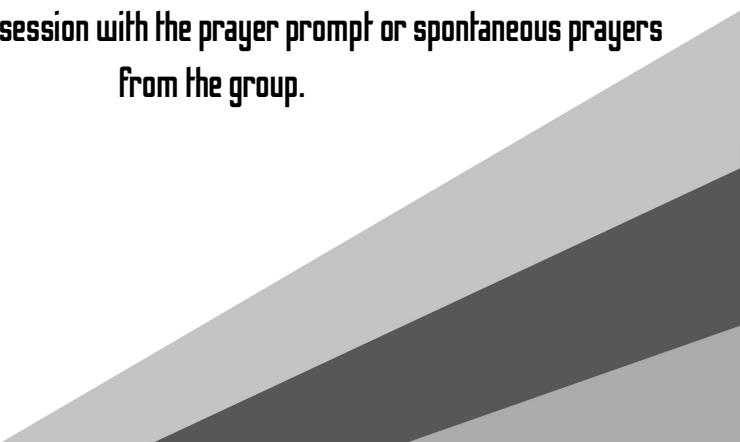
Game Changer: Small Group Guide Introduction

A 'game changer' is a decisive moment, person, or action that alters the course of the story. In sports, it's the play that turns defeat into victory. In life and faith, it's when God's grace meets our willingness to respond—and everything shifts.

A game changer doesn't just change the scoreboard; it changes the players.

In Scripture, Nehemiah and the early church were game changers. Nehemiah's prayers sparked a movement of rebuilding; the Acts church's obedience spread the gospel across the world. The same God who empowered them invites us to step into Round 3—to play our part in God's ongoing story of renewal.

How to Use This Guide

- **Connect:** Begin each session with the Icebreaker question.
 - **Reflect:** Read the Scriptures and discuss the questions that follow.
 - **Practice:** Try the Ancient and Modern Practices during the week.
 - **Pray:** Close each session with the prayer prompt or spontaneous prayers from the group.
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THE UNITED METHODIST MEMBERSHIP VOWS

When we join a United Methodist congregation, we promise to “faithfully participate in its ministries by our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.” These are not boxes to check—they are practices that shape us into Christlike people and move God’s mission forward.

Vow	What It Means	Why It’s a Game Changer
Prayers	Staying in continual conversation with God—listening and speaking with openness.	Prayer aligns us with God’s will and releases divine power in our lives and community.
Presence	Showing up faithfully in worship and relationships.	Our presence creates belonging and opens space for grace.
Gifts	Offering our resources, talents, and time to God’s work.	Generosity breaks the power of scarcity and fuels kingdom impact.
Service	Using our hands and hearts to meet needs and lift others.	Serving transforms us from spectators to participants in God’s story.
Witness	Living and sharing the story of what God has done in us.	Witnessing multiplies faith—our stories become someone else’s invitation.

WEEK 1: PRAYERS: THE POWER PLAY

Scripture: Nehemiah 1:4–11; Acts 4:23–31

Main Theme: Prayer is the ultimate game-changer—when we hand control to God, divine power and perspective are released.

Icebreaker

Share a time you needed a 'timeout' in life. What changed when you paused instead of pushing ahead?

Ancient Quote

John Wesley: "God does nothing but in answer to prayer."

Reflection: How might this quote be a game-changer in the way we think about God's involvement in our daily lives?

Contemporary Quote

Oswald Chambers: "Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work."

Reflection: How would your priorities shift if you believed prayer itself changes the world?

WEEK 1: PRAYERS: THE POWER PLAY

Discussion Questions

- How does Nehemiah's first response to crisis differ from what most people would do?
- Why does the Acts church pray for boldness rather than safety?
- When has prayer shifted your outlook or decision-making?
- What makes consistent prayer challenging in modern life?
- How could corporate prayer strengthen our church?

Ancient Practice

Ignatian Prayer of Examen – A five-step reflection from St. Ignatius of Loyola that helps believers review the day with God. Find a quiet moment each evening. Recall your day, notice gratitude, confess where you missed God's presence, and look ahead with hope.

Modern Practice

Power Play Pause – A brief, phone-free reflection before bed or at lunch. Ask: Where did I see God today? Where did I try to control outcomes? For what am I thankful? Record one line in a notes app or journal.

Closing Prayer Prompt

God, teach us to see prayer not as escape but as energy for the work you call us to do.

WEEK 2: SHOW UP AND CHANGE THE SCORE

Scripture: Nehemiah 2:17–18; Acts 2:42–47

Main Theme: Presence is the turning point—when we show up, God shows off.

Icebreaker

Describe a time someone's simple presence changed your day.

Ancient Quote

St. Benedict: "Let everyone that comes be received as Christ."

Reflection: What if every person who walked into church—or your life—was treated as Christ Himself?

Contemporary Quote

Andy Stanley: "The church is not an event to attend but a family to belong to."

Reflection: How could this change your understanding of what it means to belong?

WEEK 2: SHOW UP AND CHANGE THE SCORE

Discussion Questions

- Why is physical and relational presence central to spiritual growth?
- What keeps people from showing up regularly—in worship or community?
- How does shared life reveal God's grace more fully than solitary faith?
- What does 'devotion' mean in Acts 2?
- How could our group embody faithful presence?

Ancient Practice

Benedictine Stability – Benedictine monks vowed to remain in one community, believing holiness comes from long-term faithfulness. Commit to staying engaged in one Christian community and resist the urge to drift when things get difficult.

Modern Practice

4/5 Rule – Decide to attend worship four out of five Sundays (in-person or online). Treat consistency as spiritual training. Invite one person to join you.

Closing Prayer Prompt

God, thank you for the gift of belonging. Make our presence a channel of your grace.

WEEK 3: GIFTS: THE BIG TRADE

Scripture: Nehemiah 7:70–73; 10:35–39; Acts 4:32–35

Main Theme: Generosity is the game-changing trade—what we release to God multiplies into lasting impact.

Icebreaker

What's the best trade or deal you've ever made?

Ancient Quote

John Wesley: "Gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can."

Reflection: What would it look like to see your financial life as part of your spiritual life?

Contemporary Quote

Winston Churchill: "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

Reflection: How has generosity shaped your life or your faith journey?

WEEK 3: GIFTS: THE BIG TRADE

Scripture Discussion Questions

- What motivated Nehemiah's people to give so freely?
- How did generosity fuel the growth of the early church?
- What fears keep us from giving?
- How does generosity shape our hearts?
- How could our giving today be a legacy for future believers?

Ancient Practice

Tithing – An Old Testament rhythm of offering the first tenth to God. Early Christians adopted it to train trust and gratitude. Set aside a portion for God's work and pray over it as worship.

Modern Practice

Percentage and Purpose Giving – Choose a sustainable percentage to give regularly, then direct part of it toward a ministry you care about. It turns budgeting into discipleship.

Participate in the \$1 Challenge! Bring \$1 every week to worship and see what God will do in and through you.

Closing Prayer Prompt

Generous God, remind us that every gift we offer builds your kingdom and reshapes our hearts.

WEEK 4: SERVICE: FLIP THE SCRIPT

Scripture: Nehemiah 3:1–32; Acts 6:1–7

Main Theme: Service flips the script—greatness in God's kingdom is measured by how we serve.

Icebreaker

Who is an 'unsung hero' in your life? What have you learned from their example?

Ancient Quote

Jesus [Luke 22:26]: "The one who is greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves."

Reflection: How might this verse redefine leadership and success?

Contemporary Quote

Martin Luther King Jr.: "Everybody can be great because everybody can serve."

Reflection: What barriers prevent us from embracing this kind of greatness?

WEEK 4: SERVICE: FLIP THE SCRIPT

Discussion Questions

- What stands out about Nehemiah 3's teamwork?
- Why does service require humility?
- How did serving tables in Acts 6 expand the church's reach?
- Where do you sense God calling you to serve?
- How can our group serve together this month?

Ancient Practice

Foot Washing – Early Christians re-enacted Jesus washing his disciples' feet (John 13) to remember that love kneels. Try showing gratitude or care to someone who serves quietly in your life – it could be writing a note, sending a text, or finding an act of service that would be helpful to them.

Modern Practice

Serve One Rhythm – Worship one hour, serve one hour. Join a ministry team or local outreach consistently so service becomes a habit, not an event.

Closing Prayer Prompt

Jesus, shape our hearts to serve with your humility and joy.

WEEK 5: WITNESS: THE CLUTCH MOMENT

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:1–12; Acts 1:8

Main Theme: Witness is the clutch moment—when God's story becomes our story, and our story becomes someone else's invitation.

Icebreaker

Whose story has most influenced your faith?

Ancient Quote

John Wesley: "The best of all is, God is with us."

Reflection: How does the presence of God give courage to share your story?

Contemporary Quote

Craig Groeschel: "Your story might be the only sermon someone ever hears."

Reflection: Who might need to hear your story this week?

WEEK 5: WITNESS: THE CLUTCH MOMENT

Scripture Discussion Questions

- How did public reading of Scripture in Nehemiah 8 renew the people's faith?
- What does it mean to be Christ's witness in your everyday life?
- What fears hold you back from sharing faith naturally?
- How can story-sharing strengthen the community?
- Who needs to hear part of your story this week?

Ancient Practice

Testimony in Worship – Early Methodists regularly shared personal stories of God's work, keeping revival alive. In your group, take two minutes each to name one place you saw God at work this week.

Modern Practice

Two-Minute Story – Write your story using three movements: [1] Before Christ, [2] What Changed, [3] Life Now. Practice sharing it aloud in two minutes.

Closing Prayer Prompt

Spirit of God, give us courage and words to share your story through our own.

