

COMMUNITY GROUP

MEETING ELEMENTS

EATING TOGETHER

Eating together provides a strong platform for relationship building. A group could eat lunch, dinner, or simply enjoy some fun snacks before or after your time of biblical discussion.

DISCUSSION WELCOME & PRAYER

It is important to remember to welcome regular attenders and guests each week as you come together each week. Begin with a short prayer to invite the Lord into the discussion and encourage others to share around the specific topic or passage.

STATE THE PURPOSE

Groups can quickly lose the main purpose for meeting together. Though there are many positive motivations to meet in a small group, our main purpose as the church is disciple-making. Repeat the purpose each week: "We are here to make and multiply disciples"

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Establish an environment that is most conducive to sharing by going over the discussion guidelines each week. Along with your co-leader, you must also remember to remind participants of these guidelines if/when they come up in the discussion time.

WARM UP

A quick warm up question, or even a testimony, can help get people talking before moving into the prayer and bible discussion time. New groups can use this time sharing testimonies. How did you come to follow Jesus? What has God been doing in your life recently that has been meaningful to you?

STORY & DISCUSSION

This will be the majority of your discussion hour. Don't focus on making it through all the questions and instead concentrate on the discussion pace, responses from participants, and good follow-up questions.

TAKEAWAY

There will often be a key idea or thought that becomes prominent in the discussion and this is often a great way to help challenge the group with a takeaway application.

CLOSING PRAYER

Pay close attention during the discussion time and consider specific ways to pray over what has been shared. It may even be appropriate to spend time praying over someone who reveals a need or concern.

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DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Safe Group

We will do our part to create an environment where everyone feels safe to be real, open, and honest with their struggles and victories in following Jesus. We also take the time necessary to allow everyone the opportunity to share.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is very important for people to have the confidence to share. Whatever is said in the group we will commit to keep in the group.

Listening, Pausing, Silence

We want to practice active listening that values those who are sharing. We will pause to give ourselves and others time to process and share before moving on. We will practice silence as an important tool to allow questions and thoughts to sink in.

No Cross Talk

We will be considerate of others and avoid talking over them or having side conversations with others during the discussion time.

No Fixing

We are not here to fix each other; the Lord does that work in our lives. We will resist the urge to solve someone else's problems and give advice, rather than simply encouraging them and pointing to Jesus.

Use "I" Statements

When sharing we will learn to use "I" statements instead of focusing on "them", "they", "us", "the church", or the "the culture". We want to make application of the truth we hear from the Scriptures personal, and not deflect to others.

Conflict Resolution

As a part of the body of Christ, we want to resolve any conflict in the group in a biblical way.

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HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

THE STORYING MODEL

We will use the simple storying model presented in Real-life Discipleship. Here are the parts:

TRANSITION When possible, follow-up on the takeaway ideas from the previous week's discussion. In a series, remind participants of where you have been and what the series is about. Set up the current week's story by sharing basic background and lead-in information before the story is told.

TELL THE STORY Tell the story without stopping, teaching, or making extraneous points. The objective is not to memorize word-for-word, but to familiarize yourself well enough to simply share it.

REBUILD THE STORY Tell the group they will rebuild the story that was just told to them. Take time to "popcorn" around the room and add to the story until the group is satisfied they have remembered most of what they heard.

READ THE STORY Have someone read the story from the bible. Remind the group that as the story is being read to listen for things that were missed in the verbal telling of the story, or even things that may have been inadvertently added.

QUESTIONS Questions will be categorized by head, heart, and hands. Head questions are observational from the bible story. Heart questions move participants beyond observation to personal reflection. Hands questions move beyond personal reflection toward practical application. As a leader learn to develop an instinct for good follow-up questions based on participant responses. The goal is to listen and engage with people as they respond, not to simply get through the lesson. When appropriate learn to dig deeper and challenge people to think beyond the surface.

OTHER PASSAGES

The storying model will not apply to all passages in a particular series. When that is the case, the discussion guide will take a more traditional approach to introducing the passage. The end goal of driving toward the head, heart, and hands questions will still be applicable.

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

October 1st & 2nd 2022

WELCOME/ OPENING PRAYER

PURPOSE: *We are here as a group to make and multiply disciples.*

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

WARMUP: *Testimony from a group member or one of the following questions:*

What are you thankful for this week?

What are you concerned about this week?

What are you looking forward to?

TRANSITION: *We are focusing on 4 parts to a full engagement vision at Valley: Worship, Connect, Serve, and Share. This week we are going to talk about what it means to SERVE. Paul instructs us to understand and use our spiritual gifts to accomplish the mission of Jesus Christ.*

SET THE STAGE: *In Ephesians 4 Paul begins discussing unity within the church. He states that together in Christ we are "one body, one Spirit...called to one hope; one Lord, one faith, one baptism." The church is then united in our mission together and each member uniquely gifted for that mission. Leaders are to train and equip the church to maturity: each person growing in knowledge, love, and using our spiritual gifts together for the advancement of the gospel.*

READ THE PASSAGE: *Ephesians 4:11-16*

HEAD QUESTIONS:

According to vs. 11-13, how would you describe the primary work of church leaders? In practice, what does that really mean?

Why is it necessary that every believer is trained/equipped to serve?

HEART QUESTIONS:

How has the Lord gifted you to serve?

What have been the most meaningful experiences you have had in serving others? What made those times meaningful?

In what ways/areas do you feel you still need training and equipping in order to be useful in the mission of Jesus?

HANDS QUESTIONS:

In what way is God asking you to "build up" the church this year?

How can you use your gifts to serve those you know outside of the church?

TAKEAWAY

CLOSING PRAYER