

Together



Finding our God-Designed Purpose within Community

A 5-Week Bible Study Series for Small Groups

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OVERVIEW

Together is a 5-week bible study series focused on getting a small group to remember why they are a life group and what God wants to do through them. Each passage focuses on a story or teaching that centers around community. When Christ birthed the Church, he did not have in mind a single individual going it alone, but an army of people standing together, serving one another, loving each other and working together to see Christ's kingdom grow healthy and strong. Community!

You see, in every church birthed there would be people coming out of idolatrous backgrounds to a family of imperfect people who had abandoned everything for the call of Christ Jesus on their lives. They would need to know the Word of God taught to them by the Spirit of God, caring support from the people of God, a purpose that originated from the heart of God, so that their lives might be transformed to reflect the nature of God. All of this could not be done in isolation but by doing life with other believers, holding one another accountable and finding strength in times of failure or doubt. The early church understood this and what we see in them was a blueprint for doing life in the name of Jesus.

This study takes various passages and points the Church to what God was and is saying to His Church today. Then it asks what the passage is saying about how people respond and then challenges the church to find any ways that our lives need to be adjusted so that we reflect the nature of God above all things.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This study is best used in small groups where discussion-based learning is valued. The lessons are one-page with a hook question, background, text to read and exploratory questions to bring out the text's meaning. The story is not designed to be taught but explored. The main goal is for the people to know the story and be transformed by the story, being challenged to put it into practice during the week.

One of the best ways to get this done is for the facilitator to lead the group in reading and rereading the text in multiple translations. Then having another person (or the entire group) retell the story as if talking with a friend over coffee. There are several basic questions to get the discussion rolling. Below is the Discovery Bible Study Method in seven steps. There are basic questions a facilitator can glean from this method. The lesson also has a set of questions that could be used in the whole group or in smaller group if the group leader chooses to subdivide the group for more intimate discussion.

Discovery Bible Study 7-Step Method

The Discovery Bible Study Method is an inductive method that allows the leader to facilitate the learning of a text through focus on the text exclusively. With repetition and key questions helping to guide the discussion without teaching the text as the expert, the small group works together to hear clearly what the Holy Spirit is saying in the text and how their lives should be conformed to its truth.

There are seven steps to the process so that everyone is heard and everyone can participate. Below is a brief explanation for each of the seven steps.

What Are You Thankful for This Week?

(5 mins) Here is an easy way to get started. Call on someone, “Jenny, what are you thankful for today?” This question gets you ready for prayer as you begin with worship, expressing your gratitude to God. Everyone will have something to say. If you have more than five, try forming multiple groups (steps 1-4)

What is the Biggest Challenge You are Facing Today?

(5 mins) Authenticity is critical for any group. Some people will not want to share, but in time they will see the value and how much people truly care. This question helps people learn to relate deeper and gives the group specific ways to pray and serve. Remember that a question like this requires time management. Using a word like “Today” or “one thing” helps to focus the group.

How Can We Help? Or Who Could You Serve This Week?

(5 mins) This could be a group member who is facing a major challenge (childcare, parent in the hospital, note or call of encouragement). It doesn't have to be a “huge” event or a “huge” act of service. Lead your life group to a spirit of active compassion. Loving one another will be a hallmark, a contagion for your group and for those your group might reach.

How Did You Do Last Week?

(10 mins) How did you do with last week's “I Will”? How did that go? With whom did you share last week's lesson? How did you put into practice what you learned last week? We do not do this enough. Bible truth is meant to be applied. Applying truth solidifies it in our hearts and minds. To be held accountable means that others care about my spiritual growth and are there to help me stick to it. The enemy wants to distract you, but together we grow to see transformation in each other's lives. This is CRITICAL.

What is God Saying?

(35 mins) Don't teach or explain. Read the Word together in several different translations. Have one person re-tell the passage in their own words as if talking with a friend. Ask them to do this before group time. Ask: What grabbed you in this story? Did anything bother you or encourage you? What does this story teach us about God? (Stick to the passage only without cross-referencing). Ask: What does this story teach us about how people live? (a contrast between God's character and people's conduct develops). Ask: In what ways would we need to change if we lived this out daily?

If this is God Speaking, What Will You Do About It?

(5 mins) Develop a SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic & time bound) statement that will put the truth to work in your life. Ask everyone to write an “I Will” statement. For example: “I will spend 10 mins each day this week reflecting on God's goodness to my family.” “I will prayer walk at least 1 day through my neighborhood this week.”

Who Will You Share What You Learned this Week?

(5 mins) Share with at least one person this week what you have learned. Preferably, share this with someone who is not in a relationship with Jesus Christ and whom God has placed in your network of relationships. This helps your group get outside of themselves. Great stories come this time!



TOGETHER WEEK 1 - IN COMMUNITY TOGETHER

Open in Prayer

Welcome/Introductions

Remind group of Small Group guidelines:

Ask a hook question [Ask a thought provoking question to get the group focused]

What do you like the most about being part of a church family?

Share background for the story [Provide context by sharing what comes before the story in the Bible]

The book of Acts follows the four Gospels in the New Testament. Acts tells us what happens to the disciples and other early believers following Jesus' death and resurrection. It is an eyewitness account of the birth and infancy of the Christian church.

Jesus' followers have been waiting in Jerusalem as he instructed them. On the day of Pentecost, the promised gift, the Holy Spirit, arrives and amazing things happen! Of course, there are skeptics. They even accuse the followers of Jesus of being drunk! Then Peter steps up and begins to tell them the truth about what is happening. He talks them through prophecies, told by Joel, that Jesus fulfilled. Peter then reiterates that Jesus, whom they crucified, is indeed the Messiah. God did not allow Jesus to be defeated; in fact, he raises Jesus from the dead, and sends the Holy Spirit to be poured out on us.

Tell the story - this week's passage is Acts 2:36-47

Rebuild the story / Fill in the Gaps / Re-read the Story

Discuss these questions:

1. What grabbed you or stood out while we read and while you heard the story?
2. What does the story tell us about God?
3. What does the story tell us about people? What was Peter's challenge to the group?
4. How do you think you would have responded to Peter's challenge?
5. How is our small group similar to the early church?
6. What aspects of life in the early church do you most desire for this small group?
7. What would you need to change in your own personal life to fulfill your desire for this group?
8. What will you do this week as a result of this story? I.e., how will you obey these truths practically? [SMART - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely]

Ask someone to retell the story as if with a friend over a cup of coffee

Assign next week's passage – 1 Thess 2:6-12

Close in Prayer



TOGETHER WEEK 2 - SHARING OUR LIVES & THE GOSPEL TOGETHER

Open in Prayer

Welcome/Introductions

Remind group of Small Group guidelines:

Ask a hook question [Ask a thought provoking question to get the group focused]

What was your first encounter with God?

Share background for the story [Provide context by sharing what comes before the story in the Bible]

The Thessalonian church was one that Paul started himself. The letters of First and Second Thessalonians were written to this church. He knew these folks well. Paul had been with them before and cared about them even when he wasn't physically with them. He wrote this letter as a spiritual father would to his children. Paul reminded them of how much he had shared with them in order to bring them the Good News. He encouraged them and urged them to live their lives in a worthy manner.

This week in our series, we are concentrating on sharing. Just like Paul did with the Thessalonian people, we too must not only share the Gospel, but also our very lives. It is in this that we truly model the method Jesus left for us to imitate.

Tell the story - this week's passage is 1 These. 2:6-12

Rebuild the story / Fill in the Gaps / Re-read the Story

Discuss these questions:

1. What grabbed you or stood out while we read and while you heard the story?
2. Did anything bother you or encourage you in the story?
3. What stands out about the character and nature of God?
4. What stands out about the conduct and attitudes of people?
5. Who do you need to share the Gospel with?
6. How could you share the Gospel this week without words?
7. What will you do this week as a result of this story? I.e., how will you obey these truths practically? [SMART - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely]

Ask someone to retell the story as if with a friend over a cup of coffee

Assign next week's passage – John 1:35-51

Close in Prayer



TOGETHER WEEK 3 - CONNECTING GOD AND PEOPLE

Open in Prayer

Welcome/Introductions

Remind group of Small Group guidelines:

Ask a hook question [Ask a thought provoking question to get the group focused]

How many friends do you have on Facebook?

Share background for the story [Provide context by sharing what comes before the story in the Bible]

In the opening of the book of John, we see the birth of Christ in a new light. Jesus is called the Word. He is the light that shines in the darkness, and no one can extinguish it. We then learn of John the Baptist. He was sent to the world so that people would believe in Jesus because of his testimony. John was preaching about the coming Messiah and baptizing people.

In our story today, we see John connect people with Jesus with his declaration that Jesus was the Lamb of God. Then we meet Andrew and Phillip who connected ones they cared about to this man some were calling Messiah.

Tell the story - this week's passage is John 1:35-51

Rebuild the story / Fill in the Gaps / Re-read the Story - Asking: "What happened next?"

Discuss these questions:

1. What grabbed you or stood out while we read and while you heard the story?
2. Did anything bother you or encourage you?
3. What stands out about the character and nature of God (Jesus)?
4. What stands out about the conduct and attitude of the people in the story?
5. Who do you most identify with in the story and why?
6. What will you do this week as a result of this story? I.e., how will you obey these truths practically? [SMART - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely]

Ask someone to retell the story as if with a friend over a cup of coffee

Assign next week's passage – Acts 6:1-7

Close in Prayer



TOGETHER WEEK 4 - IN COMMUNITY TO SERVE ONE ANOTHER

Open in Prayer

Welcome/Introductions

Remind group of Small Group guidelines:

Ask a hook question [Ask a thought provoking question to get the group focused]

What happens to your priorities when you are too busy?

Share background for the story [Provide context by sharing what comes before the story in the Bible]

Peter, John and other leaders of the early church, also known as the apostles, are preaching about Jesus and healing people in His name. This infuriates the priests and religious leaders who repeatedly arrest the apostles and bring them to trial before the religious council. The apostles are told to stop speaking and teaching about Jesus. Each time, the apostles continue to teach and heal in Jesus' name. As a result, more and more people believe in Jesus. Because of the numbers of new believers, the work for the apostles became too much to accomplish on their own. It was decided that they needed help. They chose men to serve in the church, and help with the everyday workings of the church body.

Tell the story - this week's passage is Acts 6:1-7

Rebuild the story / Fill in the Gaps / Re-read the Story

Discuss these questions:

1. What grabbed you or stood out while we read and while you heard the story?
2. Did anything bother you or encourage you in the story?
3. What does the story tell us about God?
4. What does the story tell us about people?
5. What can we learn about serving others through this story?
6. What was the impact to the church when people stepped up to serve?
7. How would serving one another in this group change this group and others?
8. What will you do this week as a result of this story? I.e., how will you obey these truths practically? [SMART - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely]

Ask someone to retell the story as if with a friend over a cup of coffee

Assign next week's passage – Luke 10:1-11

Close in Prayer



TOGETHER WEEK 5 - PREPARING TOGETHER TO MAKE DISCIPLES

Open in Prayer

Welcome/Introductions

Remind group of Small Group guidelines:

Ask a hook question [Ask a thought provoking question to get the group focused]

When do you start packing for a trip?

Share background for the story [Provide context by sharing what comes before the story in the Bible]

Up until this point in Luke, Jesus has been spending much of His time with His disciples. They have been following Him and watching Him teach, heal and minister to people. Jesus modeled ministry for them, and how to share the Good News. He knew what He was doing, and intentionally invested in these people to further the Kingdom of God.

Jesus knew He had to prepare them for when He was no longer with them in the flesh. He did that not only by modeling what He wanted them to do, but also by giving them opportunities to participate in the mission themselves.

Tell the story - this week's passage is Luke 10:1-11

Rebuild the story / Fill in the Gaps / Re-read the Story

Discuss these questions:

1. What grabbed you or stood out while we read and while you heard the story?
2. Did anything in the story bother you or encourage you?
3. What do we learn about God from this story?
4. What do we learn about people from this story?
5. How did Jesus prepare His disciples before they went out?
6. Describe the kind of discipling relationships you have had or have right now?
7. What will you do this week as a result of this story? I.e., how will you obey these truths practically? [SMART - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely]

Ask someone to retell the story as if with a friend over a cup of coffee

Assign next week's passage -

Close in Prayer