Better Together

Six Weeks of Community

Leader Guide
Six Weeks of Community

Understanding your Study Guide

You are about to embark on a life-changing experience in your small group. Studying God’s Word together always impacts our lives in powerful ways. One of the unique features of this curriculum is that it uses God’s five purposes for your life as the format for each session. These purposes are Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission, and Worship. The format of each session is as follows:

**Connect Together:** Intimate connection with God and his family is the foundation for spiritual growth. This section will help you get to know the members of your group. It will also give you the opportunity to check your progress from week to week.

**Grow Together:** This section is made up of three components:

- A weekly Bible memory verse that fits the theme of the session.
- A weekly video teaching session by Pastor James Biffert. Follow along using the outline in this study guide.
- Discussion questions designed to facilitate a deeper understanding of the Bible and to help you consider how the truths of Scripture can impact your life.

**Serve Together:** Nothing is more fulfilling than using your God-given gifts to serve the needs of others in God’s family. This section will help your group discover how you can serve each other and your church together.

**Share Together:** God wants to use your small group to reach your community for Christ. The Share Together section is designed to give you and your group practical suggestions and exercises for sharing the love of Christ with others.

**Worship Together:** In each small group session you will have the opportunity to surrender your hearts to God and express your worship to him. In this section you will be led in various forms of small group worship including prayer, Scripture reading, singing together, and sharing what God is doing in your lives. This portion of your session can be very meaningful for your group.

HOST TIPS: These brief instructions in gray type are helpful coaching hints for your group host.
Here’s your first HOST TOP: The study guide material is meant to be your servant, not your master. So please don’t feel you have to answer every question in every section. The point is not to race through the session; the point is to take time to let God work in your lives. Nor is it necessary to “go around the circle” before you move on to the next question. Give people the freedom to speak, but don’t insist that they do. Your group will enjoy deeper, more open sharing and discussion if people don’t feel pressured to speak up.
SESSION ONE
What Matters Most

Connect Together. .........................................................10 Minutes

1. Give everyone a chance to introduce themselves and share how they came to be a part of this group.

2. Open to the Purpose Driven Group Guidelines in the Small Group Resources section of your study guide. Take a few minutes to review these group guidelines before you begin this study of 6 Weeks of Community. These guidelines will help everyone know what to expect from the group and how to contribute to a meaningful small group experience.

3. Love is defined in many ways by our culture. How would you define love?

Grow Together. ............................................................55 Minutes

Memory Verse
“Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”
John 13:35 (NLT)

Watch the video lesson now and follow along in your outline.

What Matters Most

“If you are a follower of Christ Jesus...all that matters in your faith that makes you love others.”
Galatians 5:6 (CEV)

“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13 (NIV)

Five Radical Statements About Love

If I don’t live a life of love:

1. Nothing I _________________________ will matter.
“If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth, but didn’t love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal.” 1 Corinthians 13:1 (NLT)

2. Nothing I _____________________________ will matter.

“I may have the gift of prophecy. I may understand all the secret things of God and have all knowledge…but if I do not have love, then I am nothing.” 1 Corinthians 13:2 (NCV)

3. Nothing I _____________________________ will matter.

“Even if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, I would still be worth nothing at all without love.” 1 Corinthians 13:2b (LB)

4. Nothing I _____________________________ will matter.

“If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body…but if I didn’t love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.” 1 Corinthians 13:3 (NLT)

5. Nothing I _____________________________ will matter.

“No matter what I say, what I believe, or what I do, I’m bankrupt without love.” 1 Corinthians 13:3b (MSG)

What is Love?

- Love is a ____________________________.
  “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” John 13:34 (NIV)

- Love is a______________________________.
  “Go after a life of love as if your life depended on it—because it does.” 1 Corinthians 14:1 (MSG)

- Love is a______________________________.
  “Let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them and show it by our actions.” 1 John 3:18 (LB)

- Love is a______________________________.
  “God is love. If we keep on loving others, we will stay one in our hearts with God and he will stay one with us.” 1 John 4:16b (CEV)
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. First Corinthians 13: 1-3 makes five radical statements about love. They are the first five fill-ins of your outline. Which statement strikes you the most? Why?

2. First Corinthians 14:1 (MSG) says, “Go after a life of love as if your life depended on it—because it does.” On a practical day-to-day level, what does it mean to “go after a life of love?” What are some steps you can take to live this way?

Serve Together. .................................................. 10 Minutes

1. One way to “go after” a life of love is to show appreciation to others. Is there a worker in your church who needs to be shown appreciation? As a group, choose either a church staff member or volunteer whom you could affirm this week. You might select an usher, a janitor, a teacher, a secretary, or a youth worker—someone who is involved in serving your congregation. Discuss ways your group can show love and appreciation to that person this week, such as a gift certificate to their favorite store or restaurant, a thank-you signed by all the volunteers from your group to handle the details. Then, as a group, make plans to present your appreciation gift to the person you chose.

Share Together. .................................................. 15 Minutes

1. Use the Circles of Life diagram to whom you can show the love of Christ this week—someone you have been meaning to call or visit, or someone you need to invite to church. Commit to doing something for that person this week. Tell your small group who the person is and what you will do: send an email, make a call, write a letter, buy a little gift, take him out for coffee, or invite her to join your small group next week.

2. At the end of his message, Pastor James asked you to begin discussing a project your whole group can do together to reach out to your community with the love of Christ, particularly in the areas of assisting the poor, caring for the sick, and reaching the lost. This project will become a major focus on one big project together. Or you may decide to do this on a group-by-group basis. Our hope is that by the end of these 6 Weeks of Community, every small group in your church will have begun an outreach project in your town. We’ll talk about this is greater detail next week, but we just want to get it on your radar screen in this session. Start discussing the idea right now. Why is it important for you as a group to reach out to your community?

Worship Together. .................................................. 10 Minutes

HOST TIP: To maximize prayer time and allow greater opportunity for personal sharing, break into subgroups of three or four people. This is especially important if your small group has more than eight members.

1. In simple, one-sentence prayer, take a few moments to thank God for his love. If praying aloud with people is new or awkward for you, feel free to pray silently.

2. One of the best ways to show each other love is to pray for each other. Share your prayer requests with your small group and then take time to pray together. Be sure to pray for friends and loved ones who do not have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Record your prayer requests on the Small Group Prayer and Praise Report. Keeping track of group prayer requests and answers to prayer would be a great job for someone in your group. Any volunteers?
BEFORE YOU LEAVE

1. Take a few minutes to look at the Small Group Calendar in the Small Group Resources section of this study guide. Healthy groups share responsibilities and group ownership. Fill out the calendar together, noting where you will meet each week, who will facilitate your discussion time, and who will provide a meal or snack. Note special events, such as birthdays, anniversaries, socials, etc. Coordinating these details would be another great job for someone in the group.

2. Collect phone numbers and email addresses from your small group members. The group roster (called My Small Group) is a good place to keep this information. Pass your study guides around the circle and have your group members fill in their contact information.

3. Here is a ministry someone in your small group can take responsibility for: organize an Email Prayer Hotline. This is a great way for your group members to share prayer requests and answers to prayer between your small group gatherings. When a need for prayer arises, just call or email your Email Prayer Hotline Coordinator. The Coordinator will then email the entire small group with either a prayer alert of your request or with a praise report of God’s answer to your prayers.
SESSION 2
Reaching Out Together

Connect Together. .................................................. 10 Minutes

1. Welcome any people who are new to your group this week.
2. Check your progress on last week’s group assignment to show love and appreciation to a church staff member or volunteer.
3. How are you progressing with your personal commitment from last week to reach out to someone with the love of Jesus Christ? Did you get started? If so, how did it go?
4. Would anyone like to tell the group about an answer to prayer or something they are learning from their Better Together daily devotional readings? Be sure to record answers to prayer in the Small Group Prayer and Praise Report.

Grow Together. .................................................. 45 Minutes

Memory Verse
“Be wise in the way you act with people who are not believers, making the most of every opportunity.” Colossians 4:5 (NCV)

Watch the video lesson now and follow along in your outline.

Reaching Out Together

“Love is kind.” 1 Corinthians 13:4 (NIV)

“Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” But he answered, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “That would take more than half a year’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?” “How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.” When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.” Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.” Mark 6:36-44 (NIV)

Meeting the Needs of Others

- Recognize ________________________________.
- Take ________________________________.

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”
2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV)

- Get ________________________________.
• Measure the _______________________________.

• Prepare your _______________________________.

“God will give you much, so that you can give away much, and when we take your gifts to those who need them they will break out into thanksgiving and praise to God for your help.” 2 Corinthians 9:11 (LB)

• Be _______________________________.

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” James 1:22 (NIV)

“Those you help will be glad not only because of your generous gifts to themselves and to others, but they will praise God for this proof that your deeds are as good as your doctrine.” 2 Corinthians 9:13 (LB)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

HOST TIP: If your group has eight or more members, we suggest you break into subgroups of three or four people for greater participation and deeper discussion. At the end of the discussion time, come back together and have someone from each group report on the highlights of their discussions.

HOST TIP: This week there are just two questions in this section because we want you to spend more of your discussion time working on the Share Together section of the study.

1. James 1:22 tells us it’s not enough just to know truth. We have to put it into practice. And 2 Corinthians 9:13 says our deeds should be “as good as our doctrine.” What does this mean on a practical level? How do these truths relate to sharing your faith?

2. Pastor James said, “God wants to use your small group to reach the world for Jesus Christ. If you want to know God’s plan for solving the world’s problems look around the room. You’re it. You are God’s plan…God works though his people—through physical, tangible demonstrations of compassions, mercy and care.” What do you think about that statement? Does it excite you, scare you, or overwhelm you? Why?

HOST TIP: There will be no Serve Together questions this week. We want you to focus the rest of your time on the Share Together section of your study.
Share Together. .............................................. 25 Minutes

God wants to use your small group to reach out to the world for Jesus Christ. To discover how, follow the six steps from Pastor James’ message this week:

1. **Recognize the need.** What physical and spiritual needs do people have in your community? Your church may have established a 6 Weeks of Community Missions Project Team to explore church-wide outreach opportunities in your community. If your church has such a team, look over their Local Missions Opportunity Report. If your church is planning one big, church-wide project, talk about the role your group will play in that project. Otherwise, use the list below to help spur creative thinking in your group for a local outreach idea. As a group, decide what your project will be.

Small Group Outreach Ideas

- Volunteer at a local food bank once a month.
- Divide into teams and rotate weekly visits to a shut-in or nursing home.
- Start a weekly sports program for the kids who live near your church.
- Divide into teams and rotate weekly volunteer service at a homeless shelter.
- Partner with a prison or jail ministry to start a small .
- Assist in a local HIV/AIDS ministry outreach.
- Volunteer in an after-school tutoring program for kids who are at risk of dropping out of school.

2. **Take inventory.** What talents, abilities, experiences, and resources are available in your group to help meet the need you have selected?

3. **Get organized.** Determine how much time your project will take and what kind of resources will be required. Make a plan. Figure out a timeline, divide up responsibilities, and assign tasks.

4. **Measure the need.** Pastor James said, “You’ll never know what God can do through you until you come to the end of yourself—until you face a hungry crowd with only a sack lunch.” Is your project a big enough challenge to your faith? If not, why not?

5. **Prepare your heart.**

6. **Be available.** (We will talk about these last two points in the Worship Together section)
Worship Together. ........................................ 10 Minutes

1. **Prepare your heart.** The Bible says in 1 Chronicles 29:14 that everything we have was given by God. In silent or spoken prayer, thank God for what he has given you and then offer it back to him to do with as he will.

2. **Be available.** Romans 12:1 tells us to worship God by offering our bodies to him as living sacrifices. In prayer, offer yourselves to God. Ask him to give you strength and courage to step out in faith as you join together in your community outreach project.

3. **Pray for each other’s prayer requests.** Pray especially for the people you are inviting to come to your small group or church with you. Be sure your Prayer Coordinator records the group’s prayer requests on the Small Group Prayer and Praise Report page. (in the back of your guide)

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Was anyone missing from your group this week? If someone was absent, ask for a volunteer from the group to call or email that person and let them know they were missed. It’s very important for people to know they are cared about.
SESSION 3
Belonging Together

Connect Together. ................................................................. 10 Minutes

1. Check your progress on your small group outreach project. Are your plans coming together? Are there any loose ends that need to be tied down?
2. Who has blessed you by meeting a practical need in your life? How did their kindness make you feel?

Grow Together . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 45 Minutes

Memory Verse
“Since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.” Romans 12:5b (NLT)

Watch the video lesson now and follow along in your outline.

Belonging Together

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up...though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV)

Lessons on Love from 1 Corinthians 13:7

- Love always______________________________.

“A gossip betrays a confidence but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.” Proverbs 11:13 (NIV)

Protects = _____________________________

- Love always______________________________.

We believe ____________________________ each other...we believe______________________________each other.

- Love always______________________________.

Be _____________________________ about other people’s accomplishments.

- Love always______________________________.

“Some friendships do not last, but some friends are more loyal than brothers.” Proverbs 18:24 (GNB)
“In Christ, we who are many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” Romans 12:5 (NIV)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

HOST TIP: If your group has eight or more members, we suggest you break into subgroups of three or four people for greater participation and deeper discussion.

1. Which of the four statements about love from 1 Corinthians 13:7 spoke to you most powerfully? Why? How can you apply these truths to your personal life this week?

2. What can we do to apply these truths to our group life? What does it mean to really trust each other and to persevere in our relationships together?

3. Talk about a time when you needed the faith of your friends to lift you in prayer, or a time when God answered your prayers for someone else.

4. Have one or two group members share their story of how they came to Christ and the role friendship played in their decision.

Serve Together. .....................................................10 Minutes

1. A recent survey revealed that the number one characteristic of a growing church is the atmosphere of love among the membership. How would you describe the atmosphere of love in your church (welcoming, warm, safe, impersonal, cliquey, etc.)? What can your small group do to help build a more loving community in your church?

2. Have you made a membership commitment to your church? If not, what is holding you back?

Share Together. .....................................................15 Minutes

1. Your group outreach project can be a great conversation starter for inviting seekers as well as Christ-following friends to join your small group. When people express interest or curiosity about your project, invite them to join you at your next group meeting to find out more about it. Who can you tell about your group outreach project this week?

2. Think of a friend who is not currently connected to a church. Why not invite that person to come to church with you this weekend? What is the worst thing that could happen if you invite them? What is the best thing that could happen if you invite them? Is the potential benefit worth the risk? Remember, over 90 percent of Christians first went to church because a friend or family member invited them. Tell your group the name of at least one person who you will invite to church or to your next small group meeting.

   Name: _________________________________

   Name: _______________________________
Worship Together. ......................................................... 10 Minutes

1. Would anyone like to share an answer to prayer from last week? Be sure to record answers to prayer in the Small Group Prayer and Praise Report.

2. Pray for your small group outreach project.

3. Love requires us to believe in each other and for each other. Pair up with a spiritual partner for the rest of your prayer time. A spiritual partner is someone we can talk to about our spiritual growth and “call for back-up” when we need prayer support. Take a moment to select someone in your group to be your spiritual partner for the remaining weeks of this study. (We strongly recommend that men partner with men, and women partner with women.) After you have paired up, pray for each other’s requests. Plan to check in with each other by phone, email, or over coffee at least once before your next small group meeting. This could be a great time to pray for each other during the coming week, and share what you are leaning from your Better Together daily devotional reading.
SESSION 4
Growing Together

Connect Together. ................................................................. 10 Minutes

1. Have you had a chance to invite a friend to church or to your small group yet? How did they respond?

2. Check the progress of your group outreach project.

3. Who have been some of the greatest examples of Christian love for you?

Grow Together. ................................................................. 50 Minutes

Memory Verse
“Encourage one another and build each other up.” 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)

Watch the video lesson now and follow along in your outline.

Growing Together

1. Growing together requires _______________________________.

“Love is patient…it is not rude…it is not easily angered.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 (NIV)

“Be humble and gentle in every way. Be patient with each other and lovingly accept each other.” Ephesians 4:2 (GW)

2. Growing together requires _______________________________.

“Love rejoices in the truth.” 1 Corinthians 13:6a (CEV)

“Speak the truth in a spirit of love.” Ephesians 4:15 (TEV)

Speaking the Truth in Love
• Check your ________________________________ .

“Why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own?...First get rid of the log in your own eye; then perhaps you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.” Matthew 7:3-5 (NLT)
• Plan your ____________.
• Plan ____________ you’ll say it.

“The right word at the right time is like precious gold set in silver.” Proverbs 25:11 (CEV)

• Plan ____________ you’ll say.

“A wise friend’s kind reprimand is like a gold ring slipped on your finger.” Proverbs 25:12 (MSG)

• Plan ____________ you’ll say it.

“Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword, but wisely spoken words can heal.” Proverbs 12:18 (TEV)

• ____________.

“A wise mature person is known for his understanding. The more pleasant his words, the more persuasive he is.” Proverbs 16:21 (TEV)

• Say it ____________.

• Say it ____________.

“Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword, but wisely spoken words can heal.” Proverbs 12:18 (TEV)

“An honest answer is a sign of a true friendship.” Proverbs 24:26 (TEV)

1. Growing together requires ____________

“Love keeps no record of wrongs.” 1 Corinthians 13:5b (NIV)

“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” Colossians 3:13 (NIV)

“In the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” Matthew 7:2 (NIV)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

HOST TIP: If your group has eight or more members, we suggest you break into subgroups of three or four people for greater participation and deeper discussion. At the end of the discussion time, come back together and have someone from each group report on the highlights of the discussions.

1. This lesson covered three aspects of love that can sometimes be very difficult: patience, truthfulness, and forgiveness. Which part of the lesson was most meaningful to you? Why?

2. Where does impatience show up in your life?
3. What is the difference between judging people and confronting them in love.

4. How do you respond when someone hurts you? Why is it so hard to forgive people who hurt us? What are the consequences of choosing not to forgive?

Serve Together. ..........................................................10 Minutes

1. In what ways do patience, truthfulness and forgiveness impact your ability to serve in ministry?

2. Is there someone in your church or small group with whom you need to seek reconciliation? Why wait any longer? Reach out to that person this week with truthfulness and forgiveness. We will pray together about these relationships during the Worship Together section of this study.

Share Together. ..........................................................10 Minutes

1. How can unforgiveness or resentment in your relationship with someone who is not a follower of Christ affect their openness to Jesus Christ? What difference could a healed relationship make in that person’s life?

2. How do unity and love in your church affect your church’s testimony to your community?

Worship Together. ..........................................................10 Minutes

1. As Pastor James closed his message, he asked: “Do you need to be patient with someone? Do you need to speak the truth in love to someone? Do you need to forgive someone?” Take a moment to quietly reflect on these questions. Write down a name or a situation that comes to mind.

   Name or Situation: _______________________________________________.

2. Break into subgroups of three or four people, or pair up with your spiritual partner. Tell each other if you have a relationship that needs healing, either through patience, truthfulness or forgiveness. This is not a time to share details or assign blame. Simply mention the person’s name or the nature of the relationship (e.g., brother, colleague, mother, neighbor, friend, etc). Share as openly as you feel comfortable so the group can pray more specifically for you. Then, as an act of worship and because it will please the Father, pray for each other, asking God to soften your hearts and give you courage and grace to initiate the healing process. If you are not yet ready to reconcile, then pray that God will help you to become “willing to be ready.”

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Recruit a volunteer to be your Group Ministry Project Coordinator! His or her job will be to contact your church this week and ask for some practical suggestions as to how your small group can serve your church. You will need this information for next week’s small group meeting.
SESSION 5
Serving Together

Connect Together. .............................................................. 10 Minutes

1. Check the progress of your group outreach project.

2. Last week we talked and prayed about being patient with others, speaking the truth in love, and forgiveness. How did that lesson impact your life this week? Did you see any answers to your prayer?

3. This week we are going to talk about serving the Lord by serving people in your church family. What do you think are the characteristics of a true servant?

Grow Together. .............................................................. 45 Minutes

Memory Verse
“By helping each other with your troubles, you truly obey the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2 (NCV)

Watch the video lesson now and follow along in your outline.

Serving Together
Four Key Aspects of Serving Together
Groups that serve together:

1. Make themselves ________________ to serve.

2. Work as a ________________.

“From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” Ephesians 4:16 (NIV)

3. Think more about ________________ than themselves.

“Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.” Philippians 2:4 (MSG)

“…consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” Hebrews 10:24 (NIV)

4. Do every task with equal ____________________.

5. “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.” (NIV)

6. “He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other Christians.” Hebrews 6:10 (NLT)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are you currently serving in a ministry at your church? If you are, tell the group about it.

2. Where do you find the most joy when it comes to helping others?
3. The true test of a servant-heart is in how you react when you are treated like a servant. Have you ever been treated like a servant? How did it make you feel?

4. Consider these roadblocks to ministry: time constraints, over commitment, lack of interest, lack of confidence, lack of information. Which of these roadblocks presents the biggest obstacle for you? What can you do to avoid or overcome these barriers to ministry?

HOST TIP: There will be no Share Together questions this week. We want you to focus the rest of your time on the Serve Together section of your study.

Serve Together. ................................................................. 25 Minutes

What can you do together as a small group to serve your church?

1. **Determine a need**: What will your group do? Pastor James, “There is nothing too small, too mundane, or too menial for a true servant.” Make a list of practical needs your group can meet in your church. Here are a few examples to get you started:

   - Provide meals for a family in need.
   - Pray with a church member who is in the hospital.
   - Assist senior adults in your church with projects around the house.
   - Offer help to military families whose moms or dads are serving overseas.
   - Take on a maintenance project at church such as painting or re-carpeting an office or classroom.
   - Other: ____________________________
   - Other: ____________________________
   - Other: ____________________________

Now pray together and ask the Lord what he would have you do. After you have prayed, choose the need your group will meet.
2. **Develop a plan:** How will you meet the need? When your group has chosen your ministry project, determine your plan of action, indentify the tasks, and divide up responsibilities. If you did not choose a Group Ministry Project Coordinator last week, then select someone this week to fill this crucial role. The Group Ministry Project Coordinator will help move your plan from the talking stage to the action stage.

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3. **Decide on a date:** When will you take action? Get out your calendars and choose a date when your group can serve together. Make it sooner than later.

Worship Together. .......................................................... 10 Minutes

1. Pray for your group ministry project. Commit your plans to the Lord and ask him to direct your steps. Thank God in advance for what he is going to do through you as your group blesses someone in need.

2. Pray this prayer aloud together: Father, we want to live our lives to please you. We want to walk through each day depending on your power, looking for you hand, and listening for the still, small voice of guidance. Use us for your kingdom’s purposes. Nudge us into greater acts of fast. Call us to a deeper level of trust. Soften our hearts, O Lord, so that we may live worthy of your calling and fulfill your highest purposes for our lives. We pray these things in the name of Jesus, and for the glory of your kingdom. Amen.

3. Break into subgroups and pray for one another’s prayer requests.
BEFORE YOU LEAVE

1. Start making plans for an evening meal or a picnic with your group to celebrate what God has done in your lives through these 6 Weeks of Community. A party is an excellent opportunity for you to invite people who might be interested in joining your group. Talk about your celebration before you leave your meeting. Where will you have your party? When will you have it? Will it be a potluck, will someone barbeque, or will you call out for pizza? Divide up the responsibilities and then get ready to enjoy a great time of fellowship together. You deserve it!

2. There is just one week left in 6 Weeks of Community. Take a few minutes for a informal evaluation of your small group experience. What has been helpful to you? What has challenged you? What would make this a better experience? How do you feel about continuing on as a group? Talk about these and address any concerns that might be raised.
SESSION 6
Worshiping Together

Connect Together. ............................................................. 10 Minutes

1. Check in about the progress of your group’s ministry plans that you discussed last week.

2. How would your friends rate you on the generosity meter?

Scrooge ................................................................. Mother Teresa
Generosity Meter

Grow Together. ............................................................. 45 Minutes

Memory Verse
“Your have six days to do your work, but the seventh day of each week is holy because it belongs to me.” Leviticus 23:3 (CEV)

Watch the video lesson now and follow along in your outline.

Worshiping Together

Six Practical Reasons for Giving

1. Giving makes me more __________________________.

“God so loved the world that he gave…” John 3:16a (NIV)

2. Giving draws me _________________________ to God.

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:21 (NIV)

3. Giving is the antidote to __________________________.

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them...to be generous and willing to share. In this way...they may take hold of the life that is truly life.” 1 Timothy 6:17-19 (NIV)

4. Giving strengthens my ____________________________.

“Bring the whole tithe to the storehouse...Test me in this, ‘says the Lord Almighty,’ and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it!” Malachi 3:10 (NIV)

5. Giving is an investment for ____________________________.

“Give happily to those in need, always being ready to share...whatever God has given you. By doing this, you will be storing up real treasure for yourself in heaven—it is the only safe investment for eternity.” 1 Timothy 6:18-10 (LB)
6. Giving blesses me in ________________________.

“A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.” Proverbs 11:25 (NIV)

“There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.” Acts 20:35b (NJB)

Four Attitudes for Giving

1. Give ____________________________.

“For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has not according to what he does not have.” 2 Corinthians 8:12 (NIV)

“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion.” 2 Corinthians 9:7 (NIV)

2. Give ____________________________.

“How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?” Psalm 116:12 (NIV)

“Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what come from your hand.” 1 Chronicles 29:14b (NIV)

3. Give ____________________________.

“God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7b (NIV)

4. Give ____________________________.

“Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” 2 Corinthians 9:6 (NIV)

“Just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see what you also excel in this grace of giving.” 2 Corinthians 8:7 (NIV)
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Take a few minutes to share what your relationships in this group have meant to you.

2. What are some practical ways you can demonstrate your gratitude to God?

3. Jesus said it is better to give than receive. Share about a time you found this to be true in your own life. How did giving make you feel?

4. Why do you think generosity is so important to God?

SERVE TOGETHER ................................................................. 10 MINUTES

1. In this session we’ve talked about giving financially. But another way for us to give is through the use of our time. What can you do to continue serving your church together as a group?

2. One person in your group who has seen a need and seized the opportunity to meet it is your small group host. His or her leadership in your group has provided an example of using one’s gifts to serve others. Take a few minutes to affirm your host. Focus on the character qualities, gifts, and talents he or she brings to your group. Thank your host for all of his or her hard work.

SHARE TOGETHER ........................................................................ 10 MINUTES

1. We want to encourage you to continue to develop the purpose of evangelism in your small group life. We pray your project will be the starting point of a lifestyle of service for your group and for you as an individual. Our hope is that you will look back after these 6 weeks and not say, “Look what we did,” but rather say, “Look what we started!” What can your group do to continue reaching out to your community with the love of Jesus Christ?

2. Pastor James would love to hear about your small group’s ministry and outreach projects. Please email your stories to pastorjames@bethelsrock.org. Thanks!
WORSHIP TOGETHER.................................................................15 MINUTES

1. What has been the most important lesson you have learned through 6 weeks of Community? Have each member of the group share something that has been meaningful to him or her. Then offer prayers of thanks together for what God has done in your lives.

2. Close your time together by praying for each other’s prayer requests. Recognize and celebrate and answered prayers from previous weeks. Record your prayer requests on the Small Group Prayer and Praise Report. (In the back of your guide)

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

1. If you are planning to share your small group outreach story during your church’s Celebration Service this coming weekend, take a few minutes to work out details of your presentation.

2. We encourage you to have a party or picnic together – a time to focus on fellowship and celebrate what God has done throughout the last several weeks. This gathering is also a good opportunity to bring friends who might want to join your small group. It gives potential group members a non-threatening environment in which to get acquainted with the rest of you. Talk about this with your group: Set a date, time, and location, and decide what kind of food you will have.
CIRCLES OF LIFE
Small Group Connection

DISCOVER WHO YOU CAN CONNECT IN COMMUNITY
Use this chart to help carry out one of the values in the Group Guidelines to “Welcome Newcomers.”

"Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Matthew 4:19

Follow this simple three-step process:
1. List 1-2 people in each circle
2. Prayerfully select one person or couple from your list and tell your group about them
3. Give them a call and invite them to your next meeting. Over fifty percent of those invited to a small group say, “Yes!”
SMALL GROUP
Prayer and Praise Report

This is a place where you can write each other’s request for prayer. You can also make a note when God answers a prayer. Pray for each other’s requests.

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<th>DATE</th>
<th>PERSON</th>
<th>PRAYER REQUEST</th>
<th>PRAISE REPORT</th>
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**Calendar**

Healthy groups share responsibilities and group ownership. It might take some time for this to develop. Shared ownership ensures that responsibility for the group doesn’t fall to one person. Use the calendar to keep track of social events, mission projects, birthdays, or days off. Complete this calendar at your first or second meeting. Planning ahead will increase attendance and shared ownership.

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<th>DATE</th>
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LIFE GROUP GUIDELINES

It’s a good idea for every group to put words to their shared values, exceptions, and commitments. Such guidelines will help you avoid unspoken agendas and unmet expectations. We recommend you discuss your guidelines during Session One in order to lay the foundation for a healthy group experience. Feel free to modify anything that does not work for your group.

WE AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING VALUES:

Clear Purpose To grow healthy spiritual lives by building a healthy group community.

Group Attendance Give priority to the group meeting (call if I am absent or late)

Safe Environment To create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes)

Be Confidential To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group.

Conflict Resolution To avoid gossip and to immediately resolve and concerns by following the Principles of Matthew 18: 15-17.

Spiritual Health To give group members permission to speak into my life and help me live a healthy, balanced spiritual life that is pleasing to God.

Limit Our Freedom To limit our freedom by not serving or consuming alcohol during small group meetings or event so as to avoid causing a weaker brother or sister to stumble (1Corinthians 8:1-13; Romans 14: 19-21)

Welcome Newcomers To invite friends who might benefit from this study and warmly welcome newcomers.

Building Relationships To get to know the other members of the group and pray for them regularly.

Other __________________________________________________________

WE HAVE ALSO DISCUSSED AND AGREE ON THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- Childcare________________________________________________________
- Starting Time____________________________________________________
- Ending Time_____________________________________________________

If you haven’t already done so, take a few minutes to fill out the Small Group Calendar.
ANSWER KEY
For Sessions One Through Six

SESSION ONE
What matters most
Nothing I say will matter.
Nothing I know will matter.
Nothing I believe will matter.
Nothing I give will matter.
Nothing I accomplish will matter.
Love is a command.
Love is a choice.
Love is a conduct.
Love is a commitment.

SESSION TWO
Reaching out together
Recognize the need.
Take inventory.
Get organized.
Measure the need.
Prepare your heart.
Be available.

SESSION THREE
Belonging together
Love always, protects.
Protects = cover over with silence
Love always trusts.
We believe in each other...
    We believe for each other.
Love always hopes.
Be enthusiastic about other people’s accomplishments.
Love always perseveres.

SESSION FOUR
Growing together
Growing together requires patience.
Growing together requires truthfulness.
Check your motives.
Play your presentation.
Plan when you’ll say it.
Plan what you’ll say.
Plan how you’ll say it.
Pray.
Say it tactfully.
Say it lovingly.
Say it gently.
Growing together requires forgiveness.

SESSION FIVE
Serving together
Make themselves available to serve.
Work as a team.
Think more about others than themselves.
Do every task with equal dedication.

SESSION SIX
Worshiping together
Giving makes me more like God.
Giving draws me closer to God.
Giving is the antidote to materialism.
Giving strengthens my faith.
Giving is an investment for eternity.
Giving blesses me in return.
Give willingly.
Give thankfully.
Give joyfully.
Give expectantly.