**A green hexagon with white text on a black background

Description automatically generated**

**LIFE GROUPS | LEADERS GUIDE**

*February 16-22, 2025 | Winter Week 5*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Well leaders, we’re over halfway through the season!

1. **YOUR FIFTH MEETING:**

* As we enter the back half of our season of Life Groups, we start to think about the coming season, which will be in the Fall – so it feels like it’s *years* away – but it actually sneaks up on us quickly. We hope you leaders can help us, as we always desire the ministry of Life Groups to grow, we’re always looking for recommendations of leaders, both facilitators and hosts.
* Who are you seeing in your group’s activity, who might be exuding those gifts? We are aware that these are hard recommendations to make, as you’re essentially giving us permission to invite away some valuable members of your group. Think about it this way – you can certainly maintain a relationship with them as they might leave your group, there is then a new opportunity for someone looking for a group like yours, to join, while someone from your group gets the opportunity to exercise their gifts given by the Lord!
* If you have any names, share them with pastor Adam.

1. **SOCIAL EVENT:**

* A building with a number and text

  Description automatically generated with medium confidenceWe also know that groups love to socialize, to have fun, and to enjoy the relationships that have been growing since you started meeting. So, take the opportunity in the coming weeks, in place of one of your regularly scheduled nights, to leave the sermon guides at home, and just have fun. Go bowling, go for dinner or a hike, plan a game and appie night, something fun!

1. A group of people posing for a photo

   AI-generated content may be incorrect.**Gateway’s 75th anniversary:**

* As it’s our 75th anniversary this year as a church family, Betty Beukema and her planning team want to fill up a time capsule with memories of who we are now, in 2025.
* **A group of people posing for a photo

  AI-generated content may be incorrect.**Can you all make a concerted effort to get group pictures to me this season!? I would love to have each of our groups represented! Can you all please submit a group shot back to me before February 23rd? I’ll keep track and bug you all (nicely of course) as our weeks carry on!
* **As of this writing, I still only received two. 14 more to go!**

**GETTING TO KNOW YOU**

**LEADER NOTE:** These are the lowest risk questions and are great ways to get everyone in your group talking – from those who love sharing stories, to those who feel a little uncomfortable in this new space. Low risk questions have their way of breaking the ice and getting everyone a little more comfortable sharing. It also gives a chance for everyone to share in an easy, approachable way.

1. What’s the most unusual thing you’ve ever collected? Do you still?

**LEADER NOTE:** Stamps, bottle caps, pins, and model cars are the usual suspects for collections. But what about those odd and peculiar things, that aren’t really universally understood as collectable items. Maybe they’re items that some have a hard time throwing out – those old concert t-shirts, or maybe those special socks worn at the amazing game, could be a collective of wood scraps in the shop, or maybe the Tupperware bowls that might have a purpose later, even though the lids have long since disappeared.

2. How did you end up in your current job/career/role in life?

**LEADER NOTE:** This is a moment to share stories of how your members got to where they are. Some are going to share that they were born into their line of work, others are going to share complex and intricate stories of their self-discovery of their gifts and abilities. Enjoy the moments, and be grateful for those who do share.

**QUICK REVIEW**

**LEADER NOTE:** These following two questions aim to have your group reflect upon last Sunday’s message. The first question will always be the same, and the second one is provided from our teaching pastor from the service.

1. Looking back at your notes from this week’s teaching, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

**LEADER NOTE:** Be sure to grab a sermon guide on Sunday morning, or bring your own way to take notes, and jot down your own questions!

2. Pastor Adam talked about two extra concepts about the Holy Spirit: (1) *that the Spirit has been around since the beginning*, & (2) *that the Spirit is in you if you can profess faith in Christ*. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit in your life? What evidence of His activity have you seen?

**LEADER NOTE:** This might be a hard question for some to answer, as they might not be fully confident in their answers, but as leaders, if you’re able to lead the conversation with your own experiences, that might help. Then as stories are shared, those who might be unsure, might connect the dots as they look back upon their lives and see moments of wisdom, or advice shared, or names recalled and connected with, as the work of the Spirit.

**SCRIPTURE REVIEW**

**LEADER NOTE:** This is a critical moment in your group’s meeting, as we’re moving away from discussing the message, and turning our hearts towards the scripture passage and themes we’re exploring. While our groups are “*sermon-based groups*,” they’re not meant to be evaluations or examinations of only the message. Our goals are to get into the themes that come up in the message, from the passage of Scripture we’re rooted in. As you seen the need to change up the pattern of these questions, feel free to more simply ask after reading the portion of scripture, “*What stands out to you about this passage?*”

**READ Acts 2:42-47.**

1. What does this passage say about the character of God?

2. What does this passage say about fallen humanity and the world we are in?

3. Where does this passage specifically expose sin or unbelief in my own life? How does it specifically call me to change my thinking, redirect my affections, replace behaviors, and trust in my Savior?

**DIGGING DEEPER**

**LEADERS NOTE:** These discussion questions generally start simple and gradually become deeper and more complex. This progression follows natural discussion patterns, but as leaders, you know your group best. Use this guide flexibly; it is not necessary to cover every question. Focus on ensuring everyone is heard and has the opportunity to contribute and ask their questions.

**1. READ Acts 2:42**. Out of the four activities that the early Spirit filled church was devoted to, which activity comes most naturally to you? Which might be the one you feel you need to work on?

**LEADER NOTE:** The four activities that Luke tells us there those in the early church were devoting themselves to is good list of godly areas for Christians to pursue, but it may not be exhaustive either. It’s also worth noting that these four activities don’t make up the recipe for how we’re to do church now in the 21st century, but that they make up a foundation for where we start from. Each church and each individual will have their strengths and weaknesses, just by the nature that they’re made up of humans and are human. We have a high understanding that even when we’re together, we’re still sinful, and we’ll still fail more often than we might succeed.

The way that these four activities can take shape in our faith lives can look like the following:

1. **Devotion to Teaching** – we might be committed to learning from those who’ve studied. From our pastors who preach, to notable authors and their books, to following podcasts, to sitting under the wisdom of elders.
2. **Devotion to Fellowship** – we might be committed to our Life Groups and to making sure that the youth in our families are connected with the various youth ministry groups here at Gateway, or elsewhere, there’s more to it than just groups. We might be committed to inviting over new people in our community for lunch or making sure that students when they’re in town have a place to be included for Easter.
3. **Devotion to Breaking of Bread** – while this activity largely points to taking in the sacrament of Communion, it’s more than that. It’s families eating dinner together after their days and before their meetings. It’s larger families getting together to celebrate milestones. It’s friends going for pizza and a beer. It’s couples going for coffee. When we share these moments together over taking in nourishment and sustenance, special things happen as all parties are receiving more than just food, but each other.
4. **Devotion to prayers** – prayer is often a very personal faith practice, but it’s also deeply meaningful when shared with others, as we get to hear the hearts and yearnings of those around us. This isn’t just praying the formulaic prayers before and after dinner and before bedtime. It’s praying for the needs of your community with your community.

* **READ Colossians 3:16-17**. Is being devoted to God in everything we do feel like a daunting and impossible task? Why or why not?

**LEADER NOTE:** Being fully devoted to following the Lord can certainly be an easy to make at the get-go, but can be difficult to fully live out, thereby making it a daunting and impossible task. But, realizing that, cannot stop us in our tracks, or limit the scope of our effort. This is the beauty of who and why Jesus came. He came to earth to show the Jews that there was no way that they could follow every letter of the law – and that the gift of grace comes before anything that they can or cannot do! The same is true for the Gentiles.

So yes, being fully devoted to God in everything we do, is impossible. And God knows that. Look up the truth that we’ve been reminded of so often of in the past year: **Romans 5:8** says, “*but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” Trying our best to follow the Lord and His commands and invitations for us, comes as a response to what He has done for us. So, while our actions and intentions still do matter, and the Lord still desires us to do all we can do even while knowing we will fail, as long as we seek His forgiveness, He’s not going to hold our inability to follow Him against us.

**2. READ Acts 2:44-45**. These verses speak of an abundantly generous community. Have you ever experienced or witnessed such generosity? What was that like? How did those moments impact your faith?

**LEADER NOTE:**  Could you imagine a community where everything was shared? That when a neighbor needs their lawn mowed, that it just happens? That when milk runs out for the children, that the need is filled without question? That when a tire is discovered to be flat, a compressor shows up? It’s a beautiful picture to consider. Yet so many of us know, rarely leave our backyards and enter the lives of those around us, to discover that these needs actually exist.

We must be careful here too, to not politicize this conversation. Luke, and those in the early church are not saying that a socialistic or communistic approach to living life is the key. Those systems are organized by governments and pushed upon their constituents. What was happening here in Acts 2, is that the community was being voluntarily generous with what they had. There were no laws set in place that they had to contribute to a particular community pot, or that they had to pay into a certain system. These actions were of those who saw needs, and desired to serve the Lord, empowered by the Spirit, to fill them.

And these moments of generosity happen all the time amongst us. Share the stories of the Lord’s provision in your lives.

* **READ James 2:14-17**. The faith of this Acts community seems to have come alive. Why now? Why didn’t God’s people respond like this before?

**LEADER NOTE:** God desired His nation of Israel to be a people unto Himself, a people for His own possession, a people to be messengers of His love and grace to all the nations around. However, they kept on being persistent in being a people who “*did what was right in their own eyes*” (a theme that we see develop in the book of **Judges**). Jesus comes on the scene in the Gospels to show the whole nation with absolute clarity what God has been trying to show them all along. Now that they have a visual example, they’ve got something more to work with. But Jesus too, knows that while He’s enough to provide for all their everything, there’s something still necessary. The fullness of the Holy Spirit.

They needed the Holy Spirit to come, who would be their Helper, their Advocate, their Guide – the One to help them connect the dots of all that they have learned, to all that they’re invited to do. Once they’ve connected the dots and seen their greater purpose of being in full pursuit of Jesus, rather than just themselves, their eyes would be opened to the possibilities and objectives of being a Spirit Filled Church.

However, we’re still sinful, aren’t we? We’re still trapped in this broken and chaotic world, therefore it’s of great importance for us to continue keeping the goal of Jesus at the center of all that we do, and the rest will follow.

* **READ Mark 10:17-22**. How does this story strike you in the context of reading Acts 2?

**LEADER NOTE:** There are a couple layers that your group’s discussion might travel through. (1) The rich young man is thinking that he can do all the good things and then gain entrance to heaven. It’s the old Jewish idea of doing the right things, checking off the boxes of following the rules, and God will smile upon you. But he’s vastly wrong. (2) The rich young man is told by Jesus to sacrifice what he’s got and to share with others. He’s missed the point that following the laws and commands, were not just about having him live righteously in the eyes of God, but that they would point him into being a help and support within his community. Now he finds out that he’s got to do that, and appears to be quite unwilling.

Contrasting this story with what we see happen in Acts 2, we see that those here in the early church (1) are not about making rules and commands, setting guidelines of what had to be shared and what had to be contributed for the greater good. They simply had all things in common, so that no one had need, out from what they have. (2) They lived into the live style of voluntary generosity, and sacrificing for the community, out of the desire to serve Jesus.

**3. READ Acts 2:46**. The early church appeared to gather every day, at the temple and in their homes. What did they continually do? How did the Spirit use what they did in those places, to grow the church?

**LEADER NOTE:** From what we can observe from this text, that as they gathered at the temple, and they gathered in their homes they shared life. They ate together – and think more about what that meant. They would likely have prepared the meals together. From making the bread, to butchering and cooking the meat, to harvesting and preparing whatever vegetables and fruit – all this done in community. While it sounds like a chaotic kitchen (which it might have been), think about the conversations, support, and teaching that’s all happening at the same time! And this all happened with “*glad and generous hearts*.”

The word “*glad*” perhaps undersells where their hearts were at, as the English word here doesn’t fully capture what they were experiencing. We’re glad about things in this life – making it home safely from travel, getting paid at the end of our work week, seeing our children lie safely in their warm beds – but this “glad” speaks more of a deep and overwhelming “*exuberant joy*.” What are we today, “*exuberantly joy filled*” about? A significant pay raise? Getting the news that we’re cancer free? The birth of a child? Receiving the gift of a new car? Being told that your mortgage has been paid off?

The Spirit certainly cause the joy to exude from where they were, to the neighborhood around. Consider their neighbors reactions as they hear of the joy and fun happening up and down their streets, as they see the smiles and hugs as guests come and go, as they see others welcomed where they weren’t before? Surely they would have been drawn in.

* **READ Ephesians 2:19-22, Hebrews 10:24-25**. What is the ultimate goal of our gatherings today within the church? Why do we as a church strive to gather people together as much as we do?

**LEADER NOTE:** Paul, in **Ephesians**, points out that “*Jesus Christ Himself [is] the cornerstone*,” that it is He who is the reason behind all our actions, and from Him, who we are “*built together*” with, will be His dwelling place. It’s what Peter was pointing out in his sermon in **Acts 2**, that’s it’s been about Jesus all along. The anonymous author of **Hebrews** picks up the similar themes but presents a challenge and encouragement within this text that out of our goal of following and serving Jesus in all our gatherings, that we’re directed also towards each other, regularly, and more frequently as the “*Day [is] drawing near*.” The Day, being the day of Christ’s return.

At Gateway, there are eight guiding values that are used to help shape and build everything that happens within our community. Ultimately, each goal speaks to the goal of our gathering, while pre-eminently the main goal is to “*help people to love and serve Jesus*,” we are also committed to the values:

1. We will prioritize the Gospel above all else.
2. We will make disciples, not just believers.
3. Discipleship happens in circles.
4. We will be known, loved, and accounted for.
5. We run towards the challenges.
6. We contribute more than we consume.
7. We do whatever it takes to reach people for the gospel.
8. Every member is sent.

**TAKING IT HOME**

**READ Acts 2:47**. At Gateway we’ve often talked about the “*Who’s Your Four*” initiative, where we seek to pray for, invest in, and invite those in our orbits to meet Jesus. How might the Holy Spirit be leading or empowering you, to speak boldly and courageously with those people in your life?

**LEADER NOTE:** You and your group can learn more about the “*Who’s Your Four*” initiative by going [HERE](https://gatewaycrc.org/grow/four), a page on our church website that explains this initiative a little more. You can encourage your members to be aware of people that God has placed in their orbits – family members, neighbors, colleagues, fellow students, random strangers in parking lots … the list goes on and on … and we can see quickly that the Lord is directing our paths towards others who need to hear and see the good news of Christ.

If your members, like in the beginning of your discussion have a hard time seeing how the Holy Spirit is leading them to conversations and encounters like this, lead by example, and share moments from your own life, or moments from others you have heard about, to get conversation going.

**PERSONAL REFLECTION**

**LEADER NOTE:** This following question is completely optional and is intended for the participants’ personal reflection. But do feel free to explore using the question within your groups meeting.

**READ Psalm 143**. It seems as though David, the author of this Psalm is once again facing some kind of obstacle. He feels weakened, tired, and exhausted from continually running from either King Saul in his younger years, or his haunting sin with Bathsheba in his years of being king. He seems to understand that God’s Spirit will guide him to righteous living. How does the Holy Spirit do that? How can the unseen Spirit guide us? How have you experienced His guidance?