



## NEWS &amp; ANNOUNCEMENTS

**THIS WEEK:**⇒ **PREPARATION FOR THIS WEEK:**

- Do the homework and choose questions best suited to your group.
- Listen to the [Audio Guide](#) for more discussion suggestions & thoughts
- Set up your ZOOM meeting and send the link to your group.

⇒ **COVID UPDATES:**

*As we are still facing meeting restrictions, here are our four recommendations:*

- **Use ZOOM to gather your group.** If you haven't used ZOOM yet to meet as a group – give it a try! You'll see that after a few weeks, it'll be worth it!
  - If you're not sure how to get it going – just ask!
  - If you have new members in your group, this is the time to greet them face to face, and to introduce them to your group!
  - See if you can play a bit of a game – here's a website that has a bunch of great ideas!  
<https://www.marieclaire.com/home/a32268495/games-to-play-on-zoom/>
- **Use the PHONE.** In this season, keeping in touch is more important than ever before! Simply say hello, ask about the kids, be curious about how they're able to be a part of church.
- **Use EMAIL.** Let your members know that you are regularly praying for them. Ask for prayer requests, share prayer requests with your group.
- **Use WHATSAPP/FB-MESSENGER/iMESSAGE.** Many groups have made use of group chat applications in order to bring their groups together. In these chats, you can also check in, but more than that, you can even ask some of the questions that are in our sermon guide!
  - Ask the "GETTING TO KNOW YOU" questions.
  - Try asking: "What did you learn from this week's message?"

**LEADER ANNOUNCEMENTS:**⇒ **PICTURES!**

- Post your ZOOM meeting shots!! We want to see those too!
- Remember the #hashtag challenge – posting your pictures on either Facebook or Instagram using #GatewayLifeGroups – to enter your group to win a prize of \$300! (possibly for a skipthedishes order for a social in April!)

⇒ **ATTENDANCE:**

- Keep recording your attendance – if your events are cancelled – please cancel them off. If you meet over ZOOM – please record attendance as you normally would.

**LEADER INFORMATION:**⇒ **WEEKLY LEADER TRAINING:**

- "The First Night of Groups – COVID STYLE"

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

**LEADER NOTE:** As you meet for the first time this week consider spending more time in this first section – sharing stories of your experiences, and getting to know those who are in your group!

1) What is the most fun thing you have done since COVID started?

**LEADER NOTE:** It's now been almost 12 months of this pandemic, and we have all been creative with our gatherings and events. Talk about the positive things that this pandemic has caused us to see and experience. Consider inviting everyone in your group to respond – go around the circle!

**DISCUSSION TIP:** As your meeting over zoom, everyone's screen will look different. So as you 'go around the room', vocally invite the next person to share.

2) What made you sign up for Life Groups this semester? What are you hoping to get out of your Life Group this semester?

**LEADER NOTE:** This is an opportunity to hear why your members joined your group. Take note of their responses, and lean into helping them achieve their hopes and expectations, while also finding opportunity to encourage them on their spiritual journey's. This is question would be better off more open ended, but in ZOOM, still consider inviting specific member's responses.

## QUICK REVIEW

**LEADER NOTE:** These are two questions that have your group reflecting back upon last Sunday's message.

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 that you're leading by example, refer to your own notes and thoughts that you have collected. Help your members see the value in taking notes!

2) This week, Pastor Justin said that the Trinity explains why God not only commands that we live in community, but that we were "MADE" for it. How did that hit you?

## GOD'S STORY - TRIADS

**LEADER NOTE:** These are three questions that we ask each week, and have us look at each passage we study through the same lens.

[READ John 17:20-23](#)

1) **GOD** - What does this passage say about the character of God?

2) **THE WORLD** - What does this passage say about fallen humanity?

3) **ME** - 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 my behaviors, and trust my Savior?

## DIGGING DEEPER

1) [READ Hebrews 10:23](#). Circumstances continue to regularly change around us. Paul writes that we need to “*hold fast ... without wavering.*” Do you feel that your faith is unwavering? What helps you “hold fast” to your faith?

**LEADERS NOTE:** The word here, “hold fast,” indicates an ongoing call to retain – it’s not a simple holding of an object for a moment, but more of keeping ownership of something more tangible. The first question about faith can be harder question for some, as it is fairly personal. This question will work with an established group. If you have a group that is newly formed, or you have some new members, and recognizing that this is your first meeting, consider leaning into the second part of the question about ‘holding fast’ to faith.

- How does our steadfast, unchanging, faith impact an ever changing world?

**LEADERS NOTE:** Our current climate of life is that everything changes. We know more than then ever before that there are no guarantees in life. Go around your meeting space and invite your members to struggle with how their faith can impact this world. Consider reframing the question:

### REFRAMED QUESTION

- We are instructed to not waver in our faith, which means that we should not bend, and to stay on the straight and narrow. How does that conflict with the worlds pre-occupation of being and doing anything we desire?

- [READ Matthew 6:24](#). If we are not holding fast to our hope in Christ, what then are we holding on to?

**LEADER NOTE:** This question that leans towards more personal answers – which is okay! In order to encourage your member, lead with your own answers and vulnerability, and show your members what has challenged and distracted you on your own journey of faith. Then invite your members to share from their own experiences.

2) [READ Hebrews 10:24](#). Paul indicates that it is not up to individuals alone to figure out how to build community, he says, “*let us consider.*” Read the following passages and discuss how community in these contexts are being strengthened.

**LEADER NOTE:** As we heard during the weekend message, that community is not just a command for us to be a part of, but it goes back to the way in which we are designed. We are made in the image of our Trinitarian God – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – who exists in inseparable community. Jesus’ prayer for us in John 17, indicates that it is His hearts desire that we model His relationship with the Father! With that perspective in mind, read and discuss the following passages.

When reading these verses considering asking these questions:

- What does community look like in this text?
- How do we see this community being able to bless those within?
- How do we see this community being able to bless those outside?
- [Ecclesiastes 4:9-12](#).
- [Matthew 18:18-20](#).
- [Acts 2:42-47](#).

3) [READ Hebrews 10:25](#). It appears as though there is an increasing need to meet regularly. While filling our calendars with more busyness isn't the point, what is Paul's goal?

**LEADER NOTE:** As our world faces more and more challenges, and as our society grows more and more less Christian, it needs to be our prerogative to support each other all that much more. Ask this question with the intention of seeking out ways to support and encourage each other

**ADDITIONAL QUESTION:**

- [READ Colossians 3:16](#). How do Paul's words here frame how we are to conduct ourselves in our gatherings?

**LEADER NOTE:** This text is just one of the 66 commands for us to be with one another through scripture. Help your group understanding that it is your heart for your group to learn together to be better disciples of Jesus, and at Gateway, it is our value that we do that learning primarily in these kinds of circles.

## TAKING IT HOME

[READ Galatians 5:13-15](#). Sometimes when we gather in groups, it is easy to get caught up in negativity, gossip, and slander. Sometimes we post comments on social media that are divisive and not encouraging. Sometimes we can react in the parking lot or a grocery store that are not God honoring. How does being a part of a Life Group impact your life when these situations come up?

**LEADER NOTE:** As our Life Group ministry seeks to deepen your relationships together through the study of God's word, and supporting each other through prayer, we heard this Sunday that one of our priorities is to help apply what we are learning the lives that we are living.

**CLOSE YOUR MEETING:** Invite your members into a time of prayer, chatting through your on-going prayer needs, updating each other on where things are at! Be sure to in the midst of this, to offer prayers of gratitude & thanksgiving!

## ADDITIONAL SELF STUDY *(Optional Personal Reflection Questions)*

**LEADER NOTE:** As you know, these questions are completely optional for participants' personal reflection.

[READ Revelation 2:19-23](#). The people of Thyatira came across as good, decent, God fearing people. However, they began to tolerate sin in their community. In this passage we see Jesus give them a second chance. Have you ever gone down a slippery slope that was leading you farther into sin? How did you receive that same second, third, fourth, or tenth chance from the Lord? How might being a part of a 'circle' help you live into these next chances??

## GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS

**PICTURES:** We are looking for pictures – from your meetings, upcoming serve projects, or socials! We want to put together a highlight video to be shown to our church after this Life Group semester wraps up. Please email them directly to pastor Adam – [adam@gatewaycrc.org](mailto:adam@gatewaycrc.org).

**HASHTAG CHALLENGE:** Be sure to encourage your group to use the #GatewayLifeGroups hashtag on Facebook and Instagram. Remember that there is going to be a \$300 gift card draw at the end of the semester. [One COVID tip – try to inspire the public sharing of photos that follow covid-19 protocols. Optics & perception play a role]

## "DISCIPLESHIP HAPPENS IN CIRCLES"

### TWO COMMON CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO HOW WE GROW IN FAITH

1. \_\_\_ **Private spiritual practices** \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_ **Go to church & listen to sermons** \_\_\_\_\_

### A THIRD VITAL COMPONENT OF HOW WE GROW IN FAITH

3. \_\_\_ **Spiritual Relationships** \_\_\_\_\_

### HOW THE TRINITY EXPLAINS THIS

1. One \_\_\_ **Gospel** \_\_\_\_\_
2. One \_\_\_ **Body** \_\_\_\_\_
3. One \_\_\_ **Proof** \_\_\_\_\_

### LIFE GROUP PRIORITIES

1. \_\_\_ **Apply** \_\_\_\_\_ the Bible to life
2. \_\_\_ **Build** \_\_\_\_\_ authentic relationships
3. \_\_\_ **Care** \_\_\_\_\_ for each other



### The First Night of Life Groups COVID STYLE

As we gear up for a new semester of Life Groups that will at least begin in a digital format, we thought it would be great to revisit some of the basics regarding the first night of your Life Group. This is obviously more relevant for those leading a group for the first time. But for those who have been leading for a while, this can be a good reminder of things we may start to take for granted and neglect.

We're going to be very practical and basic, discussing what it takes to get off on the right foot.

#### Before Group

Before the first night of your group, you'll want to reach out to those who have expressed interest in attending your group. Remind them when the group is meeting and provide them the instructions on how to join your online meeting or conversation. You'll want to include your phone number in case anyone gets confused by the process, making sure to have your phone on you the night of the group so you'll receive any calls.

Nothing creates conversation and community like cuisine, so tell your group ahead of time to prepare their own snacks – have fun with seeing what the others have and are enjoying!

You'll want to be sure you create a welcoming environment as well. Normally we would tell you to have enough chairs, and to make sure that any dinner or pet odors have been managed. In an online meeting space, those are two elements that we can simply ignore! What you do need to pay attention the distractions in your space that can hinder your groups meeting.

- Pay attention to what is behind you on your screen. Moving kids? Pets? Decorations? Select an angle that will allow your group to focus on your leadership.

- Pay attention to the lighting that hits your face. Be sure that your face has ample light, and that there is minimal light behind you.
- Be sure that your audio and video are running smoothly as well. When you click on the little arrow by the mic icon in your ZOOM window, you can test your mic and speakers.

Most importantly, the day before or day of your group, be sure to spend some time in prayer, asking God to be with you and your group. We're helping people to follow Jesus and that's not something we can do on our own – we need His help to do so.

### **During Group**

On the night of the group, your highest priority is to help people get to know each other. Make sure to provide plenty of time for conversation. In fact, that could be your only agenda item for the night. You want to help people to connect and begin developing relationships.

Greet people as they login, be sure to watch your waiting room for those entering your ZOOM space. Just like you would in your home, watch for people who haven't been interacted with, engage them in conversation and help them to connect to others in the group.

No matter the size of your group, invite your members to make sure that their names are correctly displayed in their window. You might also want to play the name game – having each person share their name plus an adjective that describes them which starts with the same letter as their name. It's a bit silly, but it really does help names stick.

We provide for you a few GETTING TO KNOW YOU QUESTIONS to start your group time together, and in the introduction of this document, a link is provided for games that work on ZOOM. Spend some time in these spaces, as it will help your group be more at ease with the medium, and will be just fun!

On the first night, it's also important to cast vision for the group. You should explain why you are leading the group and what you hope to accomplish. You should explain whether consistent attendance is important or if people can come and go. You should also set expectations regarding any homework participants will be asked to do. Establishing expectations on the front end is much easier than trying to change the small group culture once it's developed later on.

### **After Group**

After group, be sure to send a follow-up email thanking them for coming and reminding them of any details regarding logistics or homework for the following week.

And finally, don't forget to pray for them. Remember, this isn't just a meeting you're having – you're helping them to follow Jesus and you need His help to do that.

### **Some Things to Consider:**

- What's your favorite icebreaker question? What's your least favorite?
- How can you ensure that you are consistently praying for your group?
- Which aspect of your group are you most excited about?
- What's your biggest concern as your group kicks off?