

Community Part 3: Gathering

How to Use

The goal with these discussion guides during the next few weeks, is that with your group or a few others, to have honest and authentic discussions around this idea of living life together as a “new family in Christ.” The hope is that this resource is not simply a study guide to further discuss the previous weekend’s message or a certain text in Scripture, but instead an application guide of how to further flesh out and live out God’s vision for biblical community. Each week will have a brief overview to read together, 2-3 discussion questions and a suggested practice to implement with your group.

The discussion questions have been crafted in a way to help get past the surface level response we can default to and to dig into honest and perhaps challenging conversations. You might not get through them all each week and that’s okay. Allow for some space for the Spirit to work and to give time for the conversation to reach a more intimate level. We would encourage you to invite the people you’re walking through these guides with to perhaps be a little more vulnerable than they might normally be. If your group size is large, consider breaking up into a few smaller groups to better facilitate honest conversations.

Our goal for the suggested practice each week is to help establish some new rhythms and ways to live out this idea of biblical community. Our challenge to you is to try these practices through the entire 9 weeks of this series. Perhaps at the end discuss with your group about how these practices went and what they might want to continue doing.

We would also encourage you to start each discussion with a time of prayer, inviting the Spirit to work in you and your group’s heart and minds around this topic of community.

Overview (Read this aloud together)

Leader: Read Hebrews 10:19-25 and James 2:1-5

At its core, then, the very idea of what it means to be a ‘church (or ekklesia)’ involves gathering together, usually around a meal and to share life together. But ekklesia has an additional core ingredient that kind of makes it what it is. And that ingredient is the notion of purpose or intentionality. Physical gathering on its own (without intentionality or purpose) has no automatic spiritual value. Yet neither does a sense of purpose have any value without conscious and physical assembly in order to act on that purpose—to see those (God’s, in the case of the church) purposes realized in the real world. A community that gathers is doing so to manifest the Risen Jesus in our midst...

Discussion Questions

Why do we gather (as a group as well as your individual reasons)? What are some things that get in our way of regularly gathering? We're not looking for the "right answers" here but honest, vulnerable responses.

How is our group intentional in its gathering with one another? How can we become more intentional with our time together?

What are some ways that our biases or preferences get in the way of welcoming those who might feel like outcasts or who might not fit the current "mold" of our group? Perhaps take a moment to pause and pray for each other after this question, handing over the things that hinder us from loving and welcoming in others like Christ.

Leader: Take some time to discuss the practice for the week as a group. Talk briefly as a group to see if there are any hurdles that might prevent someone from engaging fully with the practice and how the group might be able to help make the practice a practical reality for all.

Practice for This Week

As a group, commit for a mutually agreed length of time (whether that's for the rest of the series or another time period) to "not give up meeting together," to not miss a week of gathering as a group. The practice (or challenge) for the weeks ahead is to make gathering together the topmost priority (barring sickness or vacations) and see how God might use that time to transform you or reorient your priorities. As well, gather with a purpose, let your time together be intentional. Be present with one another, unhurried and try your best to have conversations together beyond the typical small talk.

If you're not in a group, your invitation for this week is to figure out what gathering looks like for you and to put it into action, whether that's joining a Life Group or forming a regular gathering of other followers of Jesus centered on living out His ways together.