

Flow of a Typical Covenantal G-Group:

1. **Gather.** Gather for eating and drinking. You can start before everybody gets there. (10-15 minutes)
2. **Give thanks.** During the first 15 minutes, pause for a thanksgiving ritual. (additional 15 minutes to finish up eating)
 - a. You can find litanies of responsive thanksgiving in Section 8, "Appendix: Litanies of Thanksgiving and Prayers of Benediction."
 - b. Consider performing a simple ritual: light a candle to invite the light of Christ; everybody dip fingers in a common bowl of water for cleansing; take a posture like a mini-body prayer; sing a simple song.
 - c. Go back to eating, drinking, chatting.
3. **Check in.** As the meal progresses, chat becomes check-in, guided by the Facilitator. "Checking in" is a time to make sure everybody gets to talk *briefly* about their life – about 2 minutes each. There are a number of ways to structure check-in so there's enough time, and the important things get discussed, and conversations don't go chronically negative.
 - a. Ask, "What is your high and low from the week just past?"
 - b. Ask, "What are you working on, and what's inspiring you?"
 - c. Use the queries from worship on the rotation that your group appreciates.
 - How goeth it with thy soul?
 - Where did you see God in the week just past?
 - What is your body saying to your spirit tonight?
 - How are you further along than this time last week?
 - d. How do you want us to pray for you, tonight and in the days to come?

After a quick summary check-in, ask whether anyone needs to come back to something that's been expressed, not necessarily their own check-in. Ask whether the group agrees to spend more time on those things. (If there's not sufficient time to revisit each topic, the Facilitator can invite that person to go first next week.)

Remember, not everybody wants to check in, and that's okay. Respect silence and privacy.

(about 30 minutes)
4. **Pray.** The Facilitator facilitates, but the responsibility for prayer can be shared. Here are some ways to share prayer:
 - a. Free-form prayer by one person is always fine. No need to repeat everything everyone has said; God already knows.

- b. Popcorn prayer – Facilitator starts and ends the prayer, but anybody can talk to God in between.
- c. Have somebody prepare a prayer during the week and lead/read it here.
- d. Everybody pray a couple sentences for the person on their left or right; go in a circle. Make sure to announce this one before check-in so people can listen carefully.
- e. Use the ACTS rubric = adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication. Assign one person to each part, or have one person do it all.
- f. Facilitated silence – invite everybody to meditate, concentrate, imagine each other in the presence of the Lord. The Facilitator begins and ends.
- g. Your G-group may learn to pray in amazing ways we haven't thought of yet. Please share.

(5 minutes)

- 5. Study.** Using a curriculum your G-group has agreed to for this season, hold a conversation that nourishes your group in their discipleship of Jesus. Choose a curriculum in consultation with Lead Evangelist. Here are some suggestions:
- a. The reader-response Bible study that Katie writes each week. The Facilitator should choose several of the questions from the study. Don't try to do the whole thing; it's prepared for an hour-long study in micro-groups at Bible & Beer.
 - b. Read through a book of the Bible together; let someone prepare to lead conversation about what you've read. Buy a resource, perhaps, and share the responsibility for preparation in a rotation.
 - c. Narrate spiritual autobiographies, one per week. Let people tell their life story in 30 minutes. No questions or comments; just let the stories stand.
 - d. View and discuss the Animate curriculum (Animate:Faith, Animate:Bible, Animate:Practices). Galileo owns these; it's a DVD curriculum with a discussion guide for leaders.
 - d. Watch and discuss the Rob Bell *Nooma* videos. Galileo owns these, along with a discussion guide.
 - e. Read and discuss a book together. Books that we love:
 - *What We Talk About When We Talk About God; What Is The Bible?; Love Wins*; all by Rob Bell.
 - *We Make the Road By Walking*, Brian McLaren
 - *Learning to Walk in the Dark; An Altar in the World*; Barbara Brown Taylor
 - *Blue Like Jazz*, Donald Miller
 - *Theological Worlds*, W. Paul Jones
 - *Accidental Saints*, Nadia Bolz-Weber
 - *Daring Greatly; Braving the Wilderness*; Brené Brown

- *The Gospel According to U2* (or the Simpsons, or Oprah, or Harry Potter...)
- When you discover new ones, share with the church!

- f. Listen to a podcast together, and discuss it together.
- g. Listen to past sermon series from Katie, or other preachers that your group might enjoy. Discuss!
- h. Request a short-term (one-, two-, three-week?) consultation from Katie (our theologian-in-residence) or another teacher in our church. If there's a specific theological question that keeps coming up, ask for some help.
- i. Do a personal assessment together and discuss the impact on your discipleship of Jesus. Use Strengths Finder (Gallup), Myers-Briggs, or the Enneagram. Take the tests, hire a consultant. Learn how to pray for each other and how to be better together.

Melina says, "Self-awareness is not a bad thing for your discipleship of Jesus."

- j. Watch movies with theological themes; discuss. Katie and Travis both have resources to help with this.

(30-45 minutes)

6. **Bless and go home.** Say a benediction. Here are some suggestions. * Get the Convener's space put back together. Finish up the dishes. Take out the trash. Go in peace.

Covenantal G-groups Make Covenants:

Each G-group should construct a Covenant of Participation that governs its life together, and Co-hosts should help each other keep it. Each G-group covenant will be different, and here are some suggestions for questions that yours should answer:

1. When does this G-group meet, and for how long?
2. How do we communicate with each other during the week?
3. How long does everybody get for check-in, to keep within the time limits that we've set?
4. Is there anything else we want to do beside meet together weekly to eat and drink and pray and study? Do we want to participate in a justice action, do a service project, invite another G-group to go bowling, invite the Newcomers in G-101 to get ice cream, go on a spiritual retreat together, join a softball league, take a field trip, see a movie for discussion later?
5. What are the "group norms" for our time together? These are the guidelines we agree on to facilitate deep trust and healthy friendship, so that we can accomplish our dual goals of becoming a Community of Care and a Community of Learning.

6. What is the shape of our confidentiality – we practice it, but at what levels? Make sure to be honest about how group stuff might be shared with the Care and Feeding Team or the pastoral staff when needed. Make clear that there are exceptions, including but not limited to: if you say you're going to harm yourself or others; if you report that you're being harmed by someone else.
7. What will our meal-sharing schedule look like? What about people who truly can't participate in making or bringing food?