

Life in Community

Joining Together to Display the Gospel

LEADER'S GUIDE: SIX-WEEK STUDY

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*Life in
Community*

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

APPENDIX

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Life in Community seeks to display how community is formed, what it practically looks like to apply the biblical values (Rom. 12:1–13) of community to everyday life, and in what ways community puts the gospel on display.

The goal of this book is not to get you into a group but to help you build true community. However, groups do tend to be a great framework for community to take place. It only makes sense to discuss and process the idea with other people with whom you are doing life. The hope is for missional communities, small groups, Sunday school classes, church-plant core teams, entire churches, and church staffs to work through the book together and allow it to shape the way they build community.

This study guide is intended to be a supportive resource for any leader or group facilitator. I have provided a “Tips to Leading” resource and then a simple, straightforward guide for the six-week study.

TIPS TO LEADING A LIFE IN COMMUNITY SMALL GROUP

1. Journal through the assigned Bible chapter for the week.

Study the assigned chapters intently. Consult simple commentaries like the *Bible in Easy English* (www.easyenglish.info) to add insight to the original meaning and context of the passages.

2. Pray. Answer all nine questions as part of your prep. Then pray that God will go deeper in others who are in community with you.

3. Leave room for other voices. The first level of group conversation is you talking to the group. The next level is that the group talks back to you. The third level is the group talks to each other. When God talks to people, the group is functioning on the highest and healthiest level.

You talk > We talk back > We talk to each other > God talks to us

4. Start your formal group time by connecting. Be creative and have fun. Give the group something easy to talk about before moving into “Heart Matters.”

5. Watch the clock. Because of the open-ended approach to these questions, the deeper the conversations the greater the time challenge.

- Clearly identify your end time at the beginning of the formal meeting.
- Let people answer questions one-on-one and in triads.
- Decide in advance how much time you will spend on each section.
- Designate a group timekeeper.
- Keep moving. Conclude the meeting before they become aware of the clock.

6. Review the past week's debrief. Coach your group toward action. Reviewing next steps from the last gathering raises accountability for hearing God and following through. Have participants pray for each other concerning their next steps.

7. Become a great listener. Listen to what God says to you about others. Listen beyond what is normal and comfortable for you.

8. Be creative. Anything can get boring, even highly engaging approaches to group learning. If you are not creative, find someone in your group who is and let them help you.

SMALL GROUP STUDY WEEK 1

BEFORE THE GROUP GATHERS, HAVE EVERYONE READ:

- *Life in Community*, chapters 1 and 2
- Ephesians 2

HEART MATTERS

- What do you normally substitute for community?

- What personal barriers have you created to community?

- What unhealthy ways have you processed loneliness in your past?

SOUND BITES

“Communities centered on the gospel fly in the face of isolation and yet convey the grace-filled inclusion that we so desperately desire. These communities bring with them the answer the world is hungry for. It is a community that invites others to feast at the Lord’s table.” (*Community*, p. 29)

“The universal need for a Savior, a true source of living water, gives us the correct awareness to find common ground and is foundational to forming a healthy community.” (*Community*, p. 40)

ZOOM IN

Ephesians 2

- What key verses or phrases from this passage speak to living in community?
- What verse did God want you to see/hear/apply?
- What verse would be a great gift for someone close to you?

DEBRIEF

- What benefits of community would help you most now?
- What adjustments would you need to make to give space for community?
- What steps will you take in the next thirty days to make those adjustments?

SMALL GROUP STUDY WEEK 2

BEFORE THE GROUP GATHERS, HAVE EVERYONE READ:

- *Life in Community*, chapters 3 and 4
- Philippians 2

HEART MATTERS

- What scares you most about living in community?

- What are some advantages to not living in community?

- What attracts you most to living in community?

SOUND BITES

“The table is not a table for one. It’s an enormous banquet table where God Himself invites all to come and dine.” (*Community*, p. 69)

“Going at it alone is not the path for a disciple of Jesus. Through grace we don’t just belong to Christ—we also belong to one another.” (*Community*, p. 52)

ZOOM IN

Philippians 2

- How does this chapter reinforce the value of community?
- What verse did you need most?
- How could you shape that verse into a prayer?

DEBRIEF

- In what area do you need the greatest transformation?
- How can living in community help you in that area?
- What steps will you take in the next thirty days to let others support you?

SMALL GROUP STUDY WEEK 3

BEFORE THE GROUP GATHERS, HAVE EVERYONE READ:

- *Life in Community*, chapters 5 and 6
- 1 John 4

HEART MATTERS

- Where are you the most tempted to put on a mask?

- What part of your heart does God need to change to help you become more honest?

- What are the pros of being completely honest in community? the cons?

SOUND BITES

“The depth believers experience with one another is linked directly to their level of honesty. Any relationship built on the façade of lies will surely crumble over time.” (*Community*, p. 81)

“I’m not suggesting we create sin police who constantly bust people in their depravity. I am, however, encouraging us to become a people who love one another enough to hate the things that hurt us.” (*Community*, p. 90)

ZOOM IN

1 John 4

- What key verses or phrases from this passage speak to loving in community?
- What verse did God want you to see/hear/apply?
- How can you make the verse a part of your week?

DEBRIEF

- How can you help create a culture of honesty in your community?
- How can you become a safe person to whom people make risky confessions?
- Who is the safest person to whom you can make a risky confession in the next thirty days?

SMALL GROUP STUDY WEEK 4

BEFORE THE GROUP GATHERS, HAVE EVERYONE READ:

- *Life in Community*, chapters 7 and 8
- Romans 12

HEART MATTERS

- What person do you struggle being positive about?

- Who do you need to speak more directly to?

- What is the biggest change God has made in you over the past year?

SOUND BITES

“Biblical encouragement uses your words to point out examples of God’s goodness in another person’s life.” (*Community*, p. 107)

“As we become people who see life as a gift and not something we are entitled to, we will view people through a completely different lens. And as we grow deeper into the depths of God’s mercies, we will discover that our life is also given to us to be given away to others.” (*Community*, p. 118)

ZOOM IN

Romans 12

- What is your most pressing question about this passage?

- What verse did God want you to see/hear/apply?

- What verse could you give as an encouragement to someone else?

DEBRIEF

- Who do you need to affirm this week?

- How will you affirm them?

- What steps will you take in the next thirty days to be more encouraging?

SMALL GROUP STUDY WEEK 5

BEFORE THE GROUP GATHERS, HAVE EVERYONE READ:

- *Life in Community*, chapters 9 and 10
- James 1

HEART MATTERS

- What trial are you currently experiencing?

- How can your group help?

- What is God changing in you through this challenge?

SOUND BITES

“Suffering is the God-appointed means of conforming us to the image of Jesus. Our trials are tools in the hands of a loving God who wants to make us and our churches look more like Christ. Thank God we do not have to suffer alone.” (*Community*, p. 135)

“If we believe the gospel, then we don’t have to pray about helping those in our community with their needs.” (*Community*, p. 140)

ZOOM IN

James 1

- What part of the passage was the hardest for you to accept or understand?

- What verse did God want you to see/hear/apply?

- What part of this passage gives you courage in spite of personal challenges?

DEBRIEF

- Who in your world is going through a trial?

- What can you do this week to make a meaningful connection with them?

- How can you more fully engage a need in your city over the next thirty days?

SMALL GROUP STUDY WEEK 6

BEFORE THE GROUP GATHERS, HAVE EVERYONE READ:

- *Life in Community*, chapters 11 and 12
- 1 Peter 4

HEART MATTERS

- Who models hospitality well?

- What do they do that you admire most?

- What resources do you have that you struggle the most to share?

SOUND BITES

“The aim is to use whatever home God has given you. If you are in a dorm room or a two-hundred-square-foot city loft or a five-thousand-square-foot home in the ’burbs, you can still pursue hospitality.” (*Community*, p. 151)

“Grace-driven effort, coupled with an accurate perspective of what gospel community is about, changes everything.” (*Community*, p. 168)

ZOOM IN

1 Peter 4

- What is your most pressing question about this passage?
- What verse did God want you to see/hear/apply?
- How does this chapter apply to sharing your life with others?

DEBRIEF

- Which of your neighbors needs hospitality from you this month?
- What are your next steps to make this goal a reality?
- What is one thing God has convinced you to do as a result of your *Life in Community* study?