

GR@UPS

leader
training

PARTICIPANT GUIDE



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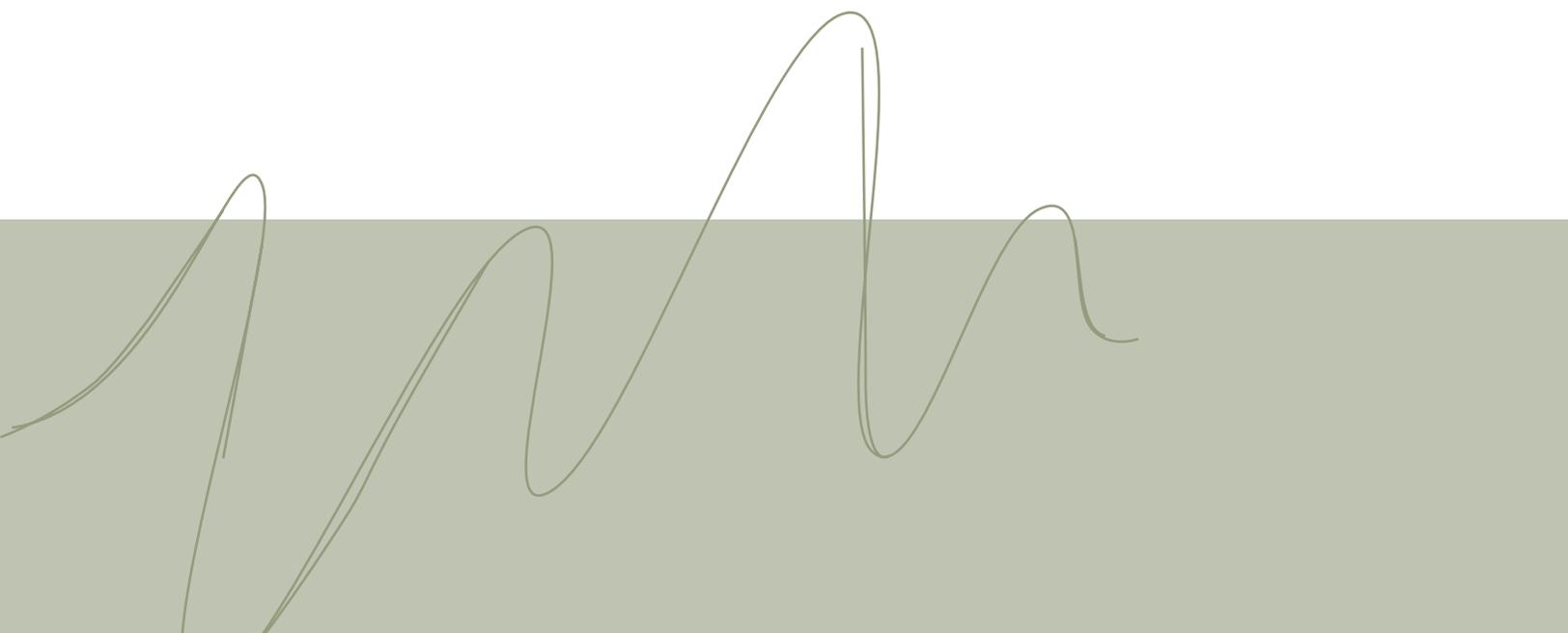
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Who We Are

At Midtown, we don't just come to church—we are the church.

God made you to receive his love, to share his love with one another, and to live in the fullness of life he gives. That's not something that happens only on Sundays—it's something we live out together in the everyday spaces of Nashville.

OUR VISION FOR THE CITY

From the beginning, Midtown had a heart for those who feel like they don't fit in church—the non-religious, the spiritually marginalized, the church-burned, and the doubters. We're not slick or performance-driven. We thrive in the honest, messy struggle of being unfinished people learning to live real life with Jesus. Our hope is to see the gospel take root in every corner of our city—homes, workplaces, coffee shops, and backyards—where love, honesty, and grace can begin to transform Nashville from the inside out.

OUR SHARED RHYTHM

We are one church with multiple congregations across the city, united by one simple rhythm:

Made to let in – We open ourselves to the love of God and others. Jesus meets us where we are, but he doesn't leave us there.

Made to be with – We walk side-by-side, learning to love one another as we've been loved.

Made to go out – We join God in loving our city, becoming a tangible presence of grace and service in every neighborhood.

This rhythm shapes everything we do—from worship to service to everyday relationships.

WHERE DO GROUPS FIT?

Groups are where Midtown's vision becomes real. Groups are the living expression of our mission to become more like Jesus—together. In Groups, we work out our salvation side-by-side—with honesty, humility, and hope. We open scripture and ourselves. We learn to receive and reflect the love of Jesus in the messiness of everyday life. And we grow into the kind of people who go out to love Nashville well—one conversation, one prayer, one step at a time.



DNA of a Midtown Group

At Midtown, discipleship happens in relationship. Every group is a small expression of the church—people learning to receive and reflect the love of Jesus together. Each group carries the same DNA: rooted in Scripture, shaped by honest relationships, and led by people who go first and furthest in following Jesus.

SESSION ONE

THE GATHERING LIFE OF A GROUP

let in → *be with* – How we open ourselves to God’s love through scripture and community.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

- Groups gather around God’s Word because that’s where we meet Jesus.
- Based on Jesus’ model of ministry, we invite smaller circles of people to form relationships around Scripture and real life.
- Our Head, Heart, Hands guides help members listen, personalize, and apply God’s truth together.

RELATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

- Relationships are at the core of how transformation happens.
- Weekly gatherings create a consistent rhythm for honesty, prayer, and growth.
- One-on-one conversations and discipleship moments often grow out of these spaces as people learn to share life beyond the group night.
- Groups are invitational—always ready to welcome people into the journey of knowing and following Jesus.

SESSION TWO

THE GOING LIFE OF A GROUP

be with → *go out* – How we walk with people as they grow in Christ.

INTENTIONAL LEADER

- Leadership means going first and furthest, receiving love from Jesus and extending it to others.
- A group leader helps people notice what they believe about God, about themselves, and how that shapes their lives.
- Through prayer, presence, and discernment, leaders guide others toward maturity in Christ.
- A group leader helps identify spiritual gifting and empowers others to live into their calling.

REPRODUCIBLE PROCESS

- Apprentices are invited to grow alongside leaders with the goal of shared leadership and multiplication.
- Groups listen to the Holy Spirit for where God is leading next—whether that’s inviting new members, raising up new leaders, or branching.
- The love we receive and share inside the group becomes a gift we carry into Nashville—our homes, workplaces, neighborhoods, and friendships—so others can experience the presence of Jesus too.

The Role of a Leader

At Midtown, leadership begins with receiving. Before you lead anyone else, you are first and always a disciple. Your greatest gift to your group will always be your own ongoing relationship with Jesus. From that overflow, you invite others into the same journey of transformation. You don't have to have it all figured out; you simply go first and furthest in love, honesty, and dependence on Christ.

YOUR ROLE

As a group leader, you help create and sustain healthy group rhythms, care for your people, and develop new leaders as God grows your group. Your goal isn't to manage a meeting—it's to shepherd a space where spiritual growth can take root and multiply.

YOUR FOUNDATIONS AS A LEADER

Midtown leaders live out the same four pillars that shape every group:

Biblical

You lead from scripture, letting God's word form your identity and your conversations. You help your group listen, personalize, and apply truth together.

Relational

You model what it means to be with others in love—creating a safe, honest space where real life and real faith meet.

Intentional

You prayerfully discern where each person is in their journey with Jesus, encouraging and equipping them toward maturity.

Reproducible

You develop apprentices and continually make room for others to lead, trusting the Holy Spirit to multiply what he's doing through your group.

YOUR COMMITMENTS

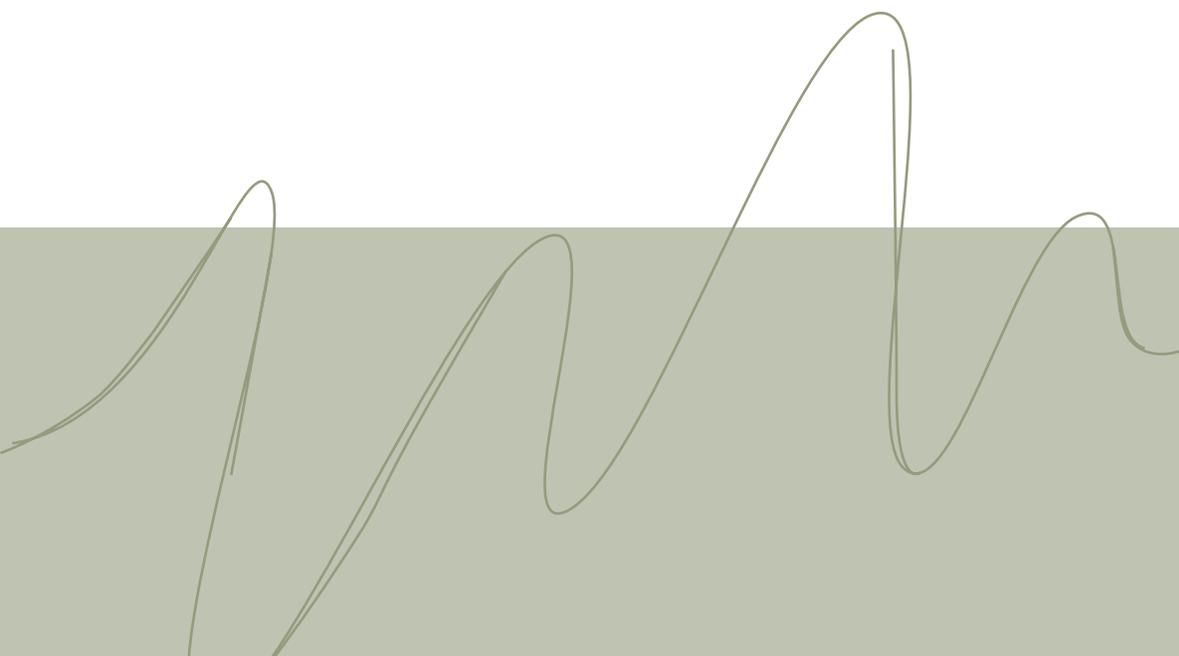
Being a leader means committing to walk with God, with your people, and with your church family. As a Midtown Group Leader, you commit to:

- Participate in Group Leader Training
- Become a member of Midtown Fellowship
- Meet regularly with your group
- Pursue opportunities for discipleship within your group
- Stay connected with your congregation's Groups Representative
- Grow together with other leaders by attending leader gatherings and events
- Walk in accountability by being open to encouragement, challenge, and correction

session *one*



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session one

the gathering life of a group

How we open ourselves to God's love through scripture and community.

KEY CONCEPTS

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

- Groups gather around God's Word because that's where we meet Jesus.
- Based on Jesus' model of ministry, we invite smaller circles of people to form relationships around Scripture and real life.
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- Relationships are at the core of how transformation happens.
- Weekly gatherings create a consistent rhythm for honesty, prayer, and growth.
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- Groups are invitational—always ready to welcome people into the journey of knowing and following Jesus.



My Part, Their Part, God's Part

The story of Philip and the Eunuch helps us see that when it comes to disciple-making, three different parties each play a role (Philip, the eunuch, the Spirit).

As you read the story, notice who does what. Under the respective headings on the next page, note what roles each party plays. (As you read, mark God "G", Philip "P", and the Eunuch "E".)

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH – ACTS 8:26-40

"Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place. And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter
and like a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation
justice was denied him. Who can describe his
generation? For his life is taken away from the earth."

And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.

And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea."

God

Philip

Eunuch

AS WE SEEK TO BE INTENTIONAL IN DISCIPLESHIP RELATIONSHIPS...

01 What is “my” part?

02 What is “their” part?

03 What is God’s part?

04 How does this concept feel freeing as you think about leading?

Forming a Faithful Core

A healthy group starts small and grows deep.

As a leader, you set the tone for belonging, consistency, and honesty. Over time, this creates a core of people who trust one another, show up for one another, and grow together in Christ.

CONSISTENCY

Create rhythms that build trust and ownership.

- Set regular meeting rhythms your group can count on—keep showing up, even if only a few can make it.
- Encourage group ownership through shared responsibility: rotate hosting, lead prayer, or share stories.
- Model vulnerability and grace; create space where people can come as they are.
- Treat your group as a weekly priority, not a convenience—consistency builds safety.

COMMUNICATION

Offer clear expectations with warmth and vision.

- Verbally lay the groundwork for how your group will function.
- Name the challenge: weekly connection is hard, but it's worth it.
- Name the challenge: we may not all be best friends, but we commit to walking in faith together.
- Cast vision early and often—use the concepts on page 10 with your group.
- Create a shared text or email thread for updates, questions, encouragement, and prayer.
- Follow up weekly with a short text or question from the discussion guide.
- Remind your group about upcoming meetings so the rhythm stays steady and expected.

COMMUNAL LIVING

Practice everyday hospitality and shared life.

- Invite people into real life—your home doesn't have to be perfect.
- Offer small touches (snacks, drinks, music) that make people feel comfortable and known.
- Mix things up occasionally: share a meal, split by gender, or have a night of prayer or worship.
- Keep connecting between gatherings—text, call, or pray for each other during the week.
- Remember: what happens between meetings matters just as much as what happens during them.

Drawing Near: The Gospel According to Hebrews

Jesus: The Better Rest

HEBREWS 4:1-13

CORE TRUTH

We spend so much of life striving—trying to prove ourselves or feel safe. But in Jesus, rest comes first—not something we earn, but something he gives. Jesus is the only true rest for our souls.

WELCOME to remind us why we're here.

🕒 Spend about 5 minutes here.

Mission – To become more like Jesus – together.

Vision – We work out our salvation side-by-side—with honesty, humility, and hope. We walk with one another, not just to talk about Jesus, but to be transformed by him. (Philippians 2:12-13)

Guidelines – Our Group Guidelines help us live out our mission and vision with kindness and humility. We encourage you to read and discuss the guidelines together regularly—they can be found on the last page.

HEAD to help us examine what the word shows and let in what's true.

🕒 Spend about 10 minutes here.

- What kind of rest do you think this passage is talking about?
- Why do you think the author tells us to “make every effort” to enter God's rest? What kind of effort do you think that means?

HEART to help us wrestle with what we believe and be with each other in it.

🕒 Spend about 30 minutes here.

- What does “rest” look like—or feel like—for you right now?
- **Entering God's rest isn't passive. It means actively trusting Jesus.** Are there places in your heart where you sense resistance to slowing down and being fully known by God?
- **The word of God isn't harsh, it's surgical – meant to bring repentance and healing.** What would it look like to let Jesus expose what's in your heart and lead you into his healing rest?

HANDS to help us live out the truth with the Spirit as we go out into the world.

🕒 Spend about 15 minutes here.

- **Meditate on the following reflection now and throughout the week:** What would it look like to live like Jesus is enough—even when you're tempted to keep striving, hiding, or holding it all together?
- **Use the following prayer based on Psalms 139 to close your time together:**
Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. Amen.

LEADER RESOURCES

• [Weekly Leader Video](#) • [Bible Project Overview](#) • [Gospel Coalition on Hebrews](#) • [Tim Keller Hebrews Series](#) •

NEXT WEEK'S PASSAGE

Hebrews 4:14-5:10

GROUPS

Leading with Vision

Every group needs regular moments to remember why we gather. Like a call to worship, this moment re-centers us around our purpose—becoming more like Jesus, side by side.

As leaders, we set the tone by helping our group lift their eyes from the details of the week to the bigger story we're living in: we are being changed by Jesus together. Vision moments remind us that what happens in group isn't just discussion—it's discipleship, transformation, and participation in God's ongoing work in our lives and our city.

ASK THE GROUP: "WHY ARE WE HERE?"

- Give space for people to reflect and respond in their own words.
- Then, help the group connect their answers back to the heart of discipleship: being transformed by Jesus through his word, his spirit, and one another.

A FEW WAYS TO NAME THE VISION

- We work out our salvation side-by-side—with honesty, humility, and hope.
- We walk with one another, not just to talk about Jesus, but to be transformed by him.
- Read Philippians 2:12-13 together.

Facilitating vs. Teaching

Each week, your group will use the discussion guide designed to help you open scripture, listen together, and respond to Jesus. These guides give structure for prayer, conversation, and reflection—not scripts to be followed, but spaces to be entered.

As a leader, your goal isn't to teach information; it's to facilitate transformation. You help people engage scripture, the Holy Spirit, and one another in ways that draw them closer to Jesus. It's not about getting to the "right" answer—it's about helping people see and experience the Living Word.

When you facilitate, you're trusting that the Word does the work—that God himself is active in the room.

LISTENING AND RESPONDING

As group members share, they'll reveal what they believe about God, what they believe about themselves, and how those beliefs shape their actions, emotions, and responses. Listen prayerfully and ask the Spirit for discernment in how to respond. This posture turns group time from a lesson into a moment of shared discovery.

Facilitating a Bible Discussion

"The Word does the work."

Dialogue

Peer to peer

Learning

Questions

Guidance

Journey

Prepared and present

Invites conversation

Lead

Teaching a Bible Study

"I do the work."

Dominating

Hierarchy

Knowing

Statements

Instruction

Destination

Planned

Invites "right answers"

Tell

Asking Follow-Up Questions

Follow-up questions open doors for people to process what God is doing in their hearts, often in real time.

A good follow-up question doesn't look for the right answer; it invites someone to go deeper. It's an act of listening—both to the person in front of you and to the Holy Spirit.

They're one of the simplest and most powerful ways to love people well. They communicate curiosity, humility, and care. A follow-up question says: "I'm with you, and I want to understand more."

EXAMPLES

- What did you mean when you said...?
- Will you help me understand...?
- Can you tell me more about that?
- Can you give me an example?
- How does faith—or what you know of God—fit into what you just said?
- What feels hardest or most hopeful about that right now?

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR LEADERS

- Use questions that start with who, what, how, or why to help people share more deeply.
- Resist the urge to fix or explain—your job is to draw out, not direct.
- Pay attention to tone and timing; sometimes silence does the best work.
- Ask the Holy Spirit for discernment as you listen—he often highlights what needs a gentle question, not a quick answer.
- Remember: it's better to ask a clumsy question with compassion than a perfect one without love.

session *two*

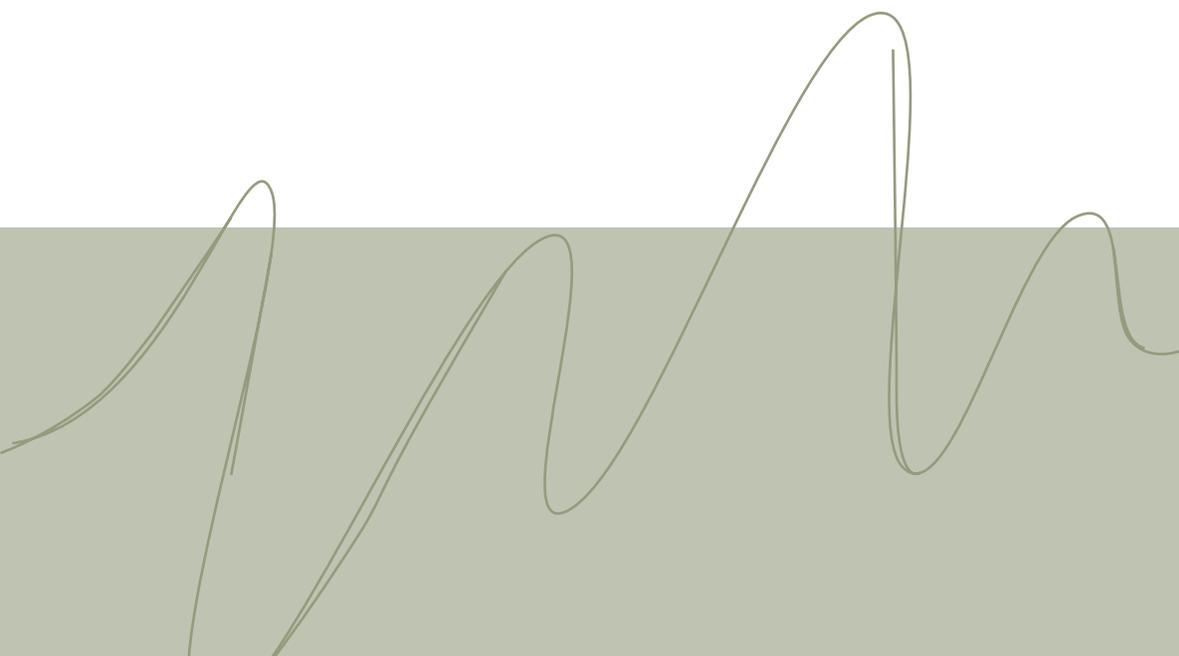


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session two

the going life of a group

How we open ourselves to God's love through scripture and community.

KEY CONCEPTS

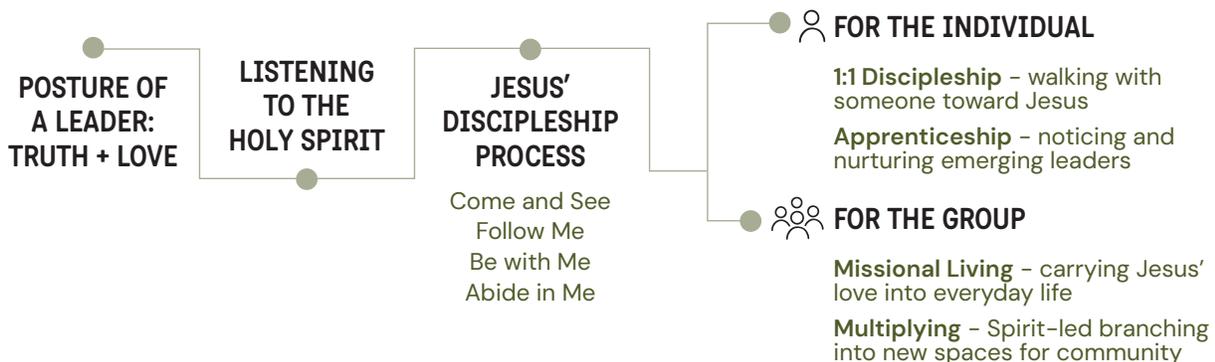
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THE GOING LIFE OF A GROUP



The Posture of a Leader

In Session One we looked at the gathering life of a group—how we create a safe, relational, scripture-centered environment where people can let in God’s love and be with one another. But the life of a group doesn’t stay in the living room. Following Jesus always leads us outward.

Session Two invites us into the going life of a group—learning to walk with people beyond group night, to notice spiritual growth, and to join what the Holy Spirit is doing around us. This session focuses on the two pillars that guide that outward movement: **intentional leadership** and **reproducible discipleship**.

Before we talk about what we do as leaders, we begin with the posture we lead from—holding **truth and love** together.

Truth & Love

Every leader naturally leans toward either truth or love.

But Jesus holds both perfectly, and he invites us to grow into that same posture—firm in truth, rich in love, grounded in grace.

A “love-only” leader wants connection so much that they avoid necessary truth.

A LOVE-ONLY LEADER MAY:

- Avoid using Group Guidelines or healthy boundaries.
- Resist structure, preferring things to feel “organic” all the time.
- Keep things light to avoid discomfort or harder conversations.
- Pull back when guidance or challenge is needed.
- Feel anxious about disappointing group members.
- Fear questions or answers that might create tension.

The impact: people may feel cared for emotionally, but not truly led.

A “truth-only” leader leans toward correction or control more than compassion.

A TRUTH-ONLY LEADER MAY:

- Struggle to trust that people are on their own journey with Jesus.
- “Talk at” people rather than listening well.
- Lead out of “shoulds” and “ought-tos.”
- Prioritize content over connection.
- Hold high expectations with little room for process.
- Offer answers more quickly than empathy.

The impact: people may gain information, but miss experiencing the heart of Jesus.

A leader who holds truth and love creates safety and direction, offering grace without losing clarity.

A TRUTH-AND-LOVE LEADER:

- Participates as a fellow traveler with Christ, not an expert above the group.
- Knows when to set boundaries that protect the group’s safety and purpose.
- Models a supportive, steady presence that helps others show up fully.
- Speaks with both honesty and empathy—truth expressed through love.
- Affirms that group members are “in process,” not expected to be perfect.
- Shares personally in ways that are honest and invitational.
- Understands that discipleship is a marathon, not a sprint.
- Loves others out of the overflow of Jesus’ love for them.

The impact: people feel safe, seen, challenged, and encouraged to grow with Jesus.

REFLECTION

Where do you tend to lean—toward truth, or toward love?

Where might Jesus be inviting you to grow so you can hold both?

“The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”

GALATIANS 5:6 (NIV)

Listening to the Holy Spirit

The primary way we exercise truth and love is by listening. We listen for Jesus. We listen for the Spirit's movement. We listen for the quiet work of God unfolding in the lives of our people.

Jesus says: "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." –John 3:6, 8

The Spirit is always at work—often in ways we cannot predict or control. Our job is not to force outcomes but to **remain responsive**.

LISTENING LOOKS LIKE

01 *Noticing where God is already moving.*

God is constantly drawing people to himself. We slow down enough to see it—in questions asked, in tears shed, in hunger for Scripture, in new curiosity, or a growing tenderness in someone's heart.

02 *Paying attention to spiritual "nudges."*

A thought, a question, a person coming to mind, a sense that someone needs prayer—these small movements often signal the Spirit's invitation.

03 *Being open to change.*

Sometimes our plans give way to God's timing. A group conversation lingers. A moment becomes sacred. A need surfaces in someone's life. Listening means being interruptible.

Jesus leads. We listen. The Spirit moves. We respond.

REFLECTION

What does it mean to respond to the Spirit?

Jesus never asked us to navigate the Holy Spirit on our own. He himself lived as the ultimate listener—attentive to the Father, responsive to the Spirit, and willing to follow where he was led. His life shows us what this posture looks like in the lives of others, and his discipleship process invites us to walk in the same way.

Jesus' Discipleship Process

	COME & SEE	FOLLOW ME	BE WITH ME	ABIDE IN ME
WHO ARE THEY?	<p>People in this stage are curious or seeking. They may identify as "spiritual," but they do not yet believe Jesus is the Son of God or understand the gospel.</p>	<p>These are believers who are beginning to grow. Their experience with Jesus is still young, and they are learning to trust him, understand Scripture, and walk with others in community.</p>	<p>People in this stage are shifting from self-focused to others-focused. They are learning to join Jesus in his mission by seeing and serving the needs of others with growing maturity.</p>	<p>These believers have a deepening relationship with God and a steady reliance on the Holy Spirit. They are others-centered, quick to repent, and increasingly able to help others grow.</p>
WHAT DO THEY NEED?				
WHAT IS GOD DOING?				
	JOHN 1:37-46	JOHN 1:43	LUKE 19:5-10	JOHN 15:5

The Going Life

The going life of a group flows directly out of Jesus' discipleship process. As we listen to the Spirit within that process, two natural responses emerge: how we walk with an individual and how we shepherd the whole group.

For the Individual

As we follow Jesus, we learn to be with people in the places where God is already at work. This is where discipleship becomes life-on-life: relational, personal, and guided by the Spirit.

1:1 DISCIPLESHIP

A simple, intentional way to walk with someone toward Jesus.

Discipleship is not reserved for the “advanced.” Jesus meets each of us right where we are—and invites us deeper. 1:1 discipleship is a relationship centered on noticing what God is doing and joining him in that work together.

WHAT DOES 1:1 DISCIPLESHIP LOOK LIKE?

1:1 discipleship is relational, flexible, and meant to fit into real life. You don't have to teach a lesson; you simply show up, stay curious, listen well, and trust the Holy Spirit to lead.

EXAMPLES

- Meeting outside the group to build intentional connection
- Opening Scripture together and letting God speak into real situations
- Listening carefully and asking thoughtful follow-up questions
- Praying for needs, hopes, fears, and next steps
- Sharing everyday life—errands, coffee, walking, meals
- Encouraging obedience, repentance, and growth
- Naming where you see God at work in someone's life
- Helping someone take a simple step toward Jesus, not a giant leap

The goal is not to fix someone, but to walk with them as Jesus forms them. This is our model: ***sharing the gospel and sharing our lives***—with patience, presence, and love.

THREE SIMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR 1:1 DISCIPLESHIP

- What is God revealing to me about himself?
- What is God revealing to me about myself?
- Because of these things, how is God leading me to live in obedience and faith?

It involves the whole person—spiritually, emotionally, relationally, and socially.

APPRENTICESHIP

Noticing and nurturing the leaders God is raising up.

Apprenticeship is simply paying attention to what God is already growing in someone—and then coming alongside them as they take steps toward leadership.

Apprentices aren't necessarily the loudest or most confident people in the group. They're often the ones who:

- show humility and teachability
- care naturally for others
- consistently show up
- ask thoughtful questions
- demonstrate spiritual curiosity
- quietly take responsibility
- reflect Jesus' heart in the way they relate to others

IDENTIFYING AN APPRENTICE

01 You pray, watch, and listen:

- Who is already modeling pieces of leadership without the title?
- Who is leading the group through personal vulnerability?

02 Then you affirm what you see and invite them gently:

- "I see God at work in you, and I'd love to explore leadership together this season."

*These are the first steps of discipleship with an apprentice. We share more about walking with and releasing an apprentice into leadership in the Additional Resources section.

"Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well... encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God."

**1 THESSALONIANS
2:8, 11-12**

For the Group

As the Spirit forms individuals, he also forms the culture of the group itself. Healthy groups don't only look inward—they become communities shaped by compassion, hospitality, prayer, and mission.

When individuals are being discipled and apprentices are being raised, the group naturally begins to face outward. This outward movement happens in two major ways: missional living and multiplying.

MISSIONAL LIVING

Carrying Jesus' love into everyday life.

Mission flows out of identity. We don't go out to impress God—we go because he has already come close to us. We are loved, so we go out as people of love.

WHAT DOES MISSIONAL LIVING LOOK LIKE?

- Noticing the needs, stories, and longings of people around you
- Practicing hospitality by opening your home, your table, your time
- Showing up with presence by being available and interruptible
- Praying for people by name and asking Jesus to draw them to himself
- Serving together as a group even in small ways
- Celebrating stories of God at work in and around your group
- Making room at the table for people exploring faith
- Offering encouragement and care to people in your everyday path

Missional groups are **steady**, **prayerful**, **relational**, and **attentive**.



MULTIPLYING

Following the Spirit as he creates new places for people to belong and grow.

Jesus said the Kingdom of God is always growing—sometimes slowly, sometimes suddenly, but always surely (*Matthew 13:31–32*). New leaders will rise. New groups will form. Not because we orchestrate it perfectly, but because this is what God does. He is always moving his people outward in love.

Multiplying is the fruit of God’s movement. It’s what naturally happens when people mature, when love multiplies, and when leaders open their hands to where the Spirit is already at work.

SOMETIMES MULTIPLYING LOOKS LIKE:

- a large group branching to become two healthy groups
- a leader identifying an apprentice and starting a new group
- a group shifting to meet needs in a new season
- New people joining and needing a place to grow in Jesus
- People being sent to help plant or strengthen a new congregation

MULTIPLYING HAPPENS WHEN:

- people are growing in maturity
- apprentices are being raised up
- the Spirit is stirring mission
- the group is becoming too large for effective discipleship
- God is opening new doors for community
- hospitality is overflowing into new relationships

Whatever it looks like, branching always involves **people**, **prayer**, and **presence**—and always moves us further into the mission of loving Nashville and every neighbor in it.

We know that new leaders will grow and new groups will form because that is how the Kingdom of God works. When you get here, remember that you’re not alone. Please reach out to your Groups Representative and they will be happy to walk with you.

the big picture

the essentials to hold on to as you lead

Across these two sessions, we've returned again and again to a simple truth: **God is already at work**. Our role is to notice, respond, and walk with others as he forms them.

REMEMBER THE RHYTHM

- **My part:** show up, listen well, love honestly, guide gently, and pay attention to the Spirit
- **Their part:** respond to Jesus, take steps of obedience, grow at their own pace
- **God's part:** change hearts, produce growth, heal, convict, and give life

When leadership feels heavy, return here. God never asks you to carry what only he can hold.

REMEMBER THE LIFE OF A GROUP

Groups have both a gathering life and a going life.

- **The gathering life** creates weekly rhythm, safety, Scripture-shaped conversation, and shared formation.
- **The going life** happens in everyday moments — walking with people, noticing growth, loving neighbors, and responding to where God is moving.

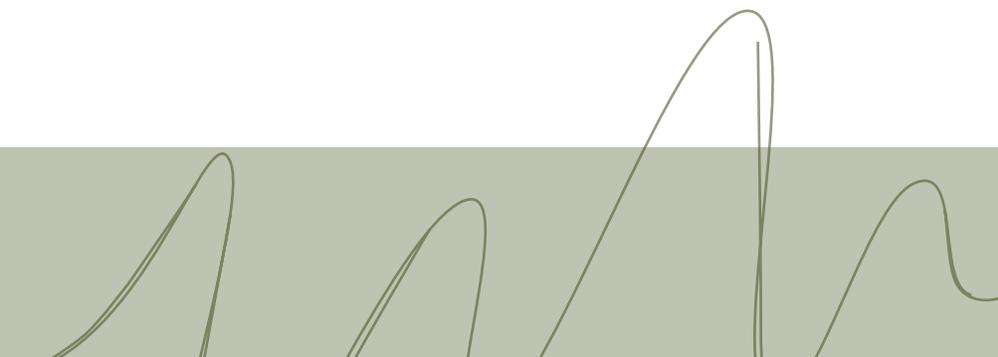
REMEMBER THE FLOW

Session Two gave us a simple way to see how God grows disciples and communities:

- Truth + Love shape the leader
- Listening to the Spirit anchors the work
- Jesus' discipleship process helps us notice where people are

The work then flows in two directions:

- 01** For the individual: 1:1 discipleship and apprenticeship
- 02** For the group: missional living and multiplying



additional *resources*

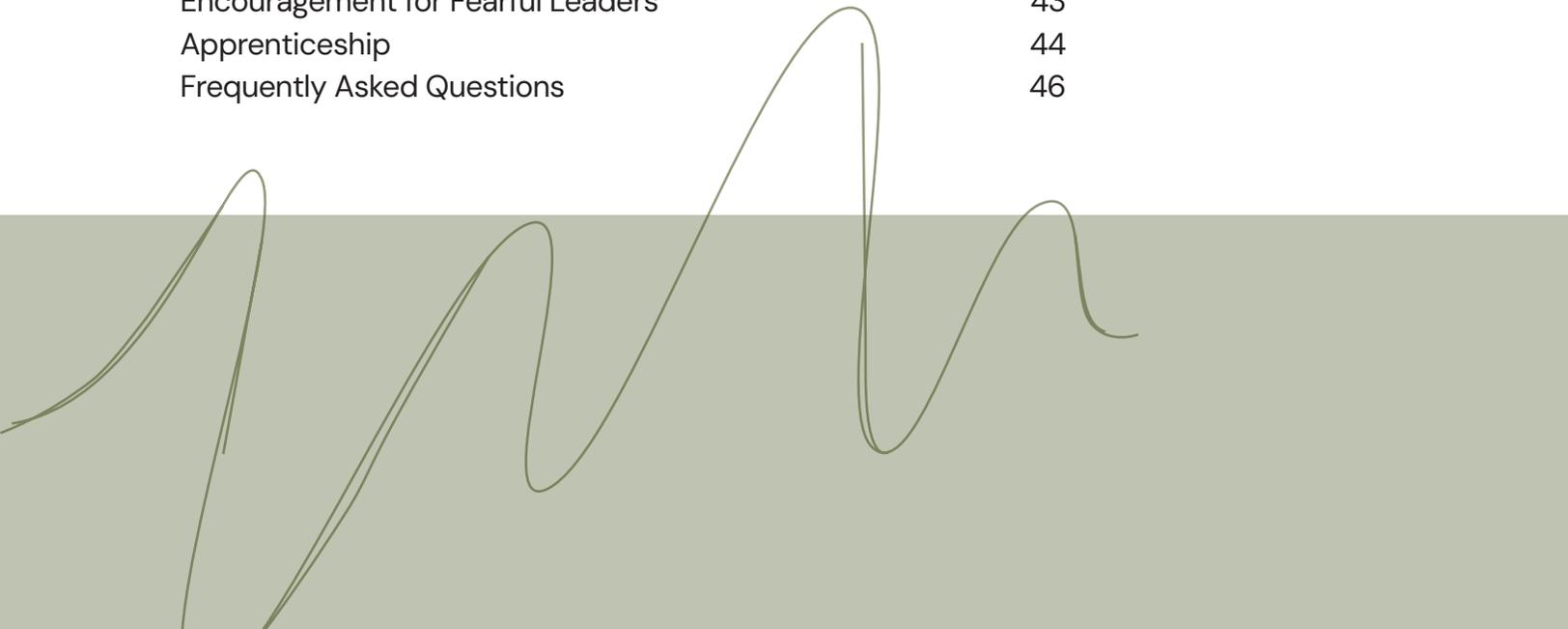


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Key Terms

These words shape the way we talk about discipleship and leadership at Midtown. Use them as a simple reference as you walk with your group.

DISCIPLE

A disciple is someone who knows Jesus, follows Jesus, and is being changed by Jesus. A disciple is learning to receive God's love, live in his ways, and join his mission in the world.

DISCIPLESHIP

The lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus. Discipleship happens in community as we let in God's love, are with one another, and go out to love our neighbors.

1:1 DISCIPLESHIP

A simple, intentional relationship where one person helps another follow Jesus. It's centered on transformation rather than expertise.

LEADER

A disciple-maker who helps create a safe, honest environment where people can encounter Jesus together. Leaders listen for how God is at work, model vulnerability, shepherd relationships, and develop apprentices.

APPRENTICE

Someone intentionally growing toward leadership. They're invited into small leadership opportunities—facilitating, praying, meeting with people—and discerning where Jesus may be leading them to serve.

LEADER CARE

Leaders need shepherding too. Each congregation has a Groups Representative or pastoral support person who checks in relationally, prays with leaders, and offers guidance and encouragement.

Characteristics of a Midtown Group

These shared qualities help groups become small, relational spaces where discipleship can grow:

- Usually **4–20 people**
- **Invitational posture** — groups remain open-hearted and hospitable, making space for people exploring faith or seeking community
- **Scripture-centered conversation** using the Head/Heart/Hands guides
- **Relational culture** that encourages honesty, shared life, and prayer
- **Organized by congregation** for support and care
- **Weekly gatherings** in homes or nearby spaces
- **Seasonal rhythm** (January–May, September–December)
- **Trained leaders and apprentices**
- A posture of **multiplication** — noticing emerging leaders, encouraging growth, and allowing the Spirit to naturally produce apprentices and, when needed, new groups.

These characteristics reflect our hope for groups that they would be safe, honest communities where disciples of Jesus grow and multiply.

Encouragement for the Weary Leader

Every leader faces moments of doubt, insecurity, or fear. You are not alone in that. When you feel the pressure to perform, fix, or carry more than you can, remember the resources God has already placed in your hands.

GOD'S WORK IS PRIMARY

You plant and water, but God gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–9).

You are not the Savior of your group—Jesus is. Your part is faithfulness; his part is transformation.

GOD IS AT WORK IN YOU

You can rest in the One who is shaping and strengthening you (Philippians 2:13).

You lead out of receiving, not striving.

YOUR IDENTITY IS SECURE

Even in weakness or uncertainty, you lead with authority that comes from Christ's finished work in you (2 Corinthians 5:17–20).

You are a new creation—fully loved, fully his.

LISTENING MATTERS MORE THAN KNOWING

Leadership is not about having the right answers. It's about listening with curiosity, humility, and compassion (Proverbs 10:14).

God uses your presence more than your expertise.

JESUS MEETS YOU IN YOUR NEED

Cling to Jesus first in your own struggles, questions, and limitations (1 Timothy 1:15–16).

Leaders breathe in grace before breathing it out to others.

ANCHOR YOUR SOUL DAILY

Care for your soul with prayer, Scripture, worship, and community (Matthew 22:37–40).

Leading from overflow—not exhaustion—begins here.

YOU DON'T LEAD ALONE

Your Groups Representative, pastors, elders, and staff are here to listen, pray, encourage, and walk with you. We share our lives—and the gospel—together.

“Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.”

1 THESSALONIANS 2:8

Icebreakers & Intro Questions

SIMPLE WAYS TO HELP YOUR GROUP OPEN UP, LAUGH, AND GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER.

- What is your most-used emoji?
- You have your own late-night talk show—who's your first guest?
- If you had to eat one meal every day for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- If you were left on a deserted island with either your least favorite person or no one, which would you choose? Why?
- What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?
- If you had to delete all but 3 apps from your phone, which ones stay?
- What fictional family would you join?
- If you could eliminate one thing from your daily routine, what would it be and why?
- What Olympic sport would you compete in?
- What would your superpower be—and why?
- If you could instantly become an expert at something, what would it be?
- What fictional world or place would you visit?
- What book, show, or movie have you enjoyed recently—and why?
- If you could live anywhere in the world for a year, where would it be?
- What's your favorite meal to cook—and why?
- What's the weirdest food you've ever eaten?
- If you had an unlimited supply of one thing—what would it be?

Reflecting on the Group Guidelines

FRESH WAYS TO HELP YOUR GROUP REVISIT WHAT CREATES A SAFE, HONEST, SPIRIT-LED ENVIRONMENT.

The Guidelines help create a space where everyone can show up honestly, listen well, and experience Jesus together. But returning to them regularly can feel repetitive unless we approach them with curiosity. Here are some questions to help you spark fresh reflection and meaningful conversation around the Guidelines.

- Why do these Guidelines matter for us as a group?
- How have you experienced safety, honesty, or deeper connection because of these Guidelines?
- When new people join our group, how might these Guidelines help them feel welcomed and safe?
- Which guideline have you found yourself practicing most naturally? Which one is more challenging?
- How do pauses and silence impact your ability to reflect or listen well?
- What tends to happen inside you when conflict arises? How might the Guidelines help you stay present?
- Where can we grow as a group in the way we listen and respond to one another?
- How do these Guidelines create space for the Holy Spirit to work during our time together?
- Which guideline has been meaningful to you personally—and why?
- Which guideline do you sometimes forget or resist? What might help you practice it more intentionally?
- Do you experience the Guidelines as a constraint or as an invitation to freedom? Why?
- How might practicing these Guidelines shape how we relate to people outside the group as well?
- How do these Guidelines help us “be with” one another in love?
- Which guideline could our group focus on more deliberately this season?

First Steps to 1:1 Discipleship

SIMPLE, RELATIONAL WAYS TO BEGIN WALKING WITH SOMEONE TOWARD JESUS.

1:1 discipleship doesn't have to feel formal or intimidating. It begins the same way most relationships begin—prayer, curiosity, and a small step of courage.

HOW DO I BEGIN?

- 01 Pray first.** Ask the Holy Spirit to bring someone to mind—someone hungry, hurting, curious, or ready for growth.
- 02 Start small.** Don't overthink it. Invite one person to meet with you intentionally this season.
- 03 Name the purpose.** You might say: "I'd love to meet up a few times to talk about life, pray together, and look at Scripture. Would you be open to that?"
- 04 Set a simple rhythm.** Decide together how long you want to meet (four weeks, six weeks, etc.) and revisit as needed.
- 05 Trust God.** You're not trying to "fix" anyone—you're paying attention to what Jesus is already doing.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE MEET?

There's no perfect formula—use wisdom and the Spirit's leading. Here's a simple guide:

One time: If someone shares something heavy during group and needs immediate care or prayer.

Two or three times: If someone is in a difficult season and needs encouragement, clarity, or presence.

Ongoing (4+ times): When you're intentionally walking with someone in discipleship, helping them grow in faith and follow Jesus more fully.

Let the relationship determine the rhythm.

WHAT COULD OUR TIME TOGETHER LOOK LIKE?

Most 1:1 discipleship is relational and connected to real life. Here are a few ideas:

SCRIPTURE TOGETHER

- Read a short passage and ask Head/Heart/Hands questions.
- Walk through a gospel with a newer believer (John is great).
- Read Philippians or James with a maturing believer.

PRAYER + CONVERSATION

- Share highs and lows from the week.
- Pray about real struggles, needs, decisions, or relationships.
- Listen for what God may be highlighting.

TOOLS THAT CAN HELP

- A discipleship or catechism app
- BibleApp or short devotionals
- Intentional question-based studies.

READING TOGETHER

You don't have to be a teacher—just read and talk about what stands out. A few helpful books:

- *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* — Eugene Peterson
- *Gentle & Lowly* — Dane Ortlund
- *Praying Like Monks Living Like Fools* — Tyler Staton
- *The Prodigal God* — Tim Keller
- *The Life of the Beloved* — Henri Nouwen
- *Idols of the Heart* — Elyse Fitzpatrick
- *When People Are Big and God Is Small* — Ed Welch
- *From Fear to Freedom* — Rose Marie Miller
- *Sonship* — Serge Ministries

Remember: you can always reach out to your Groups Representative for ideas, brainstorming, or prayer. You're not doing this alone.

A Simple Way to Read Scripture Together

You don't need a formal plan to read Scripture with someone. Choose a short passage and walk through these three questions together:

HEAD

- What does this passage say?
- What stands out?
- What questions do you have?

HEART

- What does this reveal about God?
- What does this reveal about you, people, or the world?
- Where does this meet something in your life right now?

HANDS

- How might God be inviting you to live this out?
- What is one small step of obedience or faith?

IF YOU WANT TO USE A PASSAGE, HERE ARE SIMPLE PLACES TO START:

- A story about Jesus (Mark, John)
- A psalm
- A short section of a New Testament letter (Philippians, James)

Keep it short, talk about life, pray together, and trust the Spirit.

*What matters most: Scripture. Prayer. Relationship.
These three together make space for real transformation.*

A Simple Way to Pray Together

Prayer is one of the greatest gifts Jesus gives His people. When we pray, we are stepping into a conversation God has already started. He listens, he responds, and he draws us closer to his heart.

Jesus taught his disciples a simple pattern for prayer (*Matthew 6*). Over the years, the church has described this rhythm with four words: **Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication**. This pattern is a gentle pathway that helps us slow down, notice God, and talk honestly with him and one another. You can pray this way alone, with a friend, or as a group.

A – Adoration: seeing God for who he is

Begin by focusing on God himself—his character, his goodness, his presence with you. You might say:

- “God, we praise You for being faithful and near.”
- “Thank You for the ways You’ve cared for us this week.”
- “You are patient, strong, gentle, and full of mercy.”

Adoration helps re-center our hearts on God before we talk about anything else.

C – Confession: being honest about our need

Confession is about honesty and returning to Jesus because he loves us. Together or silently, you might name:

- Attitudes or actions you want to turn from
- Places where you’ve been self-reliant
- Moments you resisted his voice or avoided his way

Confession is a posture of openness. Jesus meets us with grace every time.

T – Thanksgiving: remembering God’s gifts

Take time to thank God—for what he gives, and for how he sees you and walks with you. You might thank him for:

- Moments of joy or peace
- A conversation that encouraged you
- Provision you didn’t expect
- Evidence of growth in yourself or someone else
- His constant love, even on hard days

Thanksgiving helps us notice God’s presence in our everyday lives.

S – Supplication: asking boldly and trusting

This is where we bring our needs, desires, and longings to Jesus. Nothing is too small or too big. Pray for:

- Wisdom for a decision
- Comfort for someone who is hurting
- Courage to take a step of obedience
- Healing, provision, reconciliation
- Opportunities to love someone well

Encourage each other to ask specifically and honestly. Jesus delights in hearing the desires of his people.

Closing Together

End your time by entrusting everything you prayed to Jesus. A simple closing could be:

“Jesus, we place all of this in your hands. Lead us, help us trust you, and make us more aware of your presence today. Amen.”

Encouragement for Fearful Leaders

When doubts, insecurities, or “what ifs” feel louder than calling. Stepping into leadership or apprenticeship can stir up all kinds of fears—some real, some imagined. You are not alone in feeling this way. Fear doesn’t disqualify you; it simply reveals where Jesus wants to meet you with his love and presence. Here are some common fears leaders experience as they begin to disciple others:

- “What if group members don’t like me or reject me?”
- “What if I don’t know what to say or how to relate?”
- “What if people think I’m boring or awkward?”
- “What if I can’t move conversations deeper?”
- “What if I can’t be myself?”
- “What if I say something foolish?”
- “What if I forget names or details?”
- “What if people question why I’m meeting with them?”
- “What if I’m too old... or too young?”
- “What if I’m not a good speaker or facilitator?”
- “What if I don’t know enough about the Bible?”

THESE FEARS ARE NORMAL.

Every leader—new or experienced—has felt some version of these. But here is the truth:

- Jesus doesn’t call the confident; He calls the willing.
- He isn’t asking for expertise; He’s inviting your presence.
- He doesn’t need you to have the right words; He asks for a listening heart.
- He doesn’t require perfection; He delights in humility.
- You lead with Him, not for Him.
- Your weakness creates space for His strength.

Leadership begins with courage—not because you feel brave, but because the Holy Spirit is with you.

*“Do not be afraid,
for I am with you, I
will strengthen you
and help you.”*

ISAIAH 41:10

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is one of the most relational and Spirit-led parts of group leadership. It's the slow, joyful work of helping someone grow into who God is making them — by inviting them into your life and leadership. Below are some helpful resources along the path of apprenticeship.

TRAINING AN APPRENTICE

Training happens best through shared life rather than classroom content. Use this simple and flexible pattern:

I do. You watch. We talk.

I do. You help. We talk.

You do. I help. We talk.

You do. I watch. We talk.

You do. Someone else watches.

PRACTICAL WAYS TO INVOLVE AN APPRENTICE

Invite your apprentice into the real, everyday places where leadership happens:

- Pray and prepare together before the group gathering
- Debrief after group: “What did you notice? Where was God working?”
- Invite them to lead part of the discussion or ask the opening question
- Let them help set the tone — greeting people, setting up the room, opening the night
- Ask them to follow up with someone for care, prayer, or encouragement
- Give them opportunities to facilitate the full gathering from start to finish
- Bring them into 1:1 discipleship dynamics when appropriate
- Include them in your discernment about the group's direction
- Ask them what they sense God is growing in them through the process

Training is slow, relational, and Spirit-paced — never rushed.

DEBRIEFING WITH YOUR APPRENTICE

Debriefing helps apprentices learn to see the group the way a shepherd sees it — noticing where God is moving, how people are responding, and how they themselves are growing. Keep it simple, conversational, and Spirit-led. Use one or two questions from the categories below:

Seeing God's Work

- Where did you notice the Holy Spirit at work tonight?
- What moment felt meaningful or life-giving for the group?

Seeing People

- Who seemed especially open, hurting, encouraged, or engaged?
- How did our environment help people feel safe to share?

Seeing Yourself

- What did you learn about your own leadership tonight?
- What feels like the next small step of growth for you?

Seeing the Bigger Story

- How is our group growing in discipleship, care, or mission?
- Where might Jesus be inviting us to take a next step?

RELEASING AN APPRENTICE

Over time, as you watch your apprentice grow in humility, confidence, and spiritual attentiveness, you can begin to release them into greater ownership. Releasing may look like:

- Encouraging them to **disciple someone else**
- Giving them **larger leadership moments** within the group
- Discernment conversations: “Is the Lord leading you toward starting a new group?”
- Helping them think through **timing, team, and support**
- Praying over them and **sending them with blessing and care**
- Staying connected as a friend, encourager, and fellow disciple

Releasing someone into leadership is never losing them—it is multiplying the life of Jesus in your community.

Frequently Asked Questions

I HAVE JUST COMPLETED LEADER TRAINING. WHAT COMES NEXT?

Congratulations on completing Groups Leader Training! The first step is to pray and ask the Lord to show you where and how He is calling you to be involved in the Groups ministry. Second, a groups representative will follow up with you to answer any other questions you may have after training.

DO I HAVE TO BE A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH TO LEAD A DISCIPLESHIP GROUP?

Yes. Our hope would be that all of our leaders would be members or at least intend to join the church at their earliest convenience.

DO I HAVE TO BE AN APPRENTICE IN A GROUP BEFORE I BECOME A LEADER?

No. The path to group leadership takes many forms. Often time leaders are developed through the apprenticeship process within a group, but not always. We trust the Lord to call his people into leadership through the work of the Holy Spirit and as a church we partner with God in this process.

DO I NEED TO BE IN A GROUP AT MY HOME CONGREGATION, OR CAN I BE WITH MY FRIENDS AT ANOTHER MIDTOWN CONGREGATION?

Because the pastors and elders are called to shepherd a specific congregation, we ask that our regular attenders and members join groups within their own congregations. This process helps us care for our people.

DO MIDTOWN GROUPS MEET YEAR-ROUND?

No. Our Groups meet early September to mid-May with a break for the holidays and summer.

HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN BE IN A GROUP?

Our groups are typically 4-20 people. But we never consider our groups “closed” even if they are at a full capacity. Rather, we encourage that all of our groups be “open and invitational.”

CAN MY GROUP STUDY WHATEVER WE WANT TO?

Midtown is very intentional with the material that is discussed each week in our Groups. We work with our pastoral team to prepare the leader guide and participant guide so that leaders can facilitate discussion around God's word. We streamline the process so that it can be reproduced across groups and congregations. We ask that the Group discussion is based on the guides provided.

IS IT OKAY TO HAVE A SOCIAL GATHERING INSTEAD OF AN OFFICIAL GROUP MEETING?

Part of being an intentional leader is creating a core of committed members. Building a culture of care and community within the group helps create this core. So **yes**, please build in times and opportunities to get to know each other. Find ways to gather socially as well as to serve together. These community building gatherings will enhance and enrich the group discussion around God's word in a regular group meeting.

I DO NOT KNOW THE BIBLE VERY WELL, CAN I REALLY BE A LEADER?

You do not have to be a trained pastor to be a Group leader. You need to be a follower of Jesus who trusts the Holy Spirit and wants to be with Jesus and his people. If you are willing to facilitate a conversation around scripture and grow with others in community then you really can be a leader.

IF I BECOME A LEADER, WHO DO I GO TO WHEN I HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED SUPPORT?

Every congregation cares for group leaders, though it may look different at each congregation. Your Groups representative is your first place for questions and support.

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1024 Noelton Avenue
Nashville, Tennessee 37204
(615) 269-9015
office@midtownfellowship.org

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