

JOHNCHAPTERFIFTEEN

The Life You're Meant to Live

GREAT CHAPTERS OF THE BIBLE

JOHNCHAPTERFIFTEEN

- Session 1: Abiding: How to Get Attached
- Session 2: Pruning: How to Bear Fruit
- Session 3: Living: How to Enjoy Significance
- Session 4: Sharing: How to Show Love

Great Chapters of the Bible is a video-based small group series that will take your group in a verse-by-verse study through some of the most life-changing truths in God's Word.

Each chapter of the Bible is great because God wrote it all. But there are certain chapters that speak to our hearts and minds in an especially deep way. So each volume in this series goes deep into one chapter to draw out the life change that awaits us in these great passages.



Tom Holladay

JOHNCHAPTERFIFTEEN: The compassionate clarity of Jesus' teaching in this chapter has the power to radically transform every person in your group. You'll have the opportunity to encourage one another in a new way of living, give strength for facing disappointments, gain refreshing comfort, and give hope for sharing the Good News. As you begin this study, imagine Jesus saying, "Come walk through the vineyard with me, let me show you how to really live!"

RELIGION / Christian Life / Personal Growth



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GREAT CHAPTERS OF THE BIBLE

JOHNCHAPTERFIFTEEN

The Life You're Meant to Live

TAUGHT by TOM HOLLADAY

TAUGHT by TOM HOLLADAY
A four-session, video-based study for small groups

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GREAT CHAPTERS OF THE BIBLE

JOHNCHAPTER**FIFTEEN**

The Life You're Meant to Live



GREAT CHAPTERS OF THE BIBLE



JOHN CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Life You're Meant to Live

Great Chapters of the Bible
John Chapter Fifteen: The Life You're Meant to Live
Small Group Study Guide
Edition 1.0

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UNDERSTANDING YOUR STUDY GUIDE

Here is a brief explanation of the features of this study guide.

CATCHING UP: You will open each meeting with an opportunity for everyone to check in with each other about how you are doing with the weekly assignments. Accountability is a key to success in this study!

KEY VERSE: Each week you will find a key verse or Scripture passage for your group to read together. If someone in the group has a different translation, ask that person to read it aloud so the group can get a bigger picture of the meaning of the passage.

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VIDEO LESSON: There is a video lesson for the group to watch together each week. Fill in the blanks in the lesson outlines as you watch the video, and be sure to refer back to these outlines during your discussion time.

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS: Each video segment is complemented by several questions for group discussion. Please don't feel pressured to discuss every single question. There is no reason to rush through the answers. Give group members ample opportunity to share their thoughts. If you don't get through all of the discussion questions, that's okay.

LIVING ON PURPOSE: In his book, *The Purpose Driven® Life*, Rick Warren identifies God's five purposes for our lives. They are worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism. We will focus on one of these purposes in each lesson, and discuss how they relate to the subject of the study. This section is very important, so please be sure to set aside time.

PRAYER DIRECTION: At the end of each session you will find suggestions for your group prayer time. Praying together is one of the greatest privileges of small group life. Please don't take it for granted.

A Tip for the Host

The study guide material is meant to be your servant, not your master. The point is not to race through the sessions, but to take time to let God work in your lives. It is not necessary to “go around the circle” before you move on to the next question. Give people the freedom to speak, but don’t insist on it or make it mandatory. Your group will enjoy deeper, more open sharing and discussion if people don’t feel pressured to speak.

HOW TO USE THIS VIDEO **CURRICULUM**

Follow these steps for a successful small group meeting:

- Open your group meeting by using the Catching Up sections of your study guide.
- Watch the video lesson together and follow along in the outlines in this study guide. Each video lesson is about fifteen minutes long.
- Complete the rest of the discussion materials for each session, including the Outline and Discovery Questions. Be sure to review the Living on Purpose section that discusses how God's five purposes for our lives relate

to the subject of the study. Commit to fulfilling any assignments before your next session.

- Close your time together by following the Prayer Direction suggestions.





SESSION 1

ABIDING: HOW TO GET ATTACHED

JOHN 15:1, 4-5

Catching Up

1. If this is your first time together as a group, take a moment to get to know each other. Besides names, job, and family, you might also ask where you were born.
2. What are you hoping to get out of this study?

Key Verse

“I am the vine; you are the branches.”

JOHN 15:5 (NIV)

JOHN CHAPTER FIFTEEN

John 15:1, 4-5



Watch the video lesson now and take notes in the outline.
Refer back to the outline during your group discussion.

John 15 is about three relationships:

- Our relationship with Jesus: Abide in Christ
- Our relationship with one another: Love One Another
- Our relationship with the world: Tell About Me

Jesus had a word for a satisfying, significant life: _____

Jesus showed us the way to a fruitful life: _____

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.”

JOHN 15:1 (NIV)

The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the house of Israel.

ISAIAH 5:7a (NIV)

When you recognize the truth about who you are, you are able to live the life that God wants you to live.

- God is the _____ .
- Jesus is the _____ .
- I am a _____ .

“I am the vine; you are the branches.”

JOHN 15:5 (NIV)

SESSION 1: ABIDING

A key to growth: _____

_____ !

John 15:1, 4-5

“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

JOHN 15:4-5 (NIV)

Remain: _____ !

We live a life of _____ .

The question is . . .

Where am I drawing my life from right now?



JOHN CHAPTER **FIFTEEN**

John 15:1, 4-5

Discovery Questions

1. What do you think it would have been like to be with Jesus and the disciples in the upper room the night before he died?
2. Where are some of the places that you see yourself (or others) trying to draw life from that just don't work?
3. What are some of the disciplines that help you to stay the most connected to Christ through the day?
4. To learn from our differences, how would you describe the feelings, thoughts and personal experiences of being connected to Christ, of leaning on and depending on him?

SESSION 1: ABIDING

John 15:1, 4-5

Living on Purpose: WORSHIP

Through this week, take at least one idea that you've learned from your group and use it in your daily connection with Christ. To prompt your thinking, some of the ideas that other groups have suggested are:

- A daily devotional time of prayer and Bible reading
- Taking a Sabbath day to focus on God
- Journaling your thoughts and prayers to God
- Placing cards with Scripture where you will see them throughout the day
- Praying the first few minutes of the day when you get in the car, etc.

Prayer Direction

Have someone pray a prayer of thanksgiving for God as the gardener and Jesus as our vine.

Pray for each other's requests.







SESSION 2

PRUNING: HOW TO BEAR FRUIT JOHN 15:2-3

Catching Up

1. Talk about any experiences from the past week when you tried new or different ways to stay connected to God throughout the day.
2. What's your favorite fruit?

Key Verse

“He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.”

JOHN 15:2 (NIV)

JOHN CHAPTER FIFTEEN

John 15:2-3



Watch the video lesson now and take notes in the outline. Refer back to the outline during your group discussion.

Jesus takes the time to make this as CLEAR AS POSSIBLE.

- You **CANNOT** bear fruit unless you remain in Christ.
- You **WILL** bear fruit—much fruit—if you remain in Christ.

I will be _____ !

“He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.”

JOHN 15:2 (NIV)

Pruning reduces _____ .

Three ways vines are pruned:

Cut _____ the dead wood.

Cut _____ the fruiting branches.

Cut _____ next year’s fruiting branches.

The Father has only one criteria for pruning.

How can I get the _____ out of this branch?

SESSION 2: PRUNING

John 15:2-3

Pruning produces _____ .

Some of God's pruning tools are:

- His Word
- Our daily circumstances
- Our major struggles
- Our relationships

“You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you”

JOHN 15:3 (NIV)



JOHN CHAPTER FIFTEEN

John 15:2-3

Discovery Questions

1. What fruit have you seen God produce in your life?

2. Are you struggling with . . .
 - Continuing to do what's finished?
 - Trying to do too much?
 - Not preparing for the future?

3. How could your small group help you face a season of pruning that you might be going through right now?

4. Which of God's pruning tools do you see most frequently being used in your life?
 - ☐ His Word
 - ☐ Your daily circumstances
 - ☐ Your major struggles
 - ☐ Your relationships
 - ☐ Other

SESSION 2: PRUNING

John 15:2-3

Living on Purpose: DISCIPLESHIP

Find someone that you can encourage by sharing the principle of God's pruning this week. Many times the best way to take a truth into our soul is by sharing it with someone else.

Prayer Direction

Pray for one another's growth in faith, thanking God for his continued work to make you more like Christ in your actions and your character.

Pray for each other's requests.





SESSION 2: PRUNING

John 15:2-3

SESSION 3

LIVING: HOW TO ENJOY SIGNIFICANCE

JOHN 15:7-17

Catching Up

1. Did last week's study on pruning cause you to see a circumstance differently this week?
2. Did you have an opportunity to share this truth with someone else?
3. How would you describe a life of significance?

Key Verse

"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

JOHN 15:8 (NIV)

JOHN CHAPTER FIFTEEN

John 15:7-17



Watch the video lesson now and take notes in the outline. Refer back to the outline during your group discussion.

Jesus tells us three things will happen when we are attached:

1. My _____ abide in you.

“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

JOHN 15:7–8 (NIV)

When you pray prayers that are answered:

- God is glorified.
- You are bearing MUCH fruit.
- Others see that you are a disciple of Jesus.

2. You abide in my _____.

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.”

JOHN 15:9–10 (NIV)

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”

JOHN 15:12 (NIV)

SESSION 3: LIVING

John 15:7-17

How do I abide in his love?

Obey Jesus _____ .

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.”

JOHN 15:13–17 (NIV)

3. My _____ abides in you.

“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

JOHN 15:11 (NIV)

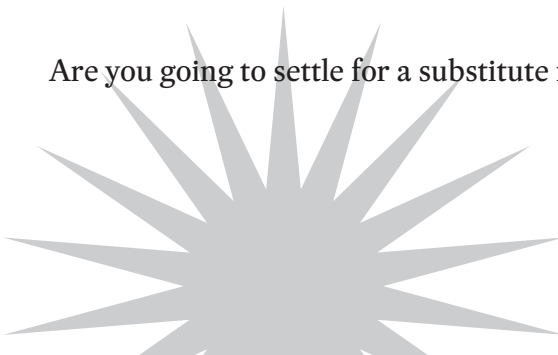
Jesus had a joy that could endure the _____ .

He wants to fill your life with that quality of joy.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

HEBREWS 12:2 (NIV)

Are you going to settle for a substitute for joy?



JOHN CHAPTER **FIFTEEN**

John 15:7-17

Discovery Questions

1. How has God's Word given you life? How have you been able to give life to others through God's Word?
2. Talk together about how it makes you feel to hear that Jesus loves you enough to call you his friend, to lay down his life for you.
3. What are some of the most popular substitutes for joy that you see people settling for?
4. How would you describe the experience of genuine joy that we have in Jesus?
5. How would you like to see yourself growing in God's Word, in love and/or in joy?

SESSION 3: LIVING

John 15:7-17

Living on Purpose: FELLOWSHIP AND MINISTRY

How could you express the love of Christ by serving someone this week? Talk in your group about whether there is someone that you could serve together.

Prayer Direction

If your group has more than eight members, break into subgroups of three or four for your prayer time. This will give each of you more opportunity to share and pray together.

Pray that Jesus will keep each of you abiding and growing in God's Word, in love, and in joy.

Pray for each other's requests.







SESSION 4

SHARING: HOW TO SHOW LOVE
JOHN 15:18–27

Catching Up

1. Talk about how you experienced the fruit of God's Word, God's love, or God's joy in your life this last week.
2. Talk about ways that you may have experienced disapproval, rejection, or persecution for your faith.

Key Verse

“They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.”

JOHN 15:21 (NIV)

JOHN CHAPTER FIFTEEN

John 15:18-27



Watch the video lesson now and take notes in the outline. Refer back to the outline during your group discussion.

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.”

JOHN 15:18–19 (NIV)

As you abide in Christ, people will react to you like they reacted to _____ .

What is “the world?”

The term is used in three ways in the Bible:

- The created world
- All of the people in the world
- The world system without God

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

ROMANS 12:2 (NIV)

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

1 JOHN 2:15–17 (NIV)

SESSION 4: SHARING

John 15:18-27

How do I handle negative reactions to my abiding in Christ?

1. Don't take it _____ .

"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first."

JOHN 15:18 (NIV)

2. Don't try to _____ .

"If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."

JOHN 15:19 (NIV)

Believers CAN'T "fit in."

- We are holy.
- We are light.
- We are being transformed.

3. Don't try to _____ rejection.

"Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also."

JOHN 15:20 (NIV)

4. Remember that rejection is not _____ .



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John 15:18-27

5. Respond with _____ .

“They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father.”

JOHN 15:21-24 (NIV)

Compassion because:

- They don't know the Father.
- They have no excuse for their sin.

Persecution is someone shouting _____ !

6. Don't look for the _____ .

“But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason.’”

JOHN 15:25 (NIV)

Here's what people believed about believers when John was written:

- They want to overthrow the government.
- They are cannibals.
- They're immoral.
- They are arsonists.
- Their faith ruins families.

It's not a difference of _____ .

It's a difference in our _____ .

SESSION 4: SHARING

John 15:18-27

7. Trust the _____ .

“When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.”

JOHN 15:26 (NIV)

8. _____ about Jesus.

“And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.”

JOHN 15:27 (NIV)

Testify is an imperative—a command.

- Times of persecution are also times of proclamation.
- A persecution without a clear witness given is a _____ persecution.

We can respond to the world’s hatred by . . .

- Blending in
- Fighting back
- Compassionately telling the truth



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John 15:18-27

Discovery Questions

1. What helps you to focus on Jesus in the midst of criticism or rejection?
2. How do you resist the temptation to fit in when you're with a group that is caught up in selfish pursuits?
3. What do you think might be the deeper need behind a criticism or persecution that you are facing right now?
4. What does it mean to you when you hear that the Holy Spirit is testifying about Jesus throughout the world?

SESSION 4: SHARING

John 15:18-27

Living on Purpose: EVANGELISM

Prayer Direction

Pray this week for those who are facing persecution around the world, that God will answer for them this prayer that Paul prayed as he faced persecution.

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.

EPHESIANS 6:19 (NIV)

If you are facing a rejection or persecution, have your group pray with you that God will use even this experience to give a testimony of the love of Jesus.



Diving Deeper

Thank you for being part of this study on John 15. Other small group studies are available at *pastors.com*.

We encourage you to continue your study of John by visiting *drivetimedevotions.com*. You will find free audio podcast devotions from Pastor Tom Holladay that will take you through the entire book of John in about ten minutes a day, five days a week, studying one chapter each week. You can listen while you're getting ready in the morning, driving to work, or out for your morning exercise.

You will also find all of the New Testament books and many Old Testament books available for free. Just have your group members listen to DriveTime Devotions each day, and then talk about it together in your weekly meetings. It's simple. It's powerful. And it's absolutely free.

A decorative graphic consisting of a vertical line and two horizontal lines intersecting to form a cross-like structure. The vertical line is positioned to the left of the text, and the two horizontal lines are positioned above and below the text.

SMALLGROUPRESOURCES

HELPS FOR HOSTS

TOP TEN IDEAS FOR NEW HOSTS

CONGRATULATIONS! As the host of your small group, you have responded to the call to help shepherd Jesus' flock. Few other tasks in the family of God surpass the contribution you will be making. As you prepare to facilitate your group, whether it is one session or the entire series, here are a few thoughts to keep in mind.

Remember you are not alone. God knows everything about you, and he knew you would be asked to facilitate your group. Even though you may not feel ready, this is common for all good hosts. God promises, *"I will never leave you; I will never abandon you"* (HEBREWS 13:5 TEV). Whether you are facilitating for one evening, several weeks, or a lifetime, you will be blessed as you serve.

1. **DON'T TRY TO DO IT ALONE.** Pray right now for God to help you build a healthy team. If you can enlist a co-host to help you shepherd the group, you will find your experience much richer. This is your chance to involve as many people as you can in building a healthy group. All you have to do is ask people to help. You'll be surprised at the response.
2. **BE FRIENDLY AND BE YOURSELF.** God wants to use your unique gifts and temperament. Be sure to greet people at the door with a big smile . . . this can set the mood for the whole gathering. Remember, they are taking as big of a step to show up at your house as you are to host a small group! Don't try to do things exactly like another host; do them in a way that fits you. Admit when you don't have an answer and apologize when you make a mistake. Your group will love you for it and you'll sleep better at night.
3. **PREPARE FOR YOUR MEETING AHEAD OF TIME.** Review the session and write down your responses to each question. Pay special attention to the **Living on Purpose** section that focuses on applying

SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

the five purposes (worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, evangelism) in each lesson. Your group will discuss how they relate to the subject of the study. This section will also help your group live what the Bible teaches, not just talk about it.

4. **PRAY FOR YOUR GROUP MEMBERS BY NAME.** Before you begin your session, take a few moments and pray for each member by name. You may want to review the **Small Group Prayer and Praise Report** at least once a week. Ask God to use your time together to touch the heart of each person in your group. Expect God to lead you to whomever he wants you to encourage or challenge in a special way. If you listen, God will surely lead.
5. **WHEN YOU ASK A QUESTION, BE PATIENT.** Someone will eventually respond. Sometimes people need a moment or two of silence to think about the question. If silence doesn't bother you, it won't bother anyone else. After someone responds, affirm the response with a simple "thanks" or "great answer." Then ask, "How about somebody else?" or "Would someone who hasn't shared like to add anything?" Be sensitive to new people or reluctant members who aren't ready to say, pray, or do anything. If you give them a safe setting, they will blossom over time. If someone in your group is a wallflower who sits silently through every session, consider talking to that person privately and encouraging them to participate. Let them know how important they are to you—that they are loved and appreciated, and that the group would value their input. Remember, still water often runs deep.
6. **PROVIDE TRANSITIONS BETWEEN QUESTIONS.** Ask if anyone would like to read the paragraph or Bible passage. Don't call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, and then be patient until someone begins. Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud.
7. **BREAK INTO SMALLER GROUPS OCCASIONALLY.** With a greater opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the study, apply more quickly what they're learning, and ultimately

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get more out of their small group experience. A small circle also encourages a quiet person to participate and tends to minimize the effects of a more vocal or dominant member.

8. **SMALL CIRCLES ARE ALSO HELPFUL DURING PRAYER TIME.**

People who are unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable trying it with just two or three others. Also, prayer requests won't take as much time, so circles will have more time to actually pray. When you gather back with the whole group, you can have one person from each circle briefly update everyone on the prayer requests from their subgroups. The other great aspect of subgrouping is that it fosters leadership development. As you ask people in the group to facilitate discussion or to lead a prayer circle, it gives them a small leadership step that can build their confidence.

9. **ROTATE FACILITATORS OCCASIONALLY.** You may be perfectly capable of hosting each time, but you will help others grow in their faith and gifts if you give them opportunities to host the group.

10. **ONE FINAL CHALLENGE (FOR NEW OR FIRST-TIME HOSTS)**

Before your first opportunity to lead, look up each of the six passages listed on the next page. Read each one as a devotional exercise to help prepare you with a shepherd's heart. Trust us on this one. If you do this, you will be more than ready for your first meeting.

MATTHEW 9:36–38 (NIV)

³⁶When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

³⁷Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

JOHN 10:14–15 (NIV)

¹⁴“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—

¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

1 PETER 5:2–4 (NIV)

²Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; ³not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1–5 (NIV)

¹If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ.

HEBREWS 10:23–25 (NIV)

²³Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:7–8, 11–12 (NIV)

⁷... but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. ⁸We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. . . . ¹¹For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, ¹²encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How long will this group meet?

This study is four sessions long. We encourage your group to add a fifth session for a celebration. In your final session, each group member may decide if he or she desires to continue on for another study. At that time you may also want to do some informal evaluation, discuss your group guidelines, and decide which study you want to do next. We recommend you visit our website at *pastors.com* for more video-based small group studies.

Who is the host?

The host is the person who coordinates and facilitates your group meetings. In addition to a host, we encourage you to select one or more group members to lead your group discussions. Several other responsibilities can be rotated, including refreshments, prayer requests, worship, or keeping up with those who miss a meeting. Shared ownership in the group helps everybody grow.

Where do we find new group members?

Recruiting new members can be a challenge for groups, especially new groups with just a few people, or existing groups that lose a few people along the way. We encourage you to use the **Circles of Life** diagram on page 46 of this study guide to brainstorm a list of people from your workplace, church, school, neighborhood, family, and so on. Then pray for the people on each member's list. Allow each member to invite several people from their list. Some groups fear that newcomers will interrupt the intimacy that members have built over time. However, groups that welcome newcomers generally gain strength with the infusion of new blood. Remember, the next person you add just might become a friend for eternity. Logistically, groups find different ways to add members. Some groups remain permanently open, while others choose to open periodically, such as at the beginning or end of a study. If your group

SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

becomes too large for easy, face-to-face conversations, you can subgroup, forming a second discussion group in another room.

How do we handle the childcare needs in our group?

Childcare needs must be handled very carefully. This is a sensitive issue. We suggest you seek creative solutions as a group. One common solution is to have the adults meet in the living room and share the cost of a baby sitter (or two) who can be with the kids in another part of the house. Another popular option is to have one supervised home for the kids and a second home (close by) for the adults. If desired, the adults could rotate the responsibility of providing a lesson for the kids. This last option is great with school-age kids and can be a huge blessing to families.

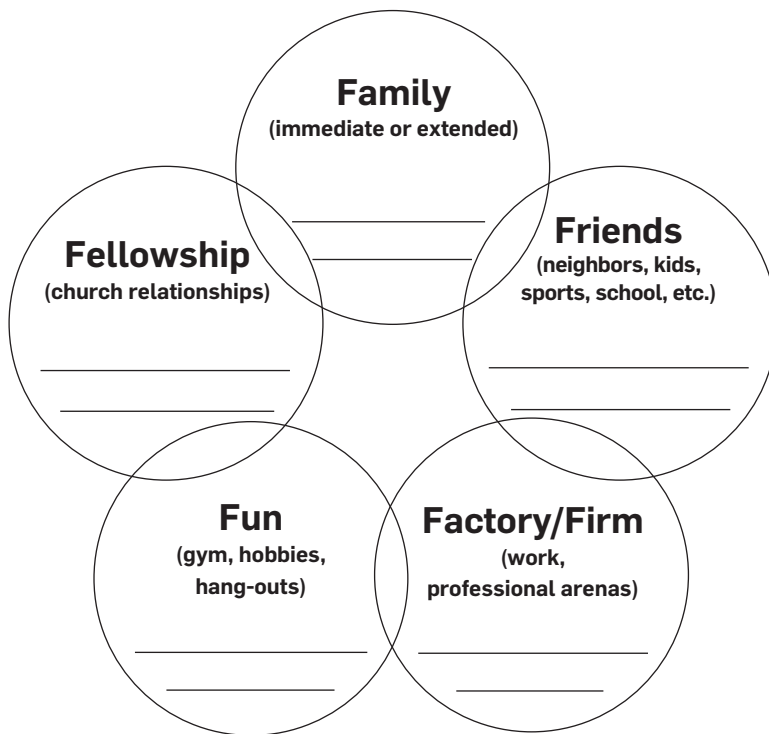


CIRCLES OF LIFE

SMALL GROUP CONNECTIONS

Discover Who You Can Connect in Community

Use this chart to help carry out one of the values in the **Group Guidelines**, to “Welcome Newcomers.”



Follow this simple three-step process:

1. List one to two people in each circle.
2. Prayerfully select one person or couple from your list and tell your group about them.
3. Give them a call and invite them to your next meeting. Over fifty percent of those invited to a small group say, “Yes!”

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GROUP GUIDELINES

It's a good idea for every group to put words to their shared values, expectations, and commitments. Such guidelines will help you avoid unspoken agendas and unmet expectations. We recommend you discuss your guidelines during Session 1 in order to lay the foundation for a healthy group experience. Feel free to modify anything that does not work for your group.

We agree to the following values:

CLEAR PURPOSE	To grow healthy spiritual lives by building a healthy small group community
GROUP ATTENDANCE	To give priority to the group meeting (call if I am absent or late)
SAFE ENVIRONMENT	To create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes)
BE CONFIDENTIAL	To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group
CONFLICT RESOLUTION	To avoid gossip and to immediately resolve any concerns by following the principles of Matthew 18:15–17
SPIRITUAL HEALTH	To give group members permission to speak into my life and help me live a healthy, balanced spiritual life that is pleasing to God



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- LIMIT OUR FREEDOM**

To limit our freedom by not serving or consuming alcohol during small group meetings or events so as to avoid causing a weaker brother or sister to stumble
(1 CORINTHIANS 8:1–13; ROMANS 14:19–21)
- WELCOME NEWCOMERS**

To invite friends who might benefit from this study and warmly welcome newcomers
- BUILD RELATIONSHIPS**

To get to know the other members of the group and pray for them regularly

OTHER _____

We have also discussed and agree on the following items:

CHILDCARE _____

STARTING TIME _____

ENDING TIME _____

If you haven’t already done so, take a few minutes to fill out the **Small Group Calendar** on page 51.

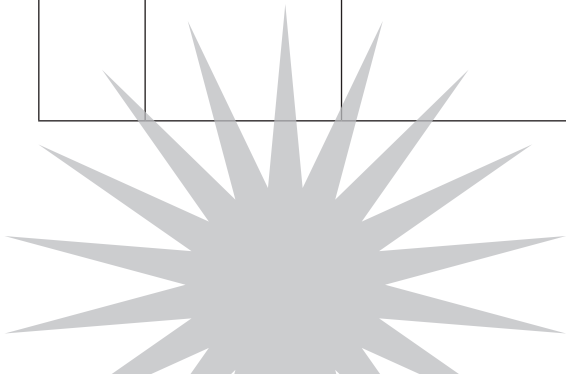
SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

SMALL GROUP PRAYER AND PRAISE REPORT

This is a place where you can write each other’s requests for prayer. You can also make a note when God answers a prayer. Pray for each other’s requests. If you’re new to group prayer, it’s okay to pray silently or to pray by using just one sentence:

“God, please help _____ to _____.”

DATE	PERSON	PRAYER REQUEST	PRAISE REPORT



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DATE	PERSON	PRAYER REQUEST	PRAISE REPORT

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SMALL GROUP CALENDAR

Healthy groups share responsibilities and group ownership. It might take some time for this to develop. Shared ownership ensures that responsibility for the group doesn't fall to one person. Use the calendar to keep track of social events, mission projects, birthdays, or days off. Complete this calendar at your first or second meeting. Planning ahead will increase attendance and shared ownership.

DATE	LESSON	LOCATION	FACILITATOR	SNACK OR MEAL
	Session 1			
	Session 2			
	Session 3			
	Session 4			
	Celebration			

JOHNCHAPTER**FIFTEEN**

SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

Foundations: 11 Core Truths to Build Your Life On

Taught by Tom Holladay and Kay Warren

This award-winning study explores essential doctrines of the Christian faith while providing a theological basis for living out God's purpose for your life. Each of the 11 studies is offered with a DVD and study guide, covering the following topics: the Bible, God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Creation, Salvation, Sanctification, Good and Evil, the Afterlife, the Church, and the Second Coming.

God's Answers to Life's Difficult Questions

Taught by Rick Warren

Pastor Rick Warren offers simple, straightforward answers from Scripture to six commonly asked questions: How can I cope with stress? How can I rebound from failure? How can I be confident in a crisis? How can I live above average? How can I overcome loneliness? How can I ever change?

To Order Product or for More
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pastors.com

ANSWER KEY

Session 1: Jesus had a word for a satisfying, significant life: <u>FRUITFUL</u> Jesus showed us the way to a fruitful life: <u>ABIDING IN HIM</u>. • God is the <u>GARDENER</u>. • Jesus is the <u>VINE</u>. • I am a <u>BRANCH</u>. A key to growth: <u>DON'T TRY TO BE THE GARDENER. DON'T TRY TO BE THE VINE. BE A BRANCH (THE BRANCHES)!</u> Remain: <u>STAY 100% ATTACHED TO ME!</u> We live a life of <u>DISCIPLINED DEPENDENCE</u>. SESSION 2: I will be <u>PRUNED!</u> Pruning reduces <u>BRANCHES</u>. Cut <u>OUT</u> the dead wood. Cut <u>BACK</u> the fruiting branches. Cut <u>FOR</u> next year's fruiting branches. How can I get the <u>MOST FRUIT</u> out of this branch? Pruning produces <u>FRUIT</u>.	SESSION 3 1. My <u>WORDS</u> abide in you. 2. You abide in my <u>LOVE</u>. Obey Jesus <u>THE WAY JESUS OBEYED GOD</u>. 3. My <u>JOY</u> abides in you. Jesus had a joy that could endure the <u>CROSS</u>. SESSION 4 As you abide in Christ, people will react to you like they reacted to <u>CHRIST</u>. 1. Don't take it <u>PERSONALLY</u>. 2. Don't try to <u>FIT IN</u>. 3. Don't try to <u>AVOID</u> rejection. 4. Remember that rejection is not <u>THE WHOLE STORY</u>. 5. Respond with <u>COMPASSION</u>. 6. Persecution is someone shouting <u>I NEED JESUS!</u> Don't look for the <u>REASON</u>. It's not a difference of <u>OPINION</u>. It's a difference in our <u>NATURES</u>. 7. Trust the <u>HOLY SPIRIT</u>. 8. <u>TELL THE TRUTH</u> about Jesus. A persecution without a clear witness given is a <u>WASTED</u> persecution.
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JOHN CHAPTER FIFTEEN

KEY VERSES

SESSION 1:

"I am the vine; you are the branches." JOHN 15:5 (NIV)

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener."
JOHN 15:1 (NIV)

The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel.
ISAIAH 5:7a (NIV)

"Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." JOHN 15:4–5 (NIV)

SESSION 2:

"He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." JOHN 15:2 (NIV)

"You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you." JOHN 15:3 (NIV)

SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

SESSION 3:

“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” JOHN 15:8 (NIV)

“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” JOHN 15:7–8 (NIV)

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.” JOHN 15:9–10 (NIV)

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”
JOHN 15:12 (NIV)

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.” JOHN 15:13–17 (NIV)



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“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” JOHN 15:11 (NIV)

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. HEBREWS 12:2 (NIV)

SESSION 4:

“They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.” JOHN 15:21 (NIV)

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.” JOHN 15:18–19 (NIV)

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. ROMANS 12:2 (NIV)

SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”

1 JOHN 2:15–17 (NIV)

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.”

JOHN 15:18 (NIV)

“If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.”

JOHN 15:19 (NIV)

“Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.”

JOHN 15:20 (NIV)



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“They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father.” JOHN 15:21–24 (NIV)

“But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason.’” JOHN 15:25 (NIV)

“When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.” JOHN 15:26 (NIV)

“And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.” JOHN 15:27 (NIV)

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