



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

Firstly, you will notice that at the start of each lesson there are three important bits of information. These will be the basic tools you need to lead the study.

All Scripture will appear in this BLUE colour. All Scripture references are taken from the NIV version of the Bible unless otherwise stated.

All discussion questions are in this GREEN colour. These discussion questions are meant to help open up times of sharing in your group.

Occasionally you will see text in RED. Red text are some ideas and thoughts that you may want to use for your group.

The bulk of the text will be in BLACK. This is the script and information for your lesson. However, please do not stick to the script word for word. The information is there just to serve as a guideline. Please feel free to lead or facilitate the discussion in the way which GOD is leading you.

**Call To Community:
Active Community
Greg Dickie
3 July 2022**

Getting-to-Know-One-Another Questions:

- What is your favourite pop song?
- What's your idea of a fun evening?

Study Guide:

In our message series, we are exploring what it means to respond to Jesus' call to community.
Question:

Why do we gather as community? Why do we gather as church?

- What do you think? Why do you gather as church?

Theologian Mark Strom, answers the above question as follows:

“The most common answer is ‘to worship’. [he says] Yet the New Testament never gave that answer... Some propose that we meet for evangelism. But again the New Testament disappoints us. The consistent answer is that we meet to build each other up in our faith through pointing each other to Christ in prayer, scripture, song, teaching and prophecy etc. (e.g. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 14:26; Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 3:15-16; Hebrews 11:24-25). To say that we meet explicitly for worship would be like saying that we meet to be Christian. They are one and the same since our whole lives are worship (Romans 12:1-2; Colossians 3:17).”

According to Strom and the Bible passages he references, we gather together to encourage each other and to build one another up. For some of us, this biblical purpose for gathering might come as a surprise.

“I don't think the thought of serving one another is honestly how we tend to approach church. I want to be a little provocative and suggest that in the modern age with fancy facilities, polished worship, professional pastors, the choice of many churches to go to, and limited time as church members, we have sometimes settled for less than the Biblical picture of meeting to ‘build one another up.’ And by ‘we’ I mean all of us: clergy and congregants; pastors and people.”

- Does the biblical purpose for gathering surprise you? Why or why not?
- Why do you think we often settle for less than the Biblical picture of meeting to ‘build one another up’?
- What would happen if people at Lifezone Church would go deeper in using their gifts to build one another up?

We often have settled for less than that purpose of building one another up and serving one another. We approach church as consumers where our question is “What does the church have to offer to me?” instead of asking “What do I have to offer to this group of people?”

You can't contribute to the spiritual growth of others if all you are doing is trying to take for yourself. We can only truly encourage each other in our faith when we forget ourselves for a moment and selflessly serve one another, as Christ has served us.”

[Read Acts 2:44-47:](#)

“ 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

This is our earliest picture of the New Testament church, and it is both compelling and intimidating.

- What do you find compelling about this earliest “snapshot” of Christian community that we have?
- What do you find intimidating?
- How did this first Christian community use their gifts to build each other up as the body of Christ?
- How does this picture of the early Christian community contrast with our often held consumer approach?

The second great commandment is to love your neighbour as yourself. There is no genuine Christianity without a commitment to lovingly serving others and giving of all that you have to meet the needs of others, just as Christ gave all that he had to meet our deep need for forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

- What sort of feeling(s) does this statement evoke in you? What might those feelings reveal?

The use of gifts

The apostle Paul spends large chunks of his letters to the New Testament churches urging them to love one another and humbly serve one another. He also helpfully highlights the kinds of gifts God gives us so that we are equipped to meet one another’s needs.

Read the following two Bible passages:

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 “ 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.”

Romans 12:6-8 “ 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

- What are the various gifts listed in the Bible passages and how do you see those gifts meeting needs?
- How can those various gifts build others up in your community group?
- Share with each other what spiritual gifts you believe you have.
- Encourage each other by naming the gifts you see in them. [Refer to 1 Corinthians 12:7 which makes clear that every Christian has at least one spiritual gift. Use this time to encourage each other.]

Paul’s listing of spiritual gifts in the above passages, notes:

“I love this little list because it ranges from the supernatural (prophecy) to the quite practical (giving) to the emotionally supportive (compassion). It’s an eclectic list. I think it shows just how

diverse the gifts of God are, and how everyone is gifted one way or another to meet the needs of others. To fully be the body of Christ we need everyone to use their gift – which is what Paul goes on to say in the Corinthian passage by speaking of many members yet one body, and how no one gift or member is more important than any other.”

Ben Paisley, a Christian writer, who says: “Every believer has a portion of grace.”

“The body of Christ needs you to use that portion of grace for it to be complete, and you need to use that grace in order to grow in faith and fulfil your calling as a Christian. Paul would say: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (1 Corinthians 12:7). The common good – the community as a whole – needs your contribution; it needs you to use the gifts that God has given you.”

- Have you ever thought that your gift is needed? How does that make you feel?
- How are you stewarding your spiritual gifts?

The priesthood of all believers

The use of our gifts to minister to other people is part of a concept that is sometimes called the priesthood of all believers. In essence, this means that we are all ministers and that when we all minister to one another using our gift, the body of Christ flourishes and is built up.

“I have often wanted to remove the distinction that we make between pastors and non-pastors because ideally we all minister. Something is fundamentally wrong with the church when most of the ministry is done by professional pastors.”

- From your perspective, what is this getting at?

Read Ephesians 4:11-13

“ 11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

According to scripture, those who are apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists – in other words those with some kind of occupational ministry calling – are given to the body of Christ to “equip the saints for the work of ministry.” This is the passage that underpins our church mission of helping people Live for Jesus and Share His Love. Pastors are here to help you minister.”

- What are your thoughts on that “pastors are there to help you minister?”

Challenge:

“Jesus said to his disciples before his departure, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” (John 13:34). We can come here week after week and hear sermon after sermon and edge no closer to the kind of community Jesus intends to create among his followers. Or, we can take seriously the call of Jesus to love one another, and wade into one another’s lives with authentic vulnerability, a readiness to serve, and a willingness to be known.”

Be encouraged “Don’t settle for an individualistic consumer approach to church where you take what pleases you while hiding your true self and the gifts God has given you. Take the plunge commit to a community where you are known and loved, and can’t hide. Then contribute to that community because your brothers and sisters in Christ need you, just as you need them.”

Prayer:

Take some time to respond in prayer. Let [1 Peter 4:8-11](#) guide you as you pray: “ [8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.](#)”