

N E X T

S T E P

L I F E

LEADER GUIDE





**Group Leader Guide**  
for the  
**“NEXT STEP LIFE” Series**  
by  
Clay Smith

I want to thank you for being willing to lead a NEXT STEP LIFE group. This is an important emphasis in the life of our church. We are hoping and praying for hundreds of people to take a next step toward Jesus Christ. Our goal is to have every child, student, and adult be asked and answer the question, "**What is your next step?**"

Our purpose is to introduce people to the NEXT STEP LIFE concept. The NEXT STEP LIFE concept is helping people understand that they always have a next step to take with Jesus. Each week we will help members of your group identify common next steps. The next steps will focus around the different vision points that guide Alice Drive. There will also be an opportunity for the members of your group to report each week how they are doing in taking their next step.

Why are we doing this? Researchers tell us that adults' and students' behavior changes when they are influenced by a specific behavioral challenge; and when they share that challenge out loud with others. The goal for your group is to create a platform to discuss specific next step behaviors and for people sharing next steps with other members of the group. Each week group members will have the opportunity to report back the results of their taking their next step.

The format of each week follows a similar pattern. If appropriate we would ask you to introduce yourself to the group. Then use the introductory question to help get discussion started. The introductory question will ask group members to report their progress with next steps over the last few days. A video providing teaching from myself will be given to each group. It contains about 10 minutes of teaching. Then you will want to follow the Participant Guide and this Group Leader Guide to guide your group interaction.

## **Helpful Tips**

Let me offer you some helpful tips:

1. When you come to a question that asks people to identify their next step be sure that you identify your own next step first before the group. This will normalize that everyone has a next step.
2. Make sure that you touch on all the common next steps. I am providing more material than you can cover. More important than covering all the material is touching each common next step. You can use the material provided to focus on the specific needs of your group.
3. Encourage everyone to participate. In every group there are people who will be eager to participate and people who will be reluctant to participate. Do your best to draw out those who are shy. This may be done with a simple technique of saying, "Martha, what do you think a next step might be for someone?"

4. If someone wants to dominate the group and talk too long, feel free to interrupt them. Most of us were taught that interrupting someone is rude. We must recognize, however, that some people are not self-regulating. They will not stop talking until we interrupt them. A helpful phrase might be: "Frank, I know you have many thoughts to share, but time is a factor. Can I ask you to hold those thoughts and let's allow everyone to share first?"
5. Allow the tension of silence. Some of the questions we will be asking may be very personal to people. Do not feel like you have to jump in and fill the silence. If no one responds restate the question in a different way.
6. The *NEXT STEP LIFE* book offers more information in every area. You are encouraged to read each section of the book as you prepare for the lesson. Also, you can refer people to the book for further information.
7. If you run into any issues, contact Todd Fleming, Discipleship Pastor. His email is [tfleming@adbc.org](mailto:tfleming@adbc.org).
8. When people are sharing their possible next steps, you will want to listen to them first, then clarify what they are saying. For example, someone might say I need to read my Bible more. That's a good next step, but it needs the clarification of specifics. You would want to follow that up with a question, "When should you start?" Let them set a start date. Then ask them if they have a Bible reading plan. If not you can offer the suggestions that are found in the *NEXT STEP LIFE* book.

9. There will be a temptation for people to want to keep their next steps very abstract. Always steer them to a tangible action. A tangible action involves a specific behavior at a specific time.
10. Keep moving. Your group may bog down in a peripheral question. You may have to say, "Let's set that question aside and we'll return to it at the end if we have time."
11. Someone in your group may share something that is very personal and painful to them. When this occurs, the group may not know how to respond. If this happens in your group, the best response is to stop the discussion and offer to pray for that person at that moment. Pray for their specific need and pray that God would heal them and provide for them. After you pray then resume the discussion.
12. Pray for members of your group out loud. I might suggest to you that you pray at the end of each session for everyone and for their next step.
13. If your group is large (over 12), adapt the material and work in several small groups. If I were leading this with a group of 12 or more, I would have everyone divide into groups of four. I would encourage husbands and wives not to be in the same group. I would then put the questions to them and let them respond in the smaller group as they move through the material. Likewise, members of the group can commit to pray for each other at the conclusion of the group.

If you have a question come up in your group and you don't know the answer or don't know how to respond, please contact me! My email is [wsmith@adbc.org](mailto:wsmith@adbc.org). If I do not know the answer, I'll find it.

I want you to dream for a moment. What would happen if everyone in your group took a next step toward Jesus Christ in the next four weeks? Imagine the spiritual transformation in your group! Imagine the changed lives. Imagine how it would change workplaces. Imagine how our church would exponentially deepen its spiritual life.

You are the point person for helping this kind of spiritual transformation occur. I can tell you from my own life that when spiritual transformation occurs in the life of the leader, the group cannot help but also be transformed.

I am praying for you to have a great experience and for many lives to be touched for Jesus Christ as you help people discover the NEXT STEP LIFE.





# SESSION ONE / KNOW JESUS

Leader's Preparation: Read chapters 1 - 6 in the *NEXT STEP LIFE* book.

Pray for the members of your group prior to class.

The first session begins with an overview of the NEXT STEP LIFE. You will be encouraging people to identify common next steps and you will want to encourage the members in your group to take those steps.

The NEXT STEP LIFE is built on two main ideas:

- 1. We all have a next step to take toward Jesus.**
- 2. We all have a next, next step to take after our next step.**

**Big Idea: We never stop moving toward Jesus.**

The participants are given an opening question that invites them to either reflect on the message (if most of your group members have heard the message prior to meeting in the group); or asking the question "What's the difference between knowing about someone and knowing someone?" After you introduce yourself, share this opening question.

The first step discussed in the NEXT STEP LIFE is the most important. **The most important step is for a person to know Jesus.** As you present these spiritual truths to the members of your group many of them will have taken these basic steps. Remind them that sharing their experiences helps them re-energize those experiences. Remind them that others can learn from their journey.

*John 17:3 - Now this is eternal life: That they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*

This verse teaches us about **eternal life**. Eternal life is the life of the ages. It is an interactive life with God and Jesus. Eternal life begins at the moment a person receives Jesus Christ. This changes the person's concept of death, life and the afterlife.

The next key word in the verse is **know**. This is the Greek word *gnosis*. It means that you are actively relating to that which is known. We can know about someone; that is abstract knowledge. To actually know something or someone, however, we must interact with the object or the person; we must experience it. When we put these two concepts together we are taught that eternal life only occurs when we experience the one true God through Jesus Christ. The only way to experience the true God is to embrace Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Chosen One, the one who comes to fulfill God's mission of reconciling people with himself.

Participants will be invited to reflect on how they have experienced God/Jesus at work in their lives. Allow two or three members to share their experiences.

## COMMON NEXT STEPS TO KNOWING GOD/KNOWING JESUS

**The first common step to knowing Jesus is to explore the meaning of life.**

Everyone seeks to know the answer to “Why do I exist?” and “Do I matter?” Often, people have the idea that they are not allowed to have questions at church. We want to assure the group that this is a safe place for people to ask questions.

*Luke 11:10 – For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; the one who knocks, the door will be open.*

Jesus invites people to ask, seek and knock. The promise of Jesus is that if you are seeking, you will find the answers. In the Bible, everyone who seeks God, discovers him.

The Participant Guide will offer three questions. Do not feel compelled to ask all of them. Select one. If you select the first question, invite people to think about why people don't find God. Be careful not to let people pile on unbelievers. You may have a silent unbeliever in the group.

If you choose the second question: "What do you think are people's most common questions about God?", what people will wind up sharing are actually their common questions about God. This will provide you with insight into the spiritual maturity level of your group.

Remind the members of your group that it is acceptable for them as believers to periodically revisit the meaning of life. They may need answers to the question "why?" They may need to know that they matter.

**The second common next step is for people to decide for Jesus.** Please emphasize that deciding for Jesus means that you have made an intentional choice to follow him. Even Jesus followers often are confused of what it means to believe in Jesus.

*John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

This well-known verse is “the gospel in miniature (Martin Luther).” The key word is **believes**. Belief is taking action with all of who you are because you accept something as true. What Jesus affirms to us in John 3:16 is God loves the world and shows this by the giving of his one and only Son. If we accept this as true and then if we take action with all of who we are, we have entered into eternal life, life with the Father, and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. If you accept that God loves the world and God gives his son Jesus you are responding positively to the invitation to do life with God and Jesus. You are acting on his truth.

The Participant Guide will invite people to offer the answers to two possible questions. Again, do not feel the requirement to use both questions. Both questions are aimed at getting the members of your group to think through the process of how one believes. Look for the core elements of belief: Confession of sin, request for forgiveness, request to be part of God's family (adoption), and the commitment to follow Jesus.

**The third common next step is baptism.** Baptism is a sign of an inward spiritual story. It is the story of how God has changed a person's life.

*Acts 8:36/38 - as they traveled along the road they came to some water and the Eunuch said "Look here is water! What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Phillip and the Eunuch went down into the water and Phillip baptized him.*

A note on this passage: Verse 37 is omitted from most modern translations. It is present in the King James translation. Why is verse 37 omitted? In the most ancient and reliable manuscripts we have of the Book of Acts, verse 37 is absent. More recent translations have elected to stick with the oldest copies of Acts that we have. Do not allow your group to get sidetracked from the main point of the story. The main point of the story is baptism. If they have questions about textual criticism, refer them to me and I can explain in greater detail.

The main point of this story is the Eunuch was eager for the sign of the story. He wanted to participate in the story of Jesus so he requested baptism. The Participant Guide will encourage you to ask people to think about why the Ethiopian Eunuch wanted to be baptized. Many of the people in your group may have already been baptized. It will be helpful for them to reflect on the parallels between their baptism and the baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch. There also may be people in your group who have never taken that step. If they sense safety in the group, they may open up about their desire to take that next step.

**A fourth common next step is developing a life of worship.** This is seeing God at work in a person's life.

*Romans 11:36 – For from him and through him and for him are all things.  
To him be glory forever. Amen.*

This verse in Romans is a benediction. It may very well have been used as a hymn sung in the Roman church to close a service. This verse affirms that everything that we have comes from God. God is working through everything that happens in our lives. Everything that we have or will do can be for him and for his glory. This is the reason the Nicene Creed declares the purpose of the church is to glorify God. To glorify God means we give God weight in every area of our life. We see him at work and we make him the focus.

The Participant Guide will invite people to think about a time they saw God at work in their lives. It will also invite them to think about ways they could be more aware of God at work in their lives. The second question is the most important question. Being aware of God at work in a person's life may happen through something very simple, like setting an alarm on your watch every hour to remind you to think about how God has been at work in your life over the past hour.

This first session concludes by inviting people to consider where all of this points to. It all points to the underlying value that people matter to God. People can see that they matter to God by discovering that God provides answers for them, that they see his love in the giving of his son, that they bear witness to their experience with Jesus in baptism and that they worship him by seeing him at work in every part of their life.

In the Participant Guide, people will be invited to think about their next step. This is a great time for them to actually circle one of the possibilities and then discuss. Also they may need to decide what their next, next step is. It may be helpful for them to be reminded that deciding for Jesus is a once-in-a-lifetime decision, as is baptism. Living a life of worship and exploring meaning can be ongoing. Challenge your group to be willing to report back next week about what happened when they took their next step.

It's very important that everyone in your group have the opportunity to share out loud what their next step will be in the coming week.

Conclude with prayer and pray for those in your group by name and for their next step. If you are leading a large group and have broken into small groups encourage people to pray in their small groups and to pray for the person on their right.





## SESSION TWO // KNOW COMMUNITY

Leader's Preparation: Read chapters 7 - 11 in the *NEXT STEP LIFE* book.

Open this second session of your group by reintroducing yourself to the newcomers if required. Give a brief overview of the NEXT STEP LIFE. The NEXT STEP LIFE is all about identifying your next step to take toward Jesus and then taking that step.

Invite people to share what it was like for them to take a next step in this past week.

As you begin the session, remind people that last week they learned that knowledge is actively relating to what is known. It is experiencing what we know, not just knowing something abstractly. In section two, we're going to focus on knowing community.

*Ephesians 4:1–6 – As a prisoner for the Lord then I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love, make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body, one spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.*

This is a lengthy passage. I would encourage you to hit the highlights. Remind people that following Jesus is answering a call. You were called to follow him.

The call is to be completely humble and gentle. Often these qualities are missing because Jesus followers have not experienced true community in Jesus Christ. Humility and gentleness results in being patient and bearing with one another. To bear with one another's Christian brothers and sisters requires proximity. You must engage in doing life together to learn to be humble, gentle, patient, and bearing with one another in love.

Likewise, making an effort to keep the unity of the Spirit requires someone else to be united with. It is important for everyone to truly know community.

The passage finishes by reminding us that we (in this one community) share commonalities. The commonalities are:

- We have one Lord, Jesus, who is the head of the church.
- We have one faith, that Jesus Christ is the son of God and one must have a relationship with him to enter into eternal life.
- There is one baptism, a baptism that is the sign that the story of Jesus has become our story.
- There is one God and father who deserves our worship because he is the God of all.

It may be helpful for you to use the question to invite the members of the group to express a time when they felt close to a group of Jesus followers and what that was like.

**The first common step to knowing community is to be a church body member.**

*1 Corinthians 12:27 – Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is part of it.*

Jesus wants you to attach to his body, the church. Many times people will argue that it is possible to believe in Jesus without belonging to a church. It is possible, but it is not healthy. This is why every person needs to be a member of a local church body.

It may be helpful for you to clarify the distinction between being a member of a church body versus being a member of a church as an organization. Too often Jesus followers have treated membership in the church like a membership in an organization. If we see ourselves as members of an organization, we believe our participation is optional. We believe the organization needs to give to us. This is not what Jesus commanded. Jesus used the metaphor of a body. If we are members of a body, we are connected to something larger than ourselves. We depend on other parts of the body to make ourselves healthy. If one part of the body is sick, it's going to impact all of us.

If you know that someone in your group is not a member of Alice Drive, this may be a time particularly to focus on the third question in the Participant Guide. You may want to encourage them to attend Starting Point. Offer to attend Starting Point with them.

**The second common step in knowing community is to get in a group.**

Obviously, members of your group have already taken this next step!

Celebrate this.

*Matthew 18:20 – For where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them.*

This is an opportunity for you to teach what your group should be about.

A group that has Jesus as a member:

**Lives for others**

**Interacts in the study of the Bible**

**Fellowships**

**Encourages**

Using the Participant Guide, encourage all group members to take a moment and circle what they think their group is doing best of these four items. Then invite them to discuss where the group could improve.

**The third common next step is to grow a 3 AM friend.**

*Proverbs 18:24 – One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

In a group, you will meet people and you will develop acquaintances. Some of these acquaintances will turn into good friends. Some of the good friends will eventually become 3 AM friends. A 3 AM friend is one who “sticks closer than a brother.” A 3 AM friend is one you can call at 3 AM and know that they will do everything they can to help you. This kind of friendship takes time, but this kind of friendship is essential for all of us.

When you use the Participant Guide recognize this may be a sensitive area for some group members. People may long for a 3 AM friend, but not have one. Invite them to share their opinions about what a 3 AM friend would be like and what they might need to do to grow a 3 AM friendship. The main point you want to steer towards is: in order to have a 3 AM friend you must be a 3 AM friend.

**The fourth common step in knowing community is to love like Jesus.**

*John 13:34 – A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, you must love one another.*

Jesus explicitly gives a command to love. This means love is not an emotional decision. Love is a choice made in response to a command. We can love even if we do not feel.

Jesus also sets the standard of love. He tells us that we are to love each other as he has loved us. Jesus loved us by offering his life for us and by serving us. We love each other by offering our lives to each other and serving each other.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus is interested in loving people who are overlooked. This includes strangers, the neglected, orphans, the powerless, the enemy, the neighbor, and the family.

Using the Participant Guide, invite people to think about who they need to love that they may not feel love for. Invite them to circle one of the possible responses in the Guide and then answer what would be a loving thing they might do for someone like that.

All of this points to the church needs to be a place of grace. Church should be a foretaste of heaven.

*Hebrews 12:15 – See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

This means that church is to be a place where we extend grace to one another. We recognize that this is Jesus' church, not our church. We also recognize that we must do our part to extend love to those who are overlooked. We must be joined to a church body to make a difference.

While using the Participant Guide, recognize that most people in your group may have already made the decision to belong to the church. If you lead a short-term group, help the group decide if the group needs to continue or do members need to commit to helping each other find a new group once NEXT STEP LIFE ends.

Encourage people to identify their specific next step and report it back next time.

## SESSION THREE /// GROW CHARACTER

Leader's Preparation: Read Chapters 12 - 16 in the *NEXT STEP LIFE* book.

As you open the third week of your group again remind people of what it means to live the NEXT STEP LIFE. It means we are identifying common next steps and we are encouraging others to take those next steps.

This will be a good time to remind people that the first week we discussed knowing Jesus. The second week we discussed knowing community.

This week the focus is on growing character. To grow means there is a process.

The Participant Guide invites group members to share what it was like for them to take their next step during the past week. Please have everyone share.

### **What does it mean to grow character?**

*1 Peter 2:1-3 – Therefore rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you've tasted that the Lord is good.*

This passage teaches us that some things will need to go before we can grow character:

- We will have to get rid of malice: a form of angry self-centeredness.
- We will have to get rid of deceit: self-protective lies.
- We will have to get rid of hypocrisy: pretending to be someone we are not.
- We will have to get rid of envy: a deep longing for someone else's life.
- We will have to get rid of slander: competing and measuring ourselves against others.

The second thing that Peter invites us to do is to think of ourselves as newborn babies that crave something pure and wonderful. Think about this: A healthy baby never has to be taught to crave mother's milk. Once he or she tastes mother's milk, he or she knows that is what he or she has been craving his or her whole life (even if his or her whole life has only been a few minutes). It is spiritual milk or spiritual nourishment that helps us grow into our salvation.

This is a helpful picture. When we were children our parents bought clothes that were one size too big, so we could grow into them. Our salvation has an infinite size. We need to be able to grow up in it and fulfill our potential. We do this so that we can experience more of God's goodness.



The Participant Guide will invite people to think about a time they were able to stop a behavior and crave something better. Invite people to reflect on what helped them make that change.

**The first most common step to growing character is to heal hurts.**

*Isaiah 53:5 – But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

This prophecy in Isaiah is about Jesus. It speaks about Jesus' death on the cross and about his resurrection. His death on the cross and his resurrection provide the power that heals hurts. Here the Bible is using a metaphor of physical hurt to describe the hurt that touches every part of our soul. We are hurt in our decision-making, in our thoughts, our feelings, in our bodies and in our relationships.

Healing our hurts begins when we bring our hurts to God and acknowledge them before Him.

The next step to healing the hurt is to ask God to heal us. This may mean that we need to be forgiven; or we may need to forgive someone. We may need to share our hurt with a mentor who can help us better understand our hurt. We need to listen to God about possible actions we may need to take that will further our healing.

Finally, we trust that God is able to do something supernatural. The healing of hurt ultimately is a supernatural event. Counseling is useful. Counseling's limitation, however, is that it is not a supernatural experience. God can supernaturally heal a soul.

In the Participant Guide, people will be encouraged to name their hurt. They will be encouraged to write the hurts down. It will be helpful if some members of the group will share some of their hurts. You may want to pause your group at this moment and pray for those who have shared a hurt that needs to be healed.

**A second common next step in this area is training.** You need to train to a new way of life. You need to train your soul to make different decisions, have different feelings, different thoughts, different ways of relating and different ways of living.

*1 Timothy 4:7 – Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.*

How you think and what you believe matters. You can believe things that are wrong and it will keep your soul stuck and sick. That is why Paul teaches Timothy, his protégé, to have nothing to do with things that are false, even if they are familiar.

Paul encourages Timothy to train himself to be godly. We can train ourselves to be like Jesus. To be like Jesus is our highest goal and will result in our deepest happiness.

There are two basic steps in training. One is **prayer**: a conversation with God. Prayer is listening to God and talking to God.

The other basic training that all believers need to do is **study**. We need to learn about God through nature and through scripture.

The Participant Guide will invite group members to consider two questions. The second is the most important. Encourage your group members to share out loud which of the two basic training steps they most need to focus on: Prayer or Bible study?

**The third most common step is the step of specific training.**

You will want to lightly touch on different spiritual disciplines and how they relate to needs and soul.

- If a person needs to learn to say no, they need to fast.
- If a person needs to learn to be still, they need to learn to meditate.
- If a person is tired, they need training in rest.
- If a person has a cluttered life, they need to simplify their life.
- If a person's life is too crowded, they need to train in solitude.

- If a person is too dominating, they need training in submission.
- If a person is living their life in drudgery, they need training in celebration.

Invite group members to circle one area of specific training they need to embrace. Ask them to share this out loud.

**The fourth common next step is to examine the results of healing and training.**

*Galatians 5:22-23 – But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Fruit is a natural result of a tree producing what it is made to produce. Spiritual fruit is the natural result of a healed and trained soul. When a soul is trained to crave God and old wounds have been healed, love, joy, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control are produced.

Invite people to look at the list in the Participant Guide. There is an exercise where people are invited to check their fruit. Ask them to think about two fruits that are missing from their lives. Ask them to think about selecting a training program that will help grow that fruit.

**All of this points to being like Jesus.**

*1 Peter 2:21 – To this you were called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.*

We are invited to be like Jesus.

The Participant Guide will offer people an opportunity to think about healing hurts, training or checking their fruit. Ask every member of your group to identify specifically which of these three next steps is theirs and be willing to report back next week about their results.



## SESSION 4 GO SHARE

Leader's Preparation: Read Chapters 17 - 22 in the *NEXT STEP LIFE* book.

This final section begins by wrapping up the central theme of the NEXT STEP LIFE. **The central theme is to help people identify their next step toward Jesus and take that step; and to take the next, next step toward Jesus.**

This week the focus is on Go Share.

The Participant Guide will ask people to review what it was like for them to take a next step during the past week.

*Jeremiah 29:11 – For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

This word of God revealed to the prophet Jeremiah is in a chapter where God makes it clear that he wants his people to bless the city in which they live. The passage is addressed to Jews who are living in exile in Babylon. God is telling them to embrace at last the purpose he has had for them all along. His purpose for them is to share his blessings with others. They were blessed to be a blessing.

This word is not only for God's people in the Old Testament; it is also for God's people today. God has a plan for each of us. You were made for a reason. God did not make you and try to figure out a reason for you to exist. God saw a need and he made you.

The Participant Guide asks people to consider "What happens if you chase something other than God's plan?" You want to invite people to think about how there might be wreckage and pain from not following God's plan. Invite people to write down God's plan for their lives.

There are three common next steps in the area of going and sharing.

**The first common next step is to share your story.**

Every true follower of Jesus has a story. Think of your story in the simplest terms. Think of your story with Jesus as one sentence with a semicolon. A semicolon interrupts a sentence and changes its direction. Jesus is the semicolon that interrupts your life and changes your direction. Your one sentence story is what life was like before Jesus. The semicolon means Jesus has entered your life. The second half of the sentence describes your life since Jesus changed you.

Someone will need to hear your story. Challenge your group members to think about who needs to hear their story.

An example of a one sentence story with a semicolon is found in *John 9:25* -  
*He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I do not know. One thing I do know. I was blind; but now I see!"*



The Participant Guide invites group members to write their one sentence life story. An example is provided. Take a moment in the group and have everyone write their one sentence life story. Invite members who are comfortable to do so to share their one sentence story with the group.

**The second common next step in the area of going and sharing is to share your resources.**

This will be one of the toughest areas to discuss. The reason this is a difficult area is because it is often an un-surrendered area of life for your group members. It is a spiritual stronghold of darkness.

*Matthew 6:21 – For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Jesus teaching in this verse from the Sermon on the Mount is clear: your treasure and your heart are interconnected. Your treasure follows your heart. This is not a reality we can deny or pretend does not exist. People often feel that the church has no business speaking to them about money. If an objection like this comes up in your group, please remind them that this is not the church's agenda, but Jesus' agenda.

Challenge your group members to follow the Participant Guide to find out where their heart is. The Participant Guide identifies four levels of giving. They are:

1. People who give nothing.
2. People who step in and give something – but their giving is not regular or generous.
3. People who step up and give 10 percent of their income – tithing.
4. People who step out and give generously – beyond 10 percent.

Invite group members to circle where they are. Then invite their group members to share out loud where they've identified themselves. This will likely result in uncomfortable silence at first. It will be helpful if you as the group leader identify where you are. However if group members can develop enough trust and support for one another to actually admit where they are in their level of giving they may achieve a spiritual breakthrough. They may discover a new financial reality of generosity.

If your group will not share in this area, you may wish to have members of the group pair up and then share with each other where they are. For example, two members of the group pair up. One indicates that they are giving nothing while the other person indicates they need to step up and give ten percent. This simple act will help break down spiritual barriers and normalize that talking about giving is okay.

Be sure to offer grace to anyone who feels ashamed or embarrassed about their financial situation.

Please do not allow your group to be sidelined by discussions on the way church uses money or whether or not a "tithe" is biblical. The main focus in this area is to help people take the next step in sharing their resources.

**A third common next step is to share your spiritual gifts.**

*Romans 12:3-8 – For by the grace given to me I say to everyone of you: do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourselves with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each one of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 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; if it is in serving, then serve; if it is in teaching, then teach; 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.*

As a group leader you will want to emphasize the following points:

Everyone must take intentional time to think clearly about themselves. This requires they think about the faith God has given them as well as the gifts God has given them.

Each follower of Jesus Christ must serve the body of Christ, the church, with their spiritual gifts. Each has different gifts and each must fulfill their own function.

There are seven broad categories of spiritual gifts listed by Paul. The spiritual gifts are these:

**Prophecy** – An insight into God's ways.

**Service** – Meeting the needs of others.

**Teaching** – Sharing and shaping another's knowledge and understanding of God.

**Encouragement** – Being with someone so they can make progress toward Jesus.

**Giving** – Sharing what you have.

**Leadership** – Helping others make progress.

**Mercy** – Extending kindness toward wounded people.

The Participant Guide also lists these broad categories of spiritual gifts. Encourage group members to circle two gifts that they think they have. Invite group members to share how they could use their gifts.

These three common next steps in going and sharing point to the reality that everyone has a purpose. The best life a person can possibly lead will be in the center of God's will, fulfilling God's purpose for their lives.

In the Participant Guide, group members will be invited to respond and share their next step. Give each group member an opportunity to share their next step. They may need to share their story; they may need to share their resources; or they may need to share their spiritual gifts.

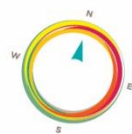
Also invite people to reflect on what their next, next step might be in this area. As the group comes to a close, set aside a small portion of time to ask group members to share what the group has meant to them. If you've made a commitment to continue as a group make sure everyone is clear about the next time for the group meeting and what you will be studying. If your group is an ongoing group, also let them know about your next area of study. If your group will disband once NEXT STEP LIFE has finished, help each group member identify which long-term LIFE Group they will try.

## CONCLUSION

I want to thank you for your service as a group leader in this great adventure. My hope is that you have been blessed as you have challenged others to take their next step toward Jesus Christ. God bless you and thank you again for your leadership, wisdom, care, and shepherding of your group.



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