

# Circle Up

A 4-Part Study to Begin a Group

groupleaders



**Edition 2.0**

*Circle Up Study Guide*

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# Circle Up

## *Study Guide*

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## LEADERS

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Need some help? It's okay. We all do. We have plenty of resources to help you create a great group experience at:

[groupleaders.org/circleup](https://groupleaders.org/circleup)

## VIDEOS

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All video sessions are free on the Anthology mobile and TV apps. Search "Anthology Studies."

- **Mobile Stores:** Apple and Google Play
- **TV Apps:** Apple TV and ROKU
- **Website:** [anthology.study](https://anthology.study)

## TYPICAL GROUP MEETING

- 1 **Hang out.** *(30 minutes)*
- 2 **Watch the video.** *(15 minutes)*
- 3 **Discuss.** *(45 minutes)*
- 4 **Pray.** *(15 minutes)*



# PART 1

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## ICEBREAKER

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### What are Story Cards?

Story Cards are a way to get people talking. You'll be surprised by how the photos help people begin an easy, interesting conversation. Check them out at [groupleaders.org/storycards](https://groupleaders.org/storycards).

### If you have Story Cards...

Use the cards to help your group connect.

- 1 Spread the cards out on a table so they're visible to everyone.
- 2 Ask each person to pick a card that describes their response to this question: **Which picture best represents how you think or feel about beginning this group?**
- 3 Go around the room and have everyone explain why they picked the card they did.

## If you don't have Story Cards...

Use the following question to help your group connect: **Do any of the words or phrases listed below describe how you're feeling or thinking about this new group?**

- Excited
- Skeptical
- Optimistic
- Guarded
- Hopeful
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- "What's in this for me?"
- "This will be good for me/us."
- "My spouse made me come."
- "I hope they like me."
- "Is this worth my time?"
- "Please don't ask me to pray out loud."



NOTES

▶ **START THE VIDEO**

Turn to **Video Notes**  
on page 8.

## VIDEO NOTES

The goal of a group is to provide everyone the opportunity to pursue authentic community and spiritual growth.

Group is where you are **known** and **grown**.

**Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.**

**ECCLESIASTES 4:9–10**

*“There are things that can happen in circles that can't happen any other way. That's by design. You can't grow spiritually unless you're connected relationally. God created us for community. And you've already taken the most important first step.”*

**Life is better connected.**

**Your role:**

- 1 Show up.
- 2 Join in.
- 3 Be real.

**START DISCUSSION**

Turn to *Let's Talk About It* on page 10.



**GOAL OF GROUP:**

TO PROVIDE EVERYONE IN  
YOUR GROUP THE  
OPPORTUNITY TO PURSUE  
AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY AND  
SPIRITUAL GROWTH

**YOUR ROLE:**

SHOW UP.  
JOIN IN.  
BE REAL.



## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

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- 1 What was the best group or team you've ever been a part of? What made it so great?
- 2 Did that group or team help you grow (e.g., physically, mentally, spiritually)? If so, how?
- 3 Take a minute to individually complete the **How You Connect** activity on page 11. When you're finished, discuss the following questions as a group.

### **In order to relax and re-energize...**

*How did you rank yourself?*

*How does this play out in your life?*

### **In a group conversation...**

*How did you rank yourself?*

*In this group, how can we make sure everyone has the chance to speak?*

### **When processing new ideas...**

*How did you rank yourself?*

*In this group, how might this affect you when you are studying something new?*

### **When experiencing emotions...**

*How did you rank yourself?*

*When you're excited about something, how will the group know?*

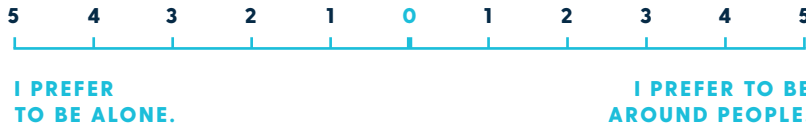
**QUESTIONS CONTINUE ON PAGE 12.**

# ACTIVITY: HOW YOU CONNECT

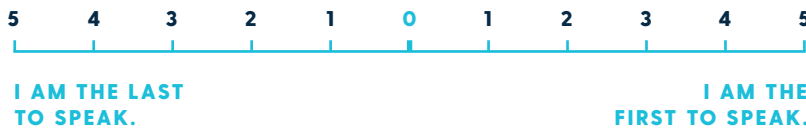


Indicate where you fall on the scales below. There are no right or wrong answers—just think about your own tendencies when it comes to connecting with others.

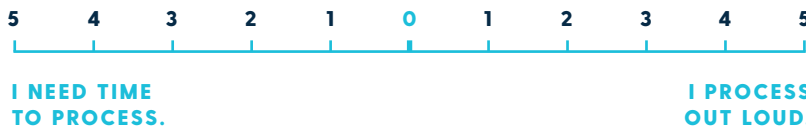
## In order to relax and re-energize...



## In a group conversation...



## When processing new ideas...



## When experiencing emotions...



- 4 It's common to end your group meeting with a prayer for the week ahead. Here are a few questions to help you consider how the group can pray for you.

*Is anything coming up this week that's exciting or stressful?*

*Is there anything you're hoping goes well or you're concerned may go poorly?*

#### **SURVEY OF PART 1 (OPTIONAL)**

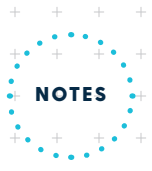
When you have a minute, complete this short survey to submit your feedback on Part 1 of *Circle Up*.



#### **INSTRUCTIONS**

**iPhone:** Launch the camera app and point your phone at the QR code. Tap the notification banner at the top of the screen to open and complete the brief survey.

**Other devices:** Download a free QR code reader to your smartphone. Open the app and point your phone at the QR code. Follow the prompts to open and complete the survey.



NOTES



**Leader Tip:**  
For more icebreaker  
options, check out:

[groupleaders.org/  
icebreakers](http://groupleaders.org/icebreakers)

 **START THE VIDEO**

# PART 2

## ICEBREAKER

Answer this question: Growing up, did you have a teacher or a mentor that impacted your life? Tell us about them.

## VIDEO NOTES

Spiritual growth is a growing faith in God validated by a growing love for God and others.

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

**GALATIANS 5:6**

**The entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."**

**GALATIANS 5:14**

Five things **common** to people growing spiritually:

- 1 Private Disciplines**
- 2 Practical Teaching**
- 3 Providential Relationships**
- 4 Personal Ministry**
- 5 Pivotal Circumstances**



THE **ONLY** THING THAT  
COUNTS IS FAITH  
EXPRESSING ITSELF  
THROUGH LOVE.

**GALATIANS 5:6**



## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

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- 1 Talk about an area of life (e.g., career, health, hobby) where you've grown significantly over time. What did you do to pursue that growth?
- 2 In the video, spiritual growth is defined as *faith in God validated by a growing love for God and others*. Does that match what you've thought about or done to pursue spiritual growth in the past? If so, how?
- 3 Take a minute to individually complete the **Gauging Your Growth** activity on page 17. When you're finished, discuss the following questions as a group:
  - In which gauge have you experienced the most growth?
  - Which gauge could use some attention?
  - If you feel comfortable sharing, how did you rank yourself on the Pivotal Circumstances gauge? Are those circumstances having a positive or negative impact on you?
- 4 What would it look like this week to prioritize your relationship with God out of love, not obligation?

QUESTIONS CONTINUE ON PAGE 18.



# ACTIVITY: GAUGING YOUR GROWTH



Indicate how much growth you're currently experiencing in the following four catalysts.



## PRACTICAL TEACHING

*Listening to sermons or podcasts, reading books*



## PRIVATE DISCIPLINES

*Reading the Bible, praying, listening to worship music*



## PROVIDENTIAL RELATIONSHIPS

*Engaging in relationships that impact your faith*



## PERSONAL MINISTRY

*Serving at your church or a local nonprofit*

How are pivotal circumstances influencing your faith in God?



## PIVOTAL CIRCUMSTANCES

*Experiencing the highs and lows of life*

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Once you complete the activity, continue with question 3.

- 5 During the next session, each group member will have the opportunity to share a little about their background as well as the people and circumstances that have been influential in their life.

Decide the order in which each of you will share.

- |                            |           |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| 1. _____<br>(Group Leader) | 7. _____  |
| 2. _____                   | 8. _____  |
| 3. _____                   | 9. _____  |
| 4. _____                   | 10. _____ |
| 5. _____                   | 11. _____ |
| 6. _____                   | 12. _____ |

- 6 How can the group pray for you this week?



**Optional homework this week:**

Use the *About Me* activity (page 19) as a tool to help you prepare to share with the group.

**SURVEY OF PART 2 (OPTIONAL)**

When you have a minute, complete this short survey to submit your feedback on Part 2 of *Circle Up*.



# **HOMEWORK: *ABOUT ME* ACTIVITY**

This activity is a tool that will help you communicate a 7–10-minute snapshot of your life to the group. You may use it as a step-by-step guide when you present. Remember, this time will pass more quickly than you think. Your goal isn't to share your entire life story, but to give your group a foundational understanding of who you are.

**Feel free to use a photo or two from your phone or tablet. If you want to go old school, print one.**



- 1** Where are you from?
- 2** What is something few people may know about you (e.g., former figure skater)?
- 3** Describe your family.
- 4** Describe your faith background.
- 5** Describe a person or event that influenced who you are today.



# PART 3

## ICEBREAKER

In order to have as much time as possible for the discussion section of today's group meeting, we recommend skipping the icebreaker and jumping right into the video.

 [START THE VIDEO](#)

## VIDEO NOTES

**Group is not the same as community.**

**The church creates groups, but you create community together.**

Loving God is best demonstrated by loving people—and many times those people are different than us.

**Be real. | Be curious.**

*“There’s a strong connection between being real and being curious. If we’re curious about others, they’re more likely to be real with us. That mutual openness and curiosity is part of community. And the church can’t create that—only you can.”*

LOVING GOD IS  
BEST DEMONSTRATED  
BY **LOVING PEOPLE**—AND  
MANY TIMES THOSE  
PEOPLE ARE DIFFERENT  
THAN US.



## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 Today, we'll each take 7–10 minutes to share about ourselves. Review the following tips and suggested outline for sharing.

### Tips for Sharing:



It's common for people to lose track of time when sharing their stories, so consider setting a timer for 7 minutes to keep the group moving along.



It will likely take more than one group meeting to hear everyone's story, so plan to continue sharing at your next meeting.

### Suggested Outline for Sharing:

- Where are you from?
- What is something few people know about you?
- Describe your family.
- Describe your faith background.
- Describe a person or event that influenced who you are today.

- 2 Go ahead and start. Remember to be real if you're sharing and to be curious if you're listening.
- 3 How can the group pray for you this week?

### SURVEY OF PART 3 (OPTIONAL)

When you have a minute, complete this short survey to submit your feedback on Part 3 of *Circle Up*.





BE REAL.  
BE CURIOUS.



# PART 4

## ICEBREAKER

Answer this question: If you won a million dollars, what would you buy for yourself?

 START THE VIDEO

## VIDEO NOTES

**Ownership is pivotal to a great group experience.**

- Own your group experience.
- Own your spiritual growth.

*“Getting off the sidelines and joining in is what owning your group experience looks like. It will take a little time and effort—and may be a little awkward at first—but it's worth it. And if you make the effort, your group experience will be so much more worthwhile.”*

**Helping other people grow their faith grows yours too.**



HELPING OTHER  
PEOPLE GROW  
**THEIR FAITH**  
GROWS YOURS  
TOO.



## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

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- 1 Have you ever had a group experience (maybe as part of a team or club) where you were *in* the group but not *part* of the group?
- 2 Here are a few ways you can take personal ownership of this group:
  - Get to know everyone.
  - Be curious. Ask questions like, “What’s going on with you this week?”
  - Offer encouragement and support in difficult times (e.g., send a text or a card, offer to bring dinner).
  - Come prepared when necessary and speak up during the discussion.

Have you ever been in a group with someone that was great at owning their group experience? What difference did it make in the overall group experience?

- 3 Samer gave a few examples of circumstances that grew his faith during his second group:
  - Watching someone admit to and overcome a lifelong struggle
  - Encouraging a group member to live out his faith in the workplace
  - Celebrating the birth of a new baby and an answered prayer

What past experiences would you say ignited your faith?

# YOU'VE OFFICIALLY COMPLETED *CIRCLE UP. WELL DONE!*

At this point, many groups decide if they are going to continue meeting for another study or for a set period of time. If you'd like help navigating a conversation about whether your group will continue, use the following questions.

- 1 Here are a few best practices successful groups have in common. Based on your personality or past group experiences, which stand out to you as particularly important?

*Successful Groups...*

- **Foster Authenticity:** The atmosphere should encourage openness and transparency among members. This is an environment where people should feel free to be themselves.
- **Provide Confidentiality:** In order to build authenticity, members must be able to trust that issues discussed within the group will not be shared outside the group.
- **Demonstrate Respect:** Group members never say anything that will embarrass their spouses or other members of the group.
- **Share Ownership:** Group members agree to encourage one another to participate in broad ownership of the group.
- **Stay Connected:** While prayer and discussion of the curriculum are key elements, the main emphasis of the group is on fostering relationships with one another and a relationship with Jesus.

QUESTION 1 CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE.





- **Provide Care:** Group members choose to be fully present and provide care and support for one another.
- **Maintain Privacy:** No guests or new members are welcome to come to the group unless all members agree to welcome the guest or add members.
- **Strive for Consistency:** Group members attend and participate on a regular basis.
- **End Well:** Group members recognize that groups have a life cycle. They know that it will take intentionality for a group to end well and to help one another take next steps to foster continuous spiritual growth.



**Leader Tip:**

People who process internally may want time to consider their choice about remaining in this group. Giving them additional time to make their decision would be beneficial. Simply ask them to inform you of their decision in the upcoming week.

- 2 Discuss the logistics of future group meetings and take a moment to identify who would like to continue being part of the group.

When would this group meet? *(Day of the week, time)*

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How long does this group intend to meet? *(Number of months)*

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Who is interested in continuing as a group? *(List the names, if helpful)*

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**3** Here are a few practical things you can do to own your group experience:

- Host group meetings in my home
- Bring snacks to group meetings
- Come prepared to participate during discussion each week
- Plan a social for our group
- Plan a service project for our group
- Get to know other group members outside of regular group meetings
- Show up consistently
- Be open and transparent about my life
- Ask good questions about others and their views
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Which are you willing to commit to? Are there any that may be challenging for you?

**4** Now decide what you'll do at your next group meeting. Talk about topics you'd like to study. Then put it on the calendar and make it happen.

### Best wishes for your newly formed group!



**Still need help selecting a leader?**

**We've created a tool on page 30 to help you navigate the process..**

#### SURVEY OF PART 4 (OPTIONAL)

When you have a minute, complete this short survey to submit your feedback on Part 4 of *Circle Up*.





# FOR A GROUP WITHOUT A LEADER

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## ADDITIONAL VIDEO NOTES: PART 1

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### WHAT MAKES A GREAT GROUP LEADER

#### A group leader...

- Is not the boss of the group.
- Keeps the group on track.
- Makes sure every group member has the opportunity to grow spiritually (even though they might be in different places).
- Does not do everything by themselves.
- Serves the group.

Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

MATTHEW 20:26, 28

**Being a group leader isn't about position or prestige. It's about posture.**

#### The best leaders are...

- Humble
- Curious
- Teachable
- Intentional

# ADDITIONAL VIDEO NOTES: PART 3

## NOMINATING A LEADER

All great groups continually ask two questions:

- 1 What is God using to grow the faith of my group members?
- 2 What can I do to support them?

A group leader keeps the group focused on those two questions.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3–4

Remember, the best leaders are...

- Humble
- Curious
- Teachable
- Intentional

You don't have to find someone in the group who is currently living out all of these qualities. But whomever you nominate for leadership should be willing to take steps to grow in these areas.





**Leader Tip:**  
Before nominating a leader, be sure everyone has the chance to share about themselves.

## ACTIVITY: NOMINATING YOUR LEADER

Choosing a leader isn't a one-size-fits-all process. Some groups have a single person or couple that is a natural fit, and they decide to nominate them for leadership. Other groups have several people capable of leading. The following questions will help you organize your thoughts as your group moves through the leader nomination process.

### REMEMBER...

- A leader ensures every group member has the opportunity to pursue spiritual growth.
- A leader isn't the boss of the group, but they do keep the group on track.
- A leader doesn't always host meetings, plan socials, or set up service projects. Those are group-owned tasks shared by everyone.

### ANSWER ON YOUR OWN.

Does anyone in my group demonstrate these qualities?

- Has a personal relationship with Jesus
- Exhibits humility, teachability, curiosity, and intentionality
- Has margin (considering other commitments like work and family)

List name(s) here:

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## DISCUSS AS A GROUP.

NOTES

- 1 Did any names from the group come to mind for leader option(s)?
- 2 If your name was mentioned, are you interested in leading?
- 3 Who will contact the church to let them know whom we've nominated as our leader?





