



CIRCLE UP
PART 2
Experiencing Church in Circles, Not Rows

Before a big game, teams circle up, review the game plan, and hear a few motivational words from the coach. As your new group kicks off, learn some ways to make sure your group experience is a great one.

ICEBREAKER:

What early memory do you have of church? Was there a special service you attended with your family? If you didn't attend church, did you know someone from school or in your neighbourhood who did?

MEMORY VERSE: Read the following verses out loud together. Then see if you can quote the verses without looking at the page.

"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." Galatians 5:6

VIDEO: Watch Circle Up Part 2 <https://www.anthology.study/circleup>

STUDY:

The most important two things about small groups are authentic community and spiritual growth. Today we will talk together about spiritual growth. Depending on your background, you may have experience in this area that may be negative or positive. For most of us, our experience is a mix of both. Regardless of your past experience, God's plan is to help you take steps forward from here. Let's explore together what that might look like.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

1. WHAT IT IS

“Spiritual growth is a growing faith in God validated by a growing love for God and others.”
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- How would you describe your spiritual growth experience from your past? Mostly negative? Mostly positive? A mix of both?

READ: Philippians 3:12-14

“I don’t mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize through which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.” NLT

- Why do you think Paul would use the analogy of a race to describe spiritual growth?
- If you were to describe your own spiritual journey using this analogy, where would you put yourself? (examples, “just starting out” “It feels like a marathon!” “I could use some help getting back up on my feet” other)

2. WHY IT MATTERS

“Why does a growing faith matter in everyday life?
God wants His relationship with me to spill over into other relationships.”
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READ: Matthew 22:37-40

“Jesus replied, ‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commands.”

- If you wanted to describe to a friend in one sentence what it means to love God, what might you say?
- God cares very much about our relationships with other people. He wants us to love them. As a group, see if you can come up with 3 examples of what it looks like to love other people.

- God wants me to love Him, but He is not basing His relationship with me on my performance. What is the difference between living to earn God's acceptance vs. simply receiving it as a gift?

3. HOW YOU GROW

5 THINGS GOD USES TO GROW OUR FAITH

1. Private Disciplines

Examples include reading the Bible on your own and praying.

READ: Joshua 1:8

"Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do." NLT

- What has been your experience with reading the Bible on your own? How about prayer?

Resource: Youversion.com (read the Bible anywhere on your device)

2. Practical Teaching

Sermons, books, videos, podcasts

- How has God used practical teaching to impact you spiritually?

3. Providential Relationships

READ: 2 Timothy 2:2

"You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others." NLT

- Who in your life has God used to impact you spiritually?

4. Personal Ministry

God wants to use my time, talent and story to play a unique part in what He is doing in the world.

READ: Matthew 28:18-20

“Jesus came and told his disciples, ‘I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always even to the end of the age.’” NLT

- When you make a decision to follow Jesus, He gives you a ministry to help other people follow Him. How have you experienced God using your time, talent and story to point others to Jesus? If you are just starting out, what might that look like?

5. Pivotal Circumstances

These are opportunities to trust God. Every time I trust God in my circumstances and see Him at work, my faith will grow.

- What pivotal experience do you sense God using in your life?

“Spiritual growth is an ongoing journey that plays out one step at a time in the context of your everyday life. Every step forward is growth.”
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- What might be a next step in your spiritual journey?
- How might your group help you to take that step?

ABOUT ME: Sharing My Story

In the coming weeks you will have opportunity to share some of your story in group. To prepare for this time, think about the following question. What would be a 5 minute version you can share with your group?

- Who are some key people and what are some key events that have influenced who you are today?

PRAYER: Take some time now to pray together in group. You can do this in groups of two or three people. Use the following questions as a guide for how to pray for each other. Aim for about 5 minutes for each person to share answers to these questions, then pray for one another. (Note: if you are uncomfortable praying out loud, it is OK to pray silently).

- What are you thankful for this week?
- What challenge are you facing? Is there some way the group can help?
- What do you sense God is inviting you to do from this study?