



GROUPS

Introduction

Nothing reaches so deeply into the human personality, tugs so tightly, as relationship. Why? For one reason, it is only in the context of connection with others that our deepest needs can be met. Whether we like it or not, each of us has an unshakable dependence on others. It's what philosopher John Donne was getting at when he said so succinctly, "No man is an island." We need camaraderie, affection, love. These are not options in life, or sentimental trimmings; they are part of our survival kit. We need to belong.

This small group discussion series, designed expressly for Christian Faith, will help you on your journey to belong – not only with people in your life, but ultimately with God.

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Month 1- Our Longing for Belonging

Month 2- Small Groups Insights (questionnaire)

Month 3- Our Compulsion for Completion

Month 4- Keeping Family Ties from Pulling Strings

Month 5- Bridging the Gender Gap

Month 6- Friends to Die For

Month 7- What to Do When Friends Fail

Month 8- Relating to God without Feeling Phony



GROUPS

MONTH ONE

Our Longing For Belonging

Intimate attachments to other human beings are the hub around which a person's life revolves.
– John Bowlby

The Point

We are made for relationship – with each other and ultimately with God.

The Word

“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 12:13 ESV

Discuss

Use these questions as a jumping off point for your discussion.

- What does “Belonging” mean to you? What do you picture in your mind?
- Do you agree that belonging is vital to growing as a person and as a Christian? Why or why not?
- We obviously have different ideas, feelings, and perspectives so how do you think we can become “one body” as believers together?
- What’s the biggest challenge to creating a sense of belonging?
- When do you feel most connected to other people and why?
- What can you do to help others feel a sense of belonging when you are with them?

Take Away

In the month ahead, consider how you can help the people you encounter to have a sense of belonging with you.

Action

Before next month’s meeting, take the Small Group insights questionnaire using the code your Facilitator will provide. Read, complete, and bring your personalized report to the next session (see www.SmallGroupInsights.com).

Prayer

Father, fill us with Your love for one another. Also help us to feel, deep down in our bones, Your amazing love for us that quenches our longing for belonging to You. Amen.



GROUPS

MONTH TWO

Small Group Insights

God loves each of us as if there were only one of us.
-Augustine

The Point

God never intended for us to live the Christian life alone. Since God created us for relationships, it's no surprise that we learn more in groups. We help each other, "as iron sharpens iron."

The Word

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35 NIV

Discuss

As a group, discuss the three exercises built into your personalized Small Group Insights Profile (you should have read this before the group time and brought your report with you to this session). The three exercises built into your report have directions and will take the bulk of your group session time to process together.

Take Away

In the month ahead, review your personal Small Group Insights Report on your own. Now that you have the feedback and interaction from this group session, consider new insights that can apply to you.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, You created each of us so uniquely – a combination of Doers, Talkers, Listeners, and Thinkers. Thank You for this incredible gift. Help us learn from each other and celebrate our differences. Amen.



GROUPS

MONTH THREE

Our Compulsion For Completion

It is only when we no longer compulsively need someone that we can have a real relationship with them. –Anthony Starr

The Point

Your relationships can only be as healthy as you are.

The Word

“Dear friend, I hope all is well with you and that you are as healthy in body as you are strong in spirit.” 3 John 1:2 NLT

Discuss

Use these questions as a jumping off point for your discussion.

- Have you ever looked for someone to complete you? Has someone looked to you to do the same for them? How might this sabotage a relationship?
- You may have heard the Greek phrase, “know thyself”; what areas of your life or personality do you need to know better and why?
- How would you describe your relationship with yourself? What words come to mind?
- 1 Corinthians 13:4 says “Love is not possessive”; why do you think this is important when it comes to love?
- The Bible says that as “iron sharpens iron”; we can help each other on the path to wholeness. Who is helping you become more complete in Christ?
- So often we think another person can complete us. But ultimately it’s our relationship with God that completes us. Why is this so tough to comprehend?

Take Away

Consider one specific character quality to work on this month that will make you healthier, more whole – and thus improve your relationships.

Prayer

We want to be the best us that we can be. Father, show us Your way to become more whole and find our completion in You. Amen.



GROUPS

MONTH FOUR

Keeping Family Ties From Pulling Strings

The shadow cast by the family tree is truly an astonishingly long one. -Maggie Scarf

The Point

The home you grew up in – for better or worse – was your “university of relationships.” It shaped who you are and the relationships you have.

The Word

“For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory.” Romans 8:16-17 NLT

Discuss

Use these questions as a jumping off point for your discussion.

- The family we grew up in teaches us to trust or distrust, to speak up or stay quiet, etc. . What lessons did you learn about relationships from your family?
- Everyone grew up with unspoken rules about life. They come from how life was lived in your family. What are some of yours?
- What was your role in your home growing up? Were you the “comedian,” the “mediator,” the “victim,” the “confronter,” or something else?
- If there was a movie made about your family of origin, what would the title be and why?
- When you think about your immediate family – the home you live in now – what three words do you want to characterize it with and why?
- What comes to mind when you think of “the family of God” and why?

Take Away

In the month ahead, consider what you can do to help create a healthy family in your home today.

Prayer

Lord, give us grace and patience for our family members. Help us to model Your love within our families. Amen.



GROUPS

MONTH FIVE

Bridging The Gender Gap

What women want: To be loved, to be listened to, to be desired, to be respected, to be needed, to be trusted, and sometimes just to be held.

What men want" Tickets for the World Series.

-Dave Barry

The Point

Men and women are different and we can learn so much from each other because of this simple fact.

The Word

"So God created humankind in his image...male and female he created them." Genesis 1:27 NRSV

Discuss

Use these questions as a jumping off point for your discussion.

- How are you typical and atypical for your gender?
- In your opinion, how do men and women see and experience the world differently?
- What do men need to know about women?
- What do women need to know about men?
- When it comes to improving communication across the gender gap, how does empathy (putting yourself in each other's shoes) factor into it? Why?
- What important life lessons have you learned from the opposite gender?
- What do you need to do, in specific terms, to better bridge the gender gap in an important relationship in your life? When can you do this?

Take Away

Imagine how your relationships would improve with the opposite gender if you took the time to see the world through their eyes a bit more.

Prayer

God, give us the capacity to emphasize, understand, and have patience with those around us. Help us bridge the gender gap in relationships where it's most needed in our lives. Amen.



GROUPS

MONTH SIX

Friends To Die For

Friendship redoubleth joys and cutteth griefs in half.
-Francis Bacon

The Point

Can you imagine life without friends? They truly do make everything easier.

The Word

“Friends come and friends go, but a true friend sticks by you like family.” Proverbs
18:24 MSG

Discuss

Use these questions as a jumping off point for your discussion.

- What’s your most enduring friendship and why has it lasted so long?
- How would you complete this: The most important thing about friendship is...?
- What qualities matter most to you in a good friend and why?
- In specific terms, what makes you a good friend to others? Are there any examples you can share?
- An English proverb says, “A friend to all is a friend to none.” What does that mean to you and do you agree?
- How can you cultivate a stronger friendship with the Holy Spirit in your life? Through conversing? Through listening?

Take Away

Consider something practical and maybe even out of the ordinary that you can do this coming month to enrich one or two of your friendships.

Prayer

God, Thank you for the friendships in our lives. We also want to be better friends with You. You make us better people. We need Your power working in our lives as we build stronger relationships with those around us. Amen.



GROUPS

MONTH SEVEN

What To Do When Friends Fail

From strong relationships often comes great grief. -Irish Proverb

The Point

When we go through tough times with friends, it can be the price we pay in order to have stronger and deeper friendships. Other times, it can mean it's time to move on from that friendship.

The Word

"If your heart is broken, you'll find God right there; if you're kicked in the gut, he'll help you catch your breath. Disciples so often get into trouble; still, God is there every time." Psalms 34:18-19 MSG

Discuss

Use these questions as a jumping off point for your discussion.

- Can you think of a time when a friend failed you? How about a time when you failed a friend? What emotions come to mind in these instances?
- Sometimes friendships fail because of neglect. Is there a friendship in your life that you need to give more attention to? Why?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how good are you at forgiving a friend who has hurt you? Why?
- It is said that rebuilding respect for each other is key to rebuilding a failed friendship. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, when is it time to move on in a friendship and go your separate ways?
- Can you think of a personal friendship that needs to be repaired? What might you do, in concrete ways, to mend it? When might you do this?

Take Away

In the month ahead, consider a failed friendship in your life and how the Holy Spirit, in practical terms, can help you cleanse it of bitterness.

Prayer

Examine our hearts, God. Show us what we can do to make a bad friendship better. Fill us with wisdom. Amen.



GROUPS

MONTH EIGHT

Relating To God Without Feeling Phony

Most Christians have enough religion to feel guilty about their sins, but not enough to enjoy life in the Spirit. –Martin Luther

The Point

We come full circle to our first session – realizing that ultimately our “compulsion for completion” is met in relationship to our Heavenly Father.

The Word

“My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?” Psalm 42:2 NIV

Discuss

Use these questions as a jumping off point for your discussion.

- How close do you feel to God right now in your life and why? When have you felt differently?
- What do you want most from your relationship with God? What does God want most from you right now?
- How would you finish the sentence “God is ...”? Why?
- What distorts, dilutes, or compromises your personal and authentic relationship with God most?
- When and where do you feel closest to God?
- Do you agree that ultimately our “compulsion for completion” is met through our relationship with God? Why or why not?

Take Away

As you ponder the journey you’ve taken in this small group series, review the insights you’ve gained and how you can continue to apply them to your life.

Prayer

God of the Universe, Thank You for Your love and grace in our lives. Thank You for creating us for relationship. Help us to receive Your love and do our very best to give it to everyone we encounter. Amen.