

Better Together



What on earth are **we** here for?

Small Group Discussion Guide
Based on the study guide by Rick Warren

Abbreviated version of original
study guide by Rick Warren.
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INTRODUCTION

From the beginning, God planned for you to fulfill His purpose in community with other people – people in your church family, small group and in the world around you. This life of purpose that God intends for each of us is not meant to be lived alone.

The goal of 40 Days of Community is to help you take the next step to spiritual maturity and a meaningful life on earth. It will deepen your understanding of how God uses other people – specifically others in your church family – for your good and your growth. It will also show you how God can use you to bless others.

Our focus for the next 40 days will be on fulfilling God's five purposes together. We will do this in two ways: First by deepening the community of love within our church family, and second by reaching out in love to the community around our church family. Both are essential for a healthy, balanced, purpose driven life.

It is no accident that you are a part of the 40 Days of Community. Before you were born, God chose you to be a difference-maker and to make an impact for good with

your life. We may feel that we cannot make a difference as individuals. But together – with your small group, with your church family - with others who are also committed to God’s purposes – we can make a difference in our culture and our world. That is the awesome power of community!

We pray that, as you do this study, you will be encouraged to grow in your faith and to make a difference in the world around you.

We are better together!

Soli Deo Gloria



Week 1

What matters most

Memory verse:

*Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are
My disciples.*

John 13:35 (NLT)



Connect Together

Share with each other:

- If you have a new group or new members, give an opportunity to introduce yourselves and share how you became part of this group. Make sure you have everyone's contact details.
- What do you want to learn from this series?
- What is God doing in your life at this moment?

Prayer:

- Ask Father to bless you as a group in this meeting and to speak to you through His Holy Spirit



Grow Together

Memory Verse:

Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are My disciples. John 13:35 (NLT)

- Read the memory verse together as a group.
- Take a moment to reflect on the meaning of this verse.

Scripture Reading:

- Galatians 5:6
- 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

DVD Session 1:

- Watch the first session as a group.



Discussion Questions

1. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 makes five radical statements about love. Fill in the missing word in the blanks below:

If I do not live a life of love:

Nothing I will matter.

Nothing I will matter.

Nothing I will matter.

Nothing I will matter.

Nothing I will matter.

2. Which one of these 5 statements strikes you the most? Why? Discuss in the group.

3. Love is defined in many ways in our culture. How would you define love?

4. The Bible describes love in different passages. Read the following passages and discuss the practical implications of this description of love.

a) Love is a command: John 13:34

b) Love is a choice: 1 Corinthians 14:1

c) Love is a conduct: 1 John 3:18

d) Love is a commitment: 1 John 14:16(b)



Serve Together

- Use the Circle of Life diagram at the end of the session to help you think of someone to whom you can show the love of Christ in this coming week.
- At the end of his message, pastor Rick ask you to begin discussing a project that your whole group can do together to reach out to your community with the love of Christ. This project will become a focus for your group over the next forty days. We will discuss this in greater detail next week, but we just want you to start thinking about it, so discuss the different possibilities with each other.

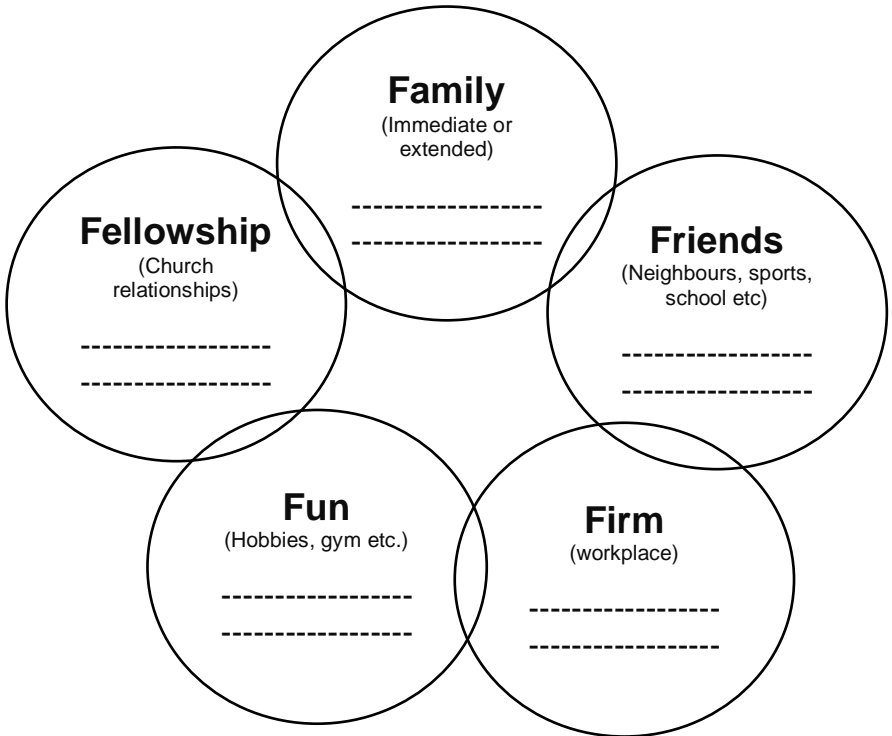


Worship Together

- Pray for your group and your congregation.
- Pray for the community that you live and work in.
- Ask Father to make you an instrument of His love.
- Ask Father to guide your group to find the project where He wants you to serve.

CIRCLES OF LIFE

Use this chart to discover who you can connect with in your community:



List one or two people in each circle.

Prayerfully select one person or couple from the list and tell your group about them.

Give them a call and connect with them.



Week **2**

Reaching out together

Memory verse:

Live wisely among those who are not believers and make the most of every opportunity.

Colossians 4:5 (NLT)



Connect Together

Share with each other:

- What is God doing in your life at this moment.
- How are you progressing with your commitment to reach out to someone in your circles of life?
- How are you progressing with the personal devotional?

Prayer:

- Ask Father to bless your group in this meeting and to make you aware of where He wants you to join Him in His work.



Grow Together

Memory Verse:

- *Live wisely among those who are not believers and make the most of every opportunity. Colossians 4:5*
- Read the memory verse together as a group.
- Take a moment to reflect on the meaning of this verse.

Scripture Reading:

- 1 Corinthians 13:4; Mark 6:36-44
- 2 Corinthians 12:9-13 and James 1:22

DVD Session 2:

- Watch the second session as a group.



Discussion Questions

1. In Mark 6:36-44 we find the miracle of Jesus feeding the five thousand. See if you can identify the steps you need to take to meet the needs of others:

Recognize the

Take

Get

Measure the

Prepare your

Be

2. Read James 1:22 and 2 Corinthians 9:13. James 1:22 says we should do what the Word says. 2 Corinthians 9:13 says our deeds should be as good as our teaching. What does it mean on a practical level? How does it relate to sharing your faith?

3. Pastor Rick said you are God’s plan for solving the world’s problems. Everyone in this group, you are it. God works through His people – through physical, tangible demonstrations of compassion, mercy and care. What do you think about this statement? Does it excite you, scare you or overwhelm you? Why?



Serve Together

This week we are going to focus the rest of the time on how we can serve together. God wants your small group to reach out to the world for Jesus. To discover how, let us follow the six steps that we identified:

1. *Recognize the need:*

What physical and spiritual needs do people have in your community? Use the time to talk about the needs that you

are aware of and as a group, decide what your project will be. (We provide a list of suggestions at the end of the study, to help you if you get stuck on ideas.)

2. Take inventory:

What talents, abilities, experiences and resources are available in your group to help meet the need you have selected?

3. Get organized:

Determine how much time your project will take and what kind of resources will be required. Plan. Figure out the timeline, divide up responsibilities and assign tasks.

4. Measure the need:

Is your project a big enough challenge to your faith? If not, why not?

5. Prepare your heart:

1 Chronicles 29:14 says that everything we have was given to us by God. We are going to offer it back to Him in prayer it when we worship together.

6. Be available:

Romans 12:1 tells us to worship God by offering our bodies to Him as a living sacrifice. We are going to offer ourselves to God during our prayer time.



Worship Together

- Thank God for what He has given you and then offer it back to Him to do with as He will.
- Offer yourselves to God. Ask Him to give you strength and courage to step out in faith as you join in your community outreach project.
- Ask Father to make your group an instrument of His love.
- Pray for each other in your group. Bring each other's prayer request to the Lord.



Before you leave:

Was anyone missing from your group this week? If someone was absent, assign someone in the group to reach out to that person, tell them they were missed and check if everything is okay. It is important for people to know that they are cared about.

SMALL GROUP OUTREACH IDEAS:

- Volunteer at a local food bank.
- Become part of the Shoebox project.
- Reach out to school chaplaincy programme and see where you can become involved.
- Offer to assist pensioners with difficult garden clean-up for their green-waste days, or assistance in the garden.
- Have a community barbeque for your neighbourhood to get to know your neighbours and what needs there are in the community.
- Speak to local community groups (community centre, charities) in your area to hear if there are programmes to get involved with
- Contact council to find out about a clean-up in a park/playground/public space and become involved.
- Volunteer for organisations like Orange Sky (homeless care), Radio Lollipop (helping sick kids in hospitals), Scripture Union (camps, school programs), YouthCARE (school mentors and Christian Values Education volunteers), Pregnancy Problem House, or Street Chaplains.

- Start a neighbourhood sports time with your children, their friends and others from the neighbourhood as a way to engage with the community.
- Volunteer at English teaching classes, often attached to local community centres (e.g., CommuniCare in Canningvale).
- Compile and hand out “dignity” packs to the homeless.
- Random acts of kindness – pack boxes with essentials or treats and deliver to people in your community.



Week 3

Belonging together

Memory verse:

Since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.

Romans 12:5(6) (NLT)



Connect Together

Share with each other:

- What is God doing in your life at this moment? Who has blessed you by meeting a practical need in your life? How did their kindness make you feel?
- How are you progressing with the personal devotional?

Prayer:

- Ask Father to bless your group in this meeting and to make you aware of where He wants you to join Him in His work.



Grow Together

Memory Verse:

- *Since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others. Romans 12:5(b) (NLT)*
- Read the memory verse together as a group.
- Take a moment to reflect on the meaning of this verse.

Scripture Reading:

- 1 Corinthians 13:7
- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- Proverbs 11:13 and Proverbs 18:24

DVD Session 3:

- Watch the third session as a group.



Discussion Questions

1. In 1 Corinthians 13:7 we find several lessons on love.
See if you can identify them:

- Love always

Protects =

- Love always

*We believeeach other and we believe
.....each other.*

- Love always

*Be about other
people's accomplishments.*

- Love always

2. Which of the four statements about love (from 1 Corinthians 13:7) spoke to you the most powerfully? Why? How can you apply these truths in your personal life this week?

3. What does it mean to really trust each other and to persevere in our relationships together? What can we do to build trust and foster hope within our small group?

4. Talk about a time when you needed the faith of your friends to lift you in prayer, or a time when God answered your prayers for someone else.

5. What role does friendship play in your faith life?



Serve Together

- How are you progressing with your small group outreach project? Spend time to catch up on your progress and motivate each other to continue. Actions steps to be taken:

- A recent survey revealed that one of the characteristics of a growing church is the atmosphere of love among members. How would you describe the atmosphere of your church? What can your small group do to help build a more loving community in your church?

- Think of a friend(s) who is not currently connected to a church. Invite them to join your group or invite them to come to church with you. Remember, over 90 percent of Christians first went to church because a friend or family member invited them.



Worship Together

- If anyone is willing, share an answer to a prayer from last week.
- Pray for your small group outreach project.
- Ask Father to make your group an instrument of His love.
- Pray for each other in your group. Bring each other's prayer requests to the Lord.

Love requires that we believe in each other and for each other. Pair up with a spiritual partner – and pray for each other during the week. (We strongly recommend that the men partner with men and the women partner with women.) Plan to check in with your spiritual partner during the week.



Before you leave:

- Was anyone missing from your group this week? If someone was absent, assign someone in the group to reach out to that person, tell them they were missed and check if everything is okay. It is important for people to know that they are cared about.
- Share the name of the person that you want to invite to church or to the small group with the rest of the group and ask them to pray that you will have the opportunity to invite them.



Week 4

Growing together

Memory verse:

Encourage one another and build each other up.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)



Connect Together

Share with each other:

- What is God doing in your life at this moment? Have you invited a friend to church? How did they respond?
- How are you progressing with the personal devotional?
- Who have been some of the greatest examples of Christian love for you?

Prayer:

- Ask Father to bless your group in this meeting and to make you aware of where He wants you to join Him in His work.



Grow Together

Memory Verse:

- *Encourage one another and build each other up. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)*
- Read the memory verse together as a group.
- Take a moment to reflect on the meaning of this verse.

Scripture Reading:

- 1 Corinthians 13:4-6
- Ephesians 4:2, 15
- Colossians 3:13
- Matthew 7:2

DVD Session 4:

- Watch the fourth session as a group.



Discussion Questions

1. Growing together requires 3 things from believers.
Name these requirements:

- Growing together requires
- Growing together requires
- Growing together requires

2. Patience, truthfulness and forgiveness can sometimes be difficult. Which part do you struggle with the most?
Why do you think that is a problem?

3. What is the difference between judging people and confronting them in love?

4. How do you respond when someone hurts you? Why is it so hard to forgive people who hurt us?

5. What are the consequences of choosing not to forgive?



Serve Together

➤ How are you progressing with your small group outreach project? Spend time to catch up on your progress and motivate each other to continue. Actions steps to be taken:

- In what ways do patience, truthfulness and forgiveness impact your ability to serve in ministry in your church? What can you do to change that?

- How does unity and love in your church affect your church's testimony to your community? What can your group do to change that?

- Is there someone in your groups or church that you need to seek reconciliation with? Why wait any longer, reach out to that person this week, with truthfulness and forgiveness.

Name of person/Situation _____



Worship Together

- If anyone is willing, share an answer to a prayer from last week.
- Pray for your small group outreach project.
- Pray for each other in your group. Bring each other's prayer requests to the Lord.
- Tell each other if you have a relationship that needs healing. This is not the time to share details or assign blame, but share as openly as you can the name or nature of the relationship. Then pray for each other, asking God to soften your hearts and give you the courage and grace to initiate the healing process.

Plan to check in with your spiritual partner during the week.



Before you leave:

- Was anyone missing from your group this week? If someone was absent, assign someone in the group to reach out to that person, tell them they were missed and

check if everything is okay. It is important for people to know that they are cared about.

- Recruit a volunteer to contact your church this week and ask for some practical suggestions as to how your small group can serve your church. You will need this information next week.



Week 5

Serving together

Memory verse:

Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2 (NLT)



Connect Together

Share with each other:

- What is God doing in your life at this moment? Have you reconciled with the person you mentioned last week?
- How are you progressing with the personal devotional?

Prayer:

- Ask Father to bless your group in this meeting and to make you aware of where He wants you to join Him in His work.



Grow Together

Memory Verse:

- *Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2 (NLT)*
- Read the memory verse together as a group.
- Take a moment to reflect on the meaning of this verse.

Scripture Reading:

- Ephesians 4:16
- Philippians 2:4
- Mark 9:35
- Hebrews 6:10 and 10:24

DVD Session 5:

- Watch the fifth session as a group.



Discussion Questions

1. What do you think are the true characteristics of a servant? Discuss in the group.

2. In the DVD session, pastor Rick mentioned four key aspects of serving together. Can you complete the statements?

Groups that serve together:

- Make themselves to serve.
- Work as a
- Think more about than themselves.

- Do every task with equal

3. Where do you find the most joy when it comes to helping others? If you are currently serving in a ministry at your church, tell the group about it.

4. The true test of a servant heart is in how you react when you are treated like a servant. Have you ever been treated like a servant? How did it make you feel?

5. The biggest roadblocks to ministry are time constraints, overcommitment, lack of interest, lack of confidence and lack of information. Which of these presents the biggest obstacle to you? What can you do to overcome these barriers in ministry?



Serve Together

- How are you progressing with your small group outreach project? Spend time to catch up on your progress and motivate each other to continue. Actions steps to be taken:

- Last week you gave a group member the task to contact the pastor to see in which ministries at your church they need help. Allow the member to give feedback. List the different tasks or ministries that needs help. Now determine what you as a group could do to meet the practical needs in your church. Pray together and ask the Lord to show you what He wants you to do.

- Now develop a plan on how you are going to meet the need you identified. Decide on action steps and a date that you will start serving together.



Worship Together

- If anyone is willing, share an answer to a prayer from last week.
- Pray for your small group outreach project.
- Pray for your group ministry project.
- Read the following prayer aloud together:

Father, we want to live our lives to please you.

We want to walk through each day depending on your power, looking for your hand and listening for the still, small voice of your guidance.

Use us for your kingdom's purpose.

Nudge us into greater acts of faith.

Call us to a deeper level of trust.

Soften our hearts, O Lord,

*so that we may live worthy of your calling and fulfill
your highest purposes for our lives.*

*We pray these things in the name of Jesus,
And for the glory of your Kingdom.*

Amen

*(Prayer adapted from NIV Worship Bible, The Corinthian
Group ©2000)*

- Pray for each other in your group. Bring each other's prayer requests to the Lord. Plan to check in with your spiritual partner during the week.



Before you leave:

- There is just one week left in our 40 Days of Community study. Start making plans to have an evening meal or a picnic with your group to celebrate what God has done in your lives through this study.
- Start praying about whether you should stay together and continue as a group.



Week 6

Worshiping together

Memory verse:

You have six days in which to do your work, but remember that the seventh day, the Sabbath, is a day of rest. On that day do not work, but gather for worship. The Sabbath belongs to the Lord, no matter where you live.



Connect Together

Share with each other:

- What is God doing in your life at this moment?
- How are you progressing with the personal devotional?
- How are you progressing with the group community project? And the ministry tasks in your church?

Prayer:

- Ask Father to bless your group in this meeting and to make you aware of where He wants you to join Him in His work.



Grow Together

Memory Verse:

- *You have six days in which to do your work, but remember that the seventh day, the Sabbath, is a day of rest. On that day do not work, but gather for worship. The Sabbath belongs to the Lord, no matter where you live. Leviticus 23:3 (GNT)*
- Read the memory verse together as a group.
- Take a moment to reflect on the meaning of this verse.

Scripture Reading:

- John 3:16, Matthew 6:21, 1 Timothy 6:17-19, Malachi 3:10, Proverbs 11:25, Acts 20:35

- 2 Corinthians 8:7,12, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, Psalm 116:12, 1 Chronicles 29:14

DVD Session 6:

- Watch the sixth session as a group.



Discussion Questions

1. In the DVD session, pastor Rick mentioned six practical reasons for giving. See if you can you complete the statements:

- Giving makes me more like
- Giving draws me to God.
- Giving is the antidote to.....
- Giving strengthens my
- Giving is an investment for.....
- Giving blesses me in

2. In the DVD session, pastor Rick mentioned four attitudes for giving. See if you can complete the statements:

- Give
- Give
- Give
- Give

3. Jesus said it is better to give than to receive. Share about a time you found this to be true in your life. How did giving make you feel?

4. Why do you think generosity is so important to God?

5. What are some practical ways you can demonstrate your gratitude to God?



Serve Together

- In this session we have talked about giving financially. But another way for us to give is using our time. What can you do to continue serving your church and community together as a group? Actions steps to be taken:

- Your host has seen the need and seized the opportunity to meet as a small group. Take a few minutes to thank your host family. Focus on the character qualities gifts and talents they bring to your group. Thank them for their hospitality. Now decide if you are going to continue as a group for the next study. Make the necessary practical arrangements.

- Finalize the date and arrangements for your group celebration dinner or picnic.



Worship Together

- Share what you have learned through the 40 Days of Community study. Have each member of the group share something that was meaningful to him or her. Now thank Father for what He has done in your lives.
- Pray for each other in your group. Bring each other's prayer requests to the Lord. Thank the Lord for any answered prayers from previous weeks.



Before you leave:

- Our congregation are having a celebration service at the end of the term and would love to hear from your group about your community project. Take a few minutes to work out the details of your presentation.



MEMORY VERSES

WEEK 1:

Your love for one another will prove to the world that you
are My disciples.

John 13:35 (NLT)

WEEK 2:

Live wisely among those who are not believers and
make the most of every opportunity.

Colossians 4:5 (NIV)

WEEK 3:

Since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each
other, and each of us needs all the others.

Romans 12:5(b) (NLT)

WEEK 4:

Encourage one another and build each other up. 1

Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)

WEEK 5:

Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law
of Christ.

Galatians 6:2 (NLT)

WEEK 6:

You have six days in which to do your work, but
remember that the seventh day, the Sabbath, is a day of
rest. On that day do not work, but gather for worship. The
Sabbath belongs to the Lord, no matter where you live.

Leviticus 23:3 (GNT)



RESOURCES

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www.zondervan.com

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