



Session 1 - Introduction

The focus of tonight is getting to know each other. Remember that beginnings are often awkward and imperfect. You may feel nervous, and that is normal. Everyone gets a little nervous at first, so take the time to break the ice: share a meal together, have a campfire, play a card game, anything that will promote being relational with those in your group. Other weeks will have more structured discussion time. This week, however, is left intentionally wide open for your group to take the time to be relational.

Getting Started:

There are many ways to bring people together and stimulate great interactions and conversations. Feel free to use an idea of your own. If you need an idea to get you started, below is a great ice breaker activity that can be adapted for any group context.

Speed Conversations- Like speed dating, but without the awkwardness.

Here's how it works:

Have each person pair up with one other person (groups of 3 will also work if you have an odd number). Set a timer for 2 minutes. Each pair (or trio), will have 2 minutes to ask and answer a random ice breaker question. When the timer goes off, everyone must find a new partner. Reset the timer and go again until everyone has had a chance to meet and talk with each person. *(For questions, see the Ice Breaker Questions tab in the Leader's Guide or create your own!)*

Let's Talk:

You could have chosen to do anything tonight, but you chose to come here. Why did you come tonight? Why do you want to be in a group?

Have you ever been a part of a small group before? What was that experience like for you? In what ways do you hope this group is similar to or different from that past experience?

Prayer:

End with a prayer for your group, thanking God for bringing you together and committing these sessions to Him as you continue to meet and learn what it means to be a Hope group.



Session 2 - Why We Gather in Small Groups

Big Idea: Small groups provide a space where spiritual growth occurs and Christ-centered relationships are formed.

Our vision is to be **internally strong** and **externally focused**– We seek to become like Jesus and help others become like Jesus. Becoming like Jesus is a lifelong journey, one that is impossible to walk alone. We need a community of other believers to help guide, challenge, and encourage us as we seek to follow Jesus. Although no group is perfect, small groups provide a space where we can grow to become more like Jesus as we connect with others in meaningful relationships!

Getting started:

Which relationships in your life are most important to you? Come up with a list of 2-3 people that are very important to you, and then share why you chose those people.

What comes to mind when you hear the phrase “meaningful relationships”? What makes a relationship meaningful?

Going to Scripture:

Read John 13:34–35, Acts 2:42–47, and Hebrews 10:24–25 as a group.

What can we learn about the importance of small groups from these Scripture passages? Why are relationships so important? Why meet in small groups?

Going Deeper:

What do you hope to gain from being a part of this group?

What fears do you have about being a part of this group?

Praying together:

Spend some time praying for each other. There are many ways you can do this, so feel free to experiment and find a way that works well for your group. If you need ideas, contact me at tim@hopechurchonline.org. I’m always here to help!



Session 3 — Becoming like Jesus (Internally Strong)

Big Idea: Becoming like Jesus begins with knowing Jesus and His Word.

Romans 8:29 and 2 Corinthians 3:18 refer to God's plan for us to become like Jesus. In order for this to happen, we must ask ourselves: What is Jesus like and how do we become like Him?

Getting Started:

Pick one word that describes Jesus. Don't overthink, just pick the first word that comes to mind when you think about Jesus. Then, go around the room and have each person share the word they chose with **no explanation** at first! After each person has shared their word, you may share the reason for choosing your word if you'd like.

The goal of a small group is not merely to get to know others on a personal level but to ultimately know Jesus more; the goal is spiritual growth. One important way we grow spiritually is by reading and discussing God's Word together.

Going to Scripture:

Read John 1:1–14. How is Jesus described in this passage? What words and phrases are used to describe Jesus and his character.

What does the passage tell us about our relationship to God through Jesus?

Read John 15:1-17

What does Jesus say about himself in this passage? What must we do to bear fruit?

Going Deeper:

How will you as a group be intentional about becoming like Jesus? Brainstorm a list of simple practices that you might use to remain intentional as a group about becoming internally strong. Remember, you don't have to use every idea, but the more ideas you come up with, the better chance you have of finding ones that best fit your group!

Praying together:

Take some time to pray for each other as you seek to become more like Jesus!



Session 4 - Functioning as God's Family (Internally Strong)

Big Idea: We are called to love and care for each other as part of God's family.

Each family has challenges, arguments, struggles, etc. The question is: How do we bear with one another through challenges? How do we operate as a family?

Getting Started:

What makes you unique? Is there a specific skill you have that most don't? Is there an experience you have had that most haven't? Take some time to find at least one thing that makes you completely unique from others in your group.

What makes you similar to those in your group? Can you find one thing that you all have in common?

Going to Scripture:

Read Romans 12:3-13

What does it mean that we are members of Christ's body?

What does genuine love look like? (v. 9-13)

Colossians 3:12-17

These verses are full of helpful instructions for how we are to interact with each other as part of God's family. As a group, list out all the actions we are called to do in this passage.

Going Deeper:

How can we be united in Christ even when we sometimes disagree with each other?

How can you use the unique gifts God has given you for the good of your group?

Praying Together:

Take time to pray for each other. Pray that God would lead and guide you as you seek to care for those around you as a part of God's family.



Session 5 — Helping Others Become Like Jesus (Externally Focused)

Big Idea: We make disciples by engaging those around us.

"Being Externally Focused is about helping others become like Jesus. You help others by engaging those around you, locally, regionally, and globally in personal, small group and corporate action to help others become like Jesus. Engaging others happens when you join in God's mission, share the hope of the gospel, help those in need, and partner with others." (From the [About Hope](#) page on our website)

Getting Started:

Think about how you came to faith in Jesus. Was there a particular person or event that you would attribute to helping you understand the truth of the gospel? How would you describe that experience to someone else?

Chances are that the reason you came to know Jesus was through the actions of another person, or a group of externally focused people. As we read God's Word together, consider this question: What would it look like to engage those around you in the same way that someone else engaged you and shared the truth of the gospel with you?

Going to Scripture:

Read John 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 3:9. From these verses, what can we learn about God's heart for the world?

Read Matthew 28:18-20. In this passage, Jesus gives us the command to go and make disciples. It is a clear and direct instruction for all believers to help others become like Jesus. Pay attention to the action words in these verses. What actions does Jesus call us to do as his followers?

Going Deeper:

What would it look like to intentionally pour into someone else's life? In other words, how can you be intentional about making disciples?

Praying together:

Pray for each other that you would have a heart for those around you who do not yet know Jesus, that you would choose to be externally focused.



Session 6 - Helping those in need (Externally Focused)

Big Idea: We bring the hope of Jesus by helping those in need.

Getting Started:

Have you ever had a time in your life when you needed help? Was there a person or a group of people that offered to help you when you needed it? How did that situation affect your life today?

Last week, we talked about God's heart for the whole world and our responsibility to engage those around us and share the hope of the gospel. This week, we focus on how our actions spread the gospel by modeling what Christ has done for us.

Going to Scripture:

Read Mark 10:42-45. In this passage, Jesus flips our understanding of greatness on its head by going against what culture would say makes someone great. How does Jesus instruct us to think about greatness?

Read John 13:1-5, 12-17

Jesus set an example for us by washing his disciples feet, a task typically performed by a servant. Although most of us will not literally wash others' feet, we can still serve others in many other ways. In what ways can you as a group "wash each other's feet"? In other words, how will you be intentional about serving one another?

Read James 1:27, Isaiah 58:6-12.

What do these verses tell us about our responsibility to serve others?

Going Deeper:

What is one simple way in which you can serve others in the same humility Jesus modeled?

In what ways can you as a group be intentional about helping those in need?

Praying together:

One simple way we can serve one another is by lifting each other up in prayer. Take some time to serve one another through prayer!



Session 7 — Living the Mission Together

Big Idea: We become internally strong and externally focused as we live on mission together.

Over the past few weeks, we have discussed the importance of small groups, how we become more like Jesus, and how we can help others become like Jesus. This week, we pull all of those things together, reflecting on what we have learned, and discussing how we will accomplish our mission together. Use this time to discuss together how you want to function as a group going forward.

Getting Started:

Reflect on the past few weeks together as a whole. What is one thing you have enjoyed about this time you have spent as a group so far?

Think about the content of this series and look back at any notes you have. Did you learn something new? Were you reminded of an important truth you had forgotten? What questions do you still have?

Is there a topic you would like to study further as a result of going through this series?

Going Deeper:

What is the purpose of this group? What is your primary focus? (i.e. studying Scripture, serving, community, accountability, etc.)

How will you stay on mission together? How will you encourage one another?

What simple practices will you participate in as a group to help each other become internally strong and externally focused?

Have you taken the time to establish roles and responsibilities?

Who will...

Host (*it can be fun to switch it up sometimes*):

Lead discussions (*consider having multiple people who are willing to lead*):

Handle communication (*this could be the group leader or someone gifted in communication*):

Plan special events, group outings, serving opportunities:

Prayer:

Pray for each other as you seek to live out the mission together!