

CELEBRATION COMMUNITIES



This booklet provides a simple structure and rhythm for your time together in a Celebration Community. The purpose of this booklet is to help steer us towards a deep, loving enjoyment of each other and God.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Your Celebration Community leader will lead your time together. If you have more than one leader in your group, alternate each time you meet.

Be aware of the amount of time you spend speaking. Practice listening by asking meaningful questions.

Remain centered around these purposes:

Love God

Learn the ways of Jesus

Live with purpose

Here are 7 simple practices from Peter and Geri Scazzero's *Emotionally Healthy Relationships* to help you set the foundation for your Community's time together:

GETTING STARTED

Speak for Yourself: We encourage you to share and use "I" statements. We are only experts on ourselves. Instead of saying, "we all struggle with forgiving," say, "I struggle with forgiving."

Respect Others: Be brief in your sharing, remaining mindful that there are limitations and others might want to share.

No Fixing, Saving, No Setting Other

People Straight: Respect people's journeys and trust the Holy Spirit inside of them to lead them into all truth – in his timing. Resist the temptation to offer quick advice as people share in the group.

Trust and Learn from Silence: It is okay to have silence between responses as the group shares, giving members the opportunity to reflect. Remember, there is no pressure to share.

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GETTING STARTED

Turn to Wonder: If you feel judgmental or defensive when someone else is sharing, ask yourself: *I wonder what brought them to this belief? I wonder what they are feeling right now? I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?*

Observe Confidentiality: In order to create an environment that is safe for open and honest participation, anything someone shares within the group should not be repeated outside of the group. However, feel free to share your own story and personal growth. Note: The exception to confidentiality is threat of or realized harm to self or harm to others, in which case you should contact a trusted professional or pastor for advice on how to proceed.

Punctuality: Resolve to arrive and end on time.

Hosting others is a tangible way of showing them your love. Are you interested in having your Celebration Community over to your space?

Here are four simple questions to ask yourself before hosting a Community in your home, adapted from Christian Pohl's *Making Room*:

HOSTING OTHERS

- (1) Is my space comfortable and a place where people can flourish?
- (2) Is my space well cared for and a place where people can feel safe?
- (3) Is my space an environment marked by peace, yet a place where pain, disappointment and sadness are still welcome?
- (4) Is my space marked by Christian traditions (i.e.: prayer, communion, etc.) where guests are welcome to join in, yet never forced?

STRUCTURE AND RHYTHM

EAT.
PRAY.
SHARE.
PRACTICE.

Use this basic rhythm to help structure your time together.

EAT (30 minutes)

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2v42 (ESV)

- + Regular meals with others can be a cornerstone to our mental health. Meals provide a context for which people feel loved and heard.
- + Take time as a Community to make meals a regular part of your rhythm together. We recommend weekly, easy-to-make meals that are cost-effective. If you feel like doing a potluck each week, this is great too!
- + Your host will provide a space during your initial gatherings, but feel free to alternate between homes. Practice being both the host and the guest.

PRAY (5 min)

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11v28 (ESV)

- + Gather as a group in a comfortable setting. Your Celebration Community leader will lead a brief time of prayer at the beginning, asking the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time together.
- + If needed, take some time to be silent before you begin. It's important to declutter our minds so that we may focus on one another and God's presence.
- + Remember that God meets us exactly where we are.

SHARE (20 min)

For where two or three are gathered in my name,
there I am. Matthew 18v20 (ESV)

- + Take a few minutes to catch up on life.
- + Take time both speaking and listening to one another. Here are some questions you could ask yourself:

What brought me joy this week?

Where did I notice God's presence?

Was there anything God revealed to me?

- + By taking the time to ask ourselves questions like these it will help us pay closer attention to our lives. It's a way of discerning the presence of God by reflecting on our daily experiences.
- + If your Community has just finished a week of practice together, how did it go? Reflecting on our experiences is important. Be honest about any barriers and limitations you came up against. Meaningful change takes time, experience, practice, community and the Holy Spirit leading and guiding us.

PRACTICE (20 min)

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. John 15v4 (ESV)

- + Your Celebration Community leader will start a time of reflection with the group. Think back on this past week's teaching. What did you learn? What did it help you take notice of in your life?
- + Talk about one action, mindset, or rhythm that you can implement into your life this upcoming week, together. Is there a practice that your group can try together that will help you create more space for a deep, loving relationship with God and others?

Ask yourself:

Am I specific in how I want to incorporate this into my life?

Where will I create space in my schedule to practice this?

How will this make God a priority in my life this upcoming week?

- + If a specific practice your Celebration Community tries resonates with you, we encourage you to make it a rule of life (see our booklet "A Rule of Life" for more information).

PRAY (15 min)

Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most. Hebrews 4v16 (ESV)

- + Spend this time in conversation with God.

Your Celebration Community leader will begin a time of prayer. It's okay to spend a couple minutes in quiet and reflective silence at the beginning. Ask yourself in these moments:

What is God saying to me?

- + Your leader will begin praying for individuals in the group. Take turns praying for each member. If everyone in your group is comfortable with laying hands on each other, feel free to do so.
- + If this is your first time in a Celebration Community, and you don't feel comfortable sharing something or praying out loud, feel free to be silent. Your Community is an opportunity and space where you can grow. You're welcome and safe here.

