

# BE GROUPS

“Belonging & Becoming”

## *An Introduction to BeGroups:*

*BeGroups are an invitation to covenantal belonging, and an experience in formation.*

Formation is not the same as information. You won't leave these sessions having learned a new framework or completed a course. What we hope is that this experience will form the way we pay attention to God and to each other - making us more attentive, more honest, more rooted in the person of Jesus and in the community of people He is gathering around us.

The series that anchors these sessions, *Become and Belong: Gather, Form, Send, Discern*, is drawn from various New Testament letters. But BeGroups are not primarily about Bible study. The goal is not to understand the letters better, though that will happen - the goal is to practice the kind of life described in them. To *become*, together, the kind of people who turn to one another when things get hard, who break bread with exuberant joy, who pray saturated in Scripture, and who boldly follow Jesus.

Each session is built around a series of practices: receiving Scripture together (Lectio Divina), conversation, a formation practice that engages your whole self, and a closing reflection (Examen) that helps you pay attention to where God has shown up in your week.

Together we'll develop *rhythms of formation* that will carry well beyond the BeGroups experience.

## BE GROUPS

# — *Formation:*

### A Note on Formation

*We become what we repeatedly do.* The early church was formed by more than shared ideas, they were formed by what they did together - how they lived together - day after day. Teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, prayer - these rhythms produced a people who belonged to one another, and who belonged to Jesus.

The practices in this guide are not religious exercises for their own sake. They are the ordinary means by which we become more like Jesus together. *The Lectio Divina* listens for His voice. *The Examen* looks for His presence. *The Intercession* extends His compassion. *The Listening* practice follows His Spirit. Each one points us to Jesus.

### Formation Virtues

Each session is anchored in a formation virtue - a quality of Jesus' character to be cultivated in us.

- Session 1: Attentiveness. *Learning to notice where God is already present.*
- Session 2: Surrender. *Learning to hold our lives with open hands.*
- Session 3: Compassion. *Learning to see what God sees.*
- Session 4: Stillness. *Learning to wait until we hear God.*

## BE GROUPS

# — *Session Format:*

### **Session Flow & Format**

**The Word: Lectio Divina** (sacred reading) A slow three-read practice of a passage of Scripture with a posture that is receptive, rather than analytical.

**Conversation** - Questions provided to help foster open dialogue and the sharing of ideas by every group member.

**Formation Practice** - Different each session, designed to engage body/mind/soul.

**Closing Reflection: Examen** - Ignatian tradition that helps us identify where we sense God's presence (consolation) and where we don't (desolation) in our everyday lives.

### **Facilitation Tips**

- Each session is designed to last approximately 90 minutes. A rough schedule is provided, but hold it loosely. If a conversation is alive, let it breathe. If a practice is landing deeply, let it run long.
- You might choose to (re)watch the message from Sunday together, or agree to come ready to discuss - decide together as a group.
- Give people space and time to participate - don't be afraid of a little silence.
- Try to include food/drink each time - nothing fancy, just something shared. A snack schedule works great!

# SESSION ONE

# GATHER

## — Introduction

The early church gathered because they belonged to each other. Not because it was scheduled or expected, but because the reflex of belonging is to *go back* to your own people, with your story, questions and life to share.

This session practices the reflex of belonging, names what we are gathering around, and invites us to pay attention to where God has already been before we arrived.

*As people settle, allow natural conversation. Don't rush to start. When you're ready, invite each person to answer one question around the table.*

*This question is from Acts 4:23 (the first thing Peter and John did after the arrest.) Keep responses brief. No need to go too deep yet. Simply share what comes to mind.*

## Opening Question:

- When was the last time you went back to 'your own people' after something hard? What did that feel like?

*5-6 Mins*

# The Word: *Lectio Devina* 15 Mins

Read the following passage three times, following the Lectio Divina guide from the introduction.

*<sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. As we came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup> they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup> Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts.*

***Acts 2:42-46***

- First read, followed by 30 sec silence - *What word or phrase caught you?*
- Second read followed by 30 sec silence - *Where does this touch your life right now?*
- Third read followed by 1 min silence - *What is the nudge? What is God inviting you toward?*
- Share briefly out loud what came to mind or heart during the reading.

# Conversation *25 Min*

Keep this dialogical, follow the flow in the room.

- Acts 2:42 describes a church that was devoted [persisted stubbornly] in four things: teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. Which of those four is most present in your life right now? Which feels most absent?
- N.T. Wright says these four marks are inseparable, remove any one and you damage the whole. Does that ring true? Where have you seen that play out, in a community or in your own faith?
- Luke says they gathered with “exuberant joy” because they weren’t trying to impress anyone. Where in your life right now are you performing rather than belonging? What would it feel like to stop?
- In his sermon, Jim asked: who are your own people? Answer that honestly. And if the answer is uncertain, name that too. It’s a real place to start from.

## *Formation Practice 20 Min*

This week's practice is learning to pray together the way Acts 4 describes; a community prayer rooted in Scripture, honesty and authenticity.

- Step 1: Name the story (5 min total) Invite each person to name, in one sentence, something they are carrying this week. Not a prayer request yet. Just a sentence. A fact. What is true in your life right now?
- Step 2: Anchor in God's character (3 min total) Before praying for any of the things named, the host/facilitator reads aloud, slowly: ***“Sovereign Lord, you made the heavens and the earth and everything in them. You hold what we just named. You are not surprised by any of it.”*** One minute of silence.
- Step 3: Pray for one another (10 min total) Go around a circle or ‘popcorn’ it - pray a short prayer, one or two sentences for what that person named. No advice in the prayer. No suggestions about what God should do. Just hold this person, this situation, this week before God.
- Step 4: Amen together (2 min) Close with one voice reading Acts 4:31 aloud as the group's collective amen: ***“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken... and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”*** Silence. Then: Amen.

## *The Examen 10 Min*

Close every session with the two questions below. Each person answers briefly. Then the host or another volunteer prays for each person by name. This can be done in smaller groups of 2-3 if it makes more sense.

- Question 1: Where did you feel most alive this week?
- Question 2: Where did you feel most drained, or most absent from God?

### *Carry into the Week*

This week: eat one meal slowly. (With no phone in sight!) Eat with people you belong to, or with someone you want to belong to. Let the meal be unhurried. Pay attention to what happens in the room when no one is performing.

This is the practice of **attentiveness**. Before the next session, write one sentence in response to this question: *'Where did I notice God this week?'* Bring it with you. You'll be invited to share it.