



# Building Community

## A Toolkit for ACF Small Groups

### Introduction

A *tool* helps you accomplish a task, build or repair something, or practice a vocation or activity. It's a means to an end. What's the purpose of the tools you'll find assembled in this toolkit? To help your small group build deeper community with the goal of growing together to be more like Christ.

Using the tools provided in this kit, you'll have the opportunity to practice and experience life in biblical community, modeled after the example provided in Acts.

*“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” ~ Acts 2:42-47 (ESV)*

Many small groups gravitate towards one or two aspects described in this passage and miss out on significant pieces of true community. When was the last time your small group served together? worshiped together? shared in communion? or shared your testimonies? Groups easily fall into a routine, never experiencing the breadth of biblical community as it was intended. We hope you'll use this toolkit to add some new practices into your small group experience. We are praying for you and we are excited to hear how God will use these experiences to grow and deepen relationships in your group as you follow Christ together!

Blessings,  
Your ACFgroups Team

### How to Use the Building Community Toolkit

Select three or four of the “tools” provided and practice them during your group time (or instead of a group meeting) over the next couple of months. After your group tries a new experience or “tool”, get feedback to determine if it is something to include in your group time on a more regular basis.

# Share Your Stories

## What does it mean to “share your story”?

Your story, sometimes called a *testimony*, is a profession or open acknowledgement of what God has done in your life, often attesting to how you came to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. Your story may also involve other parts of your faith journey once you became a Christ-follower.

*“My mouth will tell of your righteous acts; of your deeds of salvation all the day....” ~ Psalm 71:15 (ESV)*

## What are the basic parts of a testimony?

Just like in any story, your testimony about God will have a beginning, middle and end! Here are the three basic parts in most testimonies:

- Part 1: Life before Christ/your background
- Part 2: Conversion experience (when, why & how you came to commit your life to Christ)
- Part 3: Life now with Christ

jot down notes for what you would share in each of the three sections, based on your answers to the questions listed below. Optional: “Create a Compelling Story” Worksheet (see Appendix)

## What questions help you think about your story?

Take some time to reflect on how God has been working in and through you since making the decision to trust and follow Jesus. Use the questions below to help think through people and experiences that have significantly impacted your faith journey. Look for growth, turning points and themes in your life that point to God.

- When and how did you make a commitment to trust and follow Jesus?
- Who invested in you, and was anyone key in helping you understand what it means to follow Jesus?
- What was your view of God and life before you committed to Jesus? What is it like now?
- How has your worldview changed since committing to Jesus?
- What were some turning points in your life that have been central to your God story?
- Prior to following Christ, what was your identity based in, or how did you attempt to meet your needs apart from God? How did that play out?
- Where have you experienced God's blessing in your life?
- How have you seen God answer prayers?
- When/where have you felt closest to God? Farthest from God?
- What suffering or hardship have you experienced? If it happened before you were a Christ-follower, how did you try and cope? If it happened after you became a Christ-follower, how did knowing God influence your experience?

## How do you share testimonies within a small group?

Personal testimonies are confidential so remind your group members that what's shared in small group, stays in small group. Review good listening practices with your group: put away electronics, focus on the speaker, listen without judgement, and try not to interrupt. Don't forget to thank the person speaking when he/she is finished sharing.

Get creative! There are lots of ways you can incorporate sharing testimonies into small group time. Create a schedule and encourage group members to think through and write out the key points they want to share during their time.

Ideas:

- Break into groups of two and just share with the person you're paired with.
- Have one person share for 10-15 minutes at the start of each meeting (over a period of weeks) until everyone has had a chance to give their testimony.
- Enjoy a weekend retreat together as a small group to share testimonies or go for a long road trip in a minivan and take turns sharing stories as you drive!

Note: Set clear time limits on how long each person will have to share. Setting a timer is a great way to keep things on track and honor everyone's time. If you have a mixed gender small group, consider breaking into a group for men and a group for women for more intimacy in sharing your stories.

*"Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story – those he redeemed from the hand of the foe...."*  
~ Psalm 107:2 (ESV)

# Baptism

What's the big deal with baptism and why does God call us to do it? It's one of the two ordinances (or symbols) given by Jesus to help us remember his death and resurrection. (The two ordinances are baptism and The Lord's Supper.)

## Part 1 – What? and Why?

### What is baptism?

The word "baptism" means:

- To wash with water
- A ritual purification and initiation into the global Church of Christ-followers
- Separation, to split or part, new beginnings of life

Baptism is a public declaration of your decision to wholeheartedly follow Jesus. When you're "**wholehearted**," you're completely and sincerely devoted. You're determined, enthusiastic and committed. Baptism takes place after you have made a personal decision to accept Christ, His free gift of salvation, and surrendered your life to Him. You can think of it as declaring, "**I'm all in!**"

*"Baptism separates the tire kickers from the car buyers." – Max Lucado*

As you lower someone into the water, it represents being buried with Jesus in His death. As the person is raised back out of the water, it represents being raised with Christ, and it stands for new life in Christ.

Note: Because Baptism is a personal decision made once you believe, you have to be old enough to understand and receive the message of Christ. If you were baptized as an infant, it represents a decision by your parents to dedicate you to the Lord and raise you in the church, but it was not a decision of your own.

*"...Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." ~ Colossians 2:12 (NIV)*

Supporting Scripture: *Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 2:38, Acts 2:41*

### Seven great reasons to be baptized:

1. God uses the parting of the water represented by baptism to indicate new life and new beginnings.
2. Water baptism is the first step of obedience for every new believer. Order matters to God! If you've been a Christian for a long time and haven't been baptized, do it now. It's never too late.
3. Jesus was baptized. It was an act of obedience to God. If we are followers of Jesus, then we need to follow His example.
4. Jesus commanded us to be baptized and to baptize others. It's part of the disciple-making process. The pastor doesn't have to baptize everyone. As you lead others to Christ, you'll have the opportunity to baptize them!
5. It is an act of humility. It acknowledges you need Jesus.
6. It opens up new levels of intimacy with God. Why? Because it's an act of obedience and obedience leads to intimacy.
7. Baptism makes your faith public. It lets people know you are all in.

## Part 2 – How?

### Discuss baptism with your small group

Ask if anyone in the group has not been baptized after they committed their lives to Christ. Share with them the points in Part 1 and encourage them to be baptized. Adults are sometimes hesitant and people who were baptized as an infant may have questions. Help group members talk through their questions and concerns.

**Based on what we learn from the Bible, we shouldn't delay in being baptized.** The Ethiopian eunuch baptized by Philip couldn't wait to run to obedience. His example sends the message, "Don't delay! Get wet!"

*"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, 'See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?' And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him." ~ Acts 8:35:39*

### Celebrating baptism with your group: Planning steps

Is someone in your group ready to be baptized? Here are some next steps to help make this a wonderful and memorable experience for your group:

#### Before the baptism

1. Confirm the person you are baptizing has trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and that they understand the meaning of baptism.
2. Determine who they would like to have baptize them (it might be the group leader, a spouse, or mentor).
3. Share what will happen during the baptism (see below).
4. Tell them what to bring to their baptism (modest swim attire, shirt, towel, change of clothes).
5. Pick a date, time, and place for the baptism (a hot tub or pool is great).
6. Encourage them to invite others to their baptism outside of your small group.

#### During the baptism

1. Ask someone to take some pictures or record the baptism.
2. Bring everyone together and share about the meaning of baptism.
3. Pray over the person about to be baptized. Here is a simple prayer you can adapt for your purposes: *Heavenly Father, thank you for your Word that says anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; and, the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17)". Today we celebrate that new life, being made alive in Christ! God, you are not a secret to be kept! Today we get to declare before these friends and family members that we're "all in" and we believe in you! In Jesus' Name, Amen.*
4. Ask the person being baptized the following two questions:
  - Do you confess that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior?
  - Why do you want to be baptized? (This can be a simple statement of faith or a longer testimony.)
5. The person performing the baptism can raise their hand in the air and say, "I baptize you today in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." (The person being baptized should bend their knees, and the person baptizing then lowers them into the water and brings them back up.)
6. Cheer and celebrate when the person comes back out of the water. Be sure to take a group picture with those in attendance.

**After the baptism**

1. Let the church know who was baptized and when. Send this information to [groups@acfellowship.org](mailto:groups@acfellowship.org). We have a small gift we'll send to them as part of the celebration from ACF.
2. Continue to pray for the person that was baptized.

*Sources: Parts of this document were adapted from a sermon at ACF by Will Davis Jr. in January 2020 on baptism. View the message at <https://vimeo.com/382834484>.*

## Group Prayer Experience

Praying together, for each other and interceding for needs outside your group, will strengthen your relationship as a group and deepen your intimacy and love for God. Prayer should be a central part of what your group does together.

*"I am praying to you because I know you will answer, O God. Bend down and listen as I pray." ~ Psalm 17:6*

Is group prayer time something you've currently relegated to the last five minutes of your group time? Does it feel stale and routine? We encourage you to try some of these variations on group prayer!

*"So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it." ~ Hebrews 4:16*

View yourself as a coach or facilitator, helping the group learn how to pray/grow together. While you do set an example of consistent, faith-filled prayer, you should not do all of the praying! Plan simple activities (below) that facilitate people learning to pray as a group. When you see someone in your group has a passion for praying or the gifts of exhortation or faith, ask them to lead out on some of the following ideas:

- Do you have people in your group who haven't really prayed before? Teach them a simple way to pray based on the acronym ACTS - **A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving, and **S**upplication (requests). Prayer includes (**A**) adoration or praise for who God is, (**C**) confession or admission of your sin and need for God's forgiveness, (**T**) thanksgiving for what God has done, and (**S**) your requests of God.
- Plan a prayer walk through your neighborhood. As the group walks, pray for each household, known needs of the families, and any schools, churches or businesses in the neighborhood. Pray for Christ-followers in the neighborhood to be salt and light, generous, compassionate, and faithful in their witness to others. Ask God to show you what He wants to do in your neighborhood and pray into it as a group.
- Pray The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), breaking it down into individual parts and praying more specifically based on this model. Ex: Verse 9 acknowledges that God is holy so begin your time of prayer taking turns expressing adoration and praise for who God is. Continue reading each part of The Lord's Prayer, pausing to pray in the same manner.
- Write down the names of non-believing friends/family and spend time once a month (as a group) praying for those individuals to come to a saving faith in Jesus. Put the names on individual index cards and pass them out so each member prays for that specific person throughout the week.
- Pair up creating "prayer partners" that commit to praying for each other for a season, checking in with each other during the week and connecting outside of group time.
- In a couple's group, have spouses pray for each other. Encourage them to select a promise in Scripture that they want to keep praying over their spouse and marriage in the weeks to come.
- Vary when you pray during your group time. Don't hesitate to stop during meeting time to pray over a need that is shared.
- Utilize group texting to pray for each other during the week or in times of crisis. (Try the GroupMe phone app). You can also use the text thread to send out a meaningful Scripture or written prayer for the group to read.
- Pray through a psalm out loud together or another passage of Scripture. Encourage group members to personalize the passage and insert "I" or "me" where appropriate as they pray.
- Pick a passage of Scripture to pray for one another during the week (for example, Philippians

1:3-11, Colossians 1:9-14, Ephesians 3:14-19 or Ephesians 6:10-17). Your group might go a step further and memorize the passage you are praying for each other.

- As a group, select a missionary, ministry, people group, or cause to pray for. Pray through the things that stir the hearts of group members.
- It's powerful to pray all at once, "Nicaraguan style." Pray out loud (together) your individual prayers about an identified subject (such as racism in America or healing for a particular group of people). When the prayers start to die down, the prayer leader will close in prayer or move the prayer time to the next topic.
- Pray through current events. Set some ground rules for this type of prayer so that it doesn't become politicized. Focus instead on praying Scripture over situations and asking for God's direction and guidance.
- Commit to praying for our church and church leaders on a regular basis. Or, get specific and select a few church leaders and pray for their ministry areas. Go a step further and ask staff members for specific prayer requests to cover.
- Biblically, fasting and prayer often go together. Try it as a group for a period of time for something specific to the group or on behalf of someone/something you care about. Ex: pray and fast for breakthrough in an area of addiction or with a stronghold.
- Take five minutes to pray individually, asking God what He'd like the group to pray about. Then come together as a group, share what God revealed, and pray over these things.
- Facilitate a reflective prayer time in your group using the "[Prayer Time Guide](#)" (see appendix) created for a spiritual disciplines retreat at ACF.
- Invite your group to be part of the powerful prayer movement in the ACF Prayer Barn! Visit: <https://www.acfellowship.org/prayer/>

Looking for more ideas? Check out this article on facilitating meaningful group prayer: <https://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2012/facilitate-meaningful-group-prayer.html>



# Worship Together as a Group

## What is worship?

When people hear the word “worship” they often assume it means singing together at a weekend church service. Worship is so much more than this! Worship is acknowledging God's presence in your life and giving Him His rightful place. The object of our worship is God. We direct our adoration, honor and devotion to Him. Worship is our humble response to and declaration of who God is. When we come before Him with a correct posture, He shows us new things about who He is.

*“God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.” ~ John 4:24*

Worship can be both individual and corporate. Corporate worship with your small group might include an evening dedicated to celebrating and sharing where you've seen God at work recently. It might include spending time studying the attributes of God and acknowledging that there is no one like Him. Worship within your small group might also include an evening where you gather to pray and sing songs of thanks to God, taking a hike and considering the grandeur of His creation, or reading Psalms that proclaim His greatness. All of these examples are acts of worship! When we worship God, we are shifting the focus off of ourselves and our circumstances, placing the focus on God and His sovereignty.

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”  
~ Matthew 22:37*

## Need some ideas?

How do you make worship a more intentional part of your small group? Try a few of these and experience what it's like to shift your focus and praise to God and His sovereignty – you might even incorporate some of these practices into your regular weekly small group gatherings:

- **Meet outside at a park.** Circle up in chairs or on blankets and share what they notice about the surroundings; how the air feels, what they hear and smell, etc. How does nature reveal God's character? Read Psalm 19:1-6 and/or Psalm 46 out loud and reflect or share what resonates with them about God from this passage. Spend a few minutes individually praying and meditating on Psalm 46:10, *“Be still and know that I am God.”* Remember to enjoy a picnic dinner together!
- **Practice giving thanks together.** Ask each group member to complete the sentence, *“Lord, I thank you for...”* Gratitude shifts your perspective, worships God, and builds a sense of community within your group. Get creative! Fill a jar with slips of paper expressing what you are each thankful for. At the end of the month or study, empty the jar and read them aloud, giving thanks in prayer for all the things mentioned. Try asking group members to share a “praise report” of where they saw God working at the start of your meeting. Sharing answers to prayer is also a way to give thanks and worship God.
- **Share which attribute of God** is most meaningful to them right now and why. Key attributes of God: He is infinite (without limits, self-existent), omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing), omnipresent (everywhere), immutable (unchanging), self-sufficient, wise, faithful, good, just, merciful, loving, patient, trustworthy, holy, gracious, and sovereign.
- **Be a living sacrifice.** Read Romans 12:1-2 together in either the NIV or ESV translation, and then read it in The Message translation. Discuss how we worship by dedicating our every action to the Lord. Start thinking creatively about worship from this perspective – as a living sacrifice. Is it possible to worship God while helping your kids with math homework? calling a neighbor who has been on your mind, cooking your family dinner, doing yardwork etc.? Ask group members

to share specifically what it would look like to work, study, or speak as acts of worship. Invite them to share one next step to put one of their ideas into practice this week.

- **Read Psalms together.** Many of the Psalms are songs of praise. Select one to read out loud and think about how it worships God. Discuss what particular verse spoke to each group member. Psalms of praise to consider: Psalm 27, 34, 37, 56, 89, 92, 95, 96, 98, 100, 103, 111, 113, 118, 136, 139, 145, 146, 148, 150.
- **Create a playlist** for the group on Spotify for everyone to enjoy throughout the week. Include different genres of music such as country, gospel, hip hop praise, traditional hymns, classical music, choir music, instrumental or worship songs sung by mainstream music artists. When you meet together, discuss how the different types of music helped them connect with God in a new way.
- **Listen to worship music.** Begin or end your group meeting by playing a worship song from your phone or computer. Ask the group to quiet their minds, close their eyes, and think about God. They can just listen, pray, or journal any thoughts that come to mind. How did the song help focus their thoughts on Him? Did God show them anything?
- **Sing together.** Play music from your phone or computer to lead the group in worship. Having someone who can play guitar is an added bonus, but it's not necessary for your group to sing together! Try searching YouTube for familiar and favorite worship songs that include lyrics with the video. It may take a while to feel comfortable singing within the group, and that's okay! Remind them that the focus is on connecting with God and blessing Him with our worship, rather than creating a performance. Pray and even talk a little between songs to help people relax!

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship." ~ Romans 12:1*

### **Did You Know?**

ACF offers weekly worship? We gather on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11a – 12p and Wednesdays at 7pm in the Prayer Barn to sing His praises! Participate in person or via livestream. Visit: <https://www.acfellowship.org/prayer/>

*"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." ~ Colossians 3:16-17*

# Lead Your Group Through Communion

Jesus never asked His disciples to remember His birth. But He did instruct them to remember His death and resurrection. He gave the church two visible symbols (called *ordinances*) as reminders. These two ordinances are baptism and The Lord's Supper (what we also call *communion*). The Lord's Supper and Baptism don't save you. Only your faith in Christ saves you.

## What is The Lord's Supper?

- A simple act

*"...The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, (1 Corinthians 11:23)*

He didn't have some big elaborate ceremony. He didn't wear special garments or burn incense. He didn't perform any fancy rituals. The Lord's Supper is a very simple act. He took bread and He took wine and He gave it to the people there. When we take The Lord's Supper at ACF or within a small group, don't turn it into a big ritual. Just observe the elements...the bread (body) and the juice (blood).

- A symbol to remind us

*"...and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" (1 Corinthians 11:24-25)*

The bread symbolizes His body broken for us and the juice represents His blood that was shed for us on the cross. The whole purpose of The Lord's Supper is for us to remember what Jesus did on the cross.

- A statement of faith

*For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (1 Corinthians 11:26)*

When you take The Lord's Supper, you are telling everyone, "I've put my trust in Christ." We look back at the work Jesus has already done at the cross and we look forward to Jesus' return to this earth. Jesus didn't stay dead after the crucifixion. He is risen and is coming back again!

## Who should take communion?

Only those who have put their trust in Jesus. If someone has not accepted what Jesus did for them on the cross, the symbols are meaningless to them.

*"So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord...For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves." ~ 1 Corinthians 11:27, 29 (NIV)*

## How do I prepare for The Lord's Supper?

Examine yourself by:

- Confessing your sin (1 John 1:9)
- Recommitting your life (Romans 12:1)
- Reconciling your broken relationships (Matthew 5:23-24)

*"Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup."  
~ 1 Corinthians 11:28 (NIV)*

## **When and how often should we observe The Lord's Supper?**

The Bible does not say when or how often. In Scripture, Christians observed communion in homes with small groups of people. At ACF we encourage our small groups to take it anytime they wish.

## **How do I celebrate communion in my small group?**

1. Prepare the bread and juice beforehand. Break the bread into wafer sized portions on a plate or use small crackers. Pour a small amount of grape juice into separate glasses.
2. Share Scripture or a story about God's love, forgiveness, mercy, grace, hope, etc.
3. Distribute the bread and juice to each person.
4. Explain about The Lord's Supper by reading from parts of this document.
5. Give everyone ample time to "examine themselves" (1 Corinthians 11:28).
6. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23–24 (NIV) and then lead them by eating the bread...
7. *"...The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.'"*
8. Read 1 Corinthians 11:25 (NIV) and then lead them by drinking the juice...
9. *"In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'"*
10. Close by singing or listening to a worship song and in prayer.

## **Additional Scriptures on The Lord's Supper**

1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 1 Corinthians 11:23-30, Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-20

*Source: Adapted for ACF with permission from "Celebrating The Lord's Supper in Your Small Group" by Saddleback Church Small Groups.*

## Identify and Understand Your Spiritual Gifts

A **spiritual gift** is a supernatural ability, given by the Holy Spirit to every believer at their conversion, so that they would share His love and therefore build up the body of Christ.

*"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." ~ 1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)*

There are ten truths every Christ-follower should know about spiritual gifts:

- |                                                        |                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Only Christians have spiritual gifts.               | 1 Cor. 2:14     |
| 2. Every Christian has at least one gift.              | 1 Cor. 7:7      |
| 3. No one receives all the gifts.                      | 1 Cor. 12:18-21 |
| 4. No single gift is given to everyone.                | 1 Cor. 12:29-30 |
| 5. You can't earn a spiritual gift.                    | Eph. 4:7        |
| 6. The Holy Spirit decides what gifts you get.         | 1 Cor. 12:11    |
| 7. The gifts you're given are permanent/irrevocable.   | Rom. 11:29      |
| 8. You are to develop the gifts God gives you.         | 1 Tim. 4:14     |
| 9. It's a sin to misuse the gifts God gave you.        | 1 Cor. 4:1-2    |
| 10. Using your gifts honors God and grows/matures you. | John 15:8       |

The four major lists of spiritual gifts are found in the following passages and provide great group discussion:

1. Romans 12:1-8
2. 1 Cor. 12:1-11, 27-31
3. Eph. 4:11-12
4. 1 Peter 4:9-11

We have provided a list of the most commonly recognized "Spiritual Gifts" (see appendix) along with characteristic statements for each one. Encourage your group members to read through this list and see which gifts they recognize in themselves and in others in the group. Spend some time discussing your observations together.

### How do you determine which spiritual gift(s) God has given you?

- As you read through the descriptions, did any resonate with you and what you've noticed about yourself?
- Ask your Christian friends which gifts they identify in you—very often they can see what you cannot and can observe which skills God has divinely assigned to you.
- Pray about it. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you toward whatever gifts He has given you.
- From time to time, our church offers a spiritual gifts class to help you discover yours. Check to see if this is coming up any time soon.

Take an online spiritual gifts test. Taking two or three may give you a more accurate idea of your giftings. Note: These are man-made attempts to discern something divinely given! Hold the results loosely, as you continue pursuing the answer in prayer. Share these links with group members:

- Free spiritual gifts assessment with online report - click on "Free Spiritual Gift Analysis" to begin: <https://gifts.churchgrowth.org/spiritual-gifts-survey/>
- Free spiritual gifts assessment with online report: <http://mintools.com/spiritual-gifts-test.htm>
- Free spiritual gifts assessment tool (this one you print & tabulate yourself): <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/women-leadership-spiritual-gifts-growth-service>
- Free online SHAPE test (this is a longer online assessment): <https://www.freeshapetest.com>

Once you've identified your spiritual gifts, put them to use for the good of others and the glory of God!

### **How can your giftings benefit your small group?**

Here are a few ideas to get you thinking...Use your gift of **hospitality** and offer to host meetings for the group or prepare a meal for a sick member. Can you use your gift of **administration** to help organize the group communications, meeting schedule and contact list? If you have the gift of **service**, offer to plan a serving opportunity for the group. Do you have the gift of **exhortation**? Commit to reach out to a struggling group member to offer encouragement and words of support. Have the gift of **teaching**? Offer to lead the group through a study of a book of the Bible, and research and prepare so you can help the group learn and grow as they study together. Are you gifted with **leadership** ability? Ask your small group leader to help you develop this skill and consider stepping in as a co-leader or preparing to lead a new small group.

### **How can your giftings benefit your church?**

Consider how you can use your giftings to serve in the church. At ACF, we have opportunities in every area of ministry, from greeting new people and making them feel welcome, to training tech volunteers, making care calls, praying with others, teaching children, organizing supplies, shepherding youth, serving as a mission trip leader, volunteering in the church office, and more! Reach out to the area / ministry leader in the area you'd like to serve:

Guest Services Team – [connect@acfellowship.org](mailto:connect@acfellowship.org)

Small Group Ministry – [groups@acfellowship.org](mailto:groups@acfellowship.org)

Women's Ministry – [women@acfellowship.org](mailto:women@acfellowship.org)

Men's Ministry – [men@acfellowship.org](mailto:men@acfellowship.org)

Student Ministry – [students@acfellowship.org](mailto:students@acfellowship.org)

Camp Fun Children's Ministry – [campfun@acfellowship.org](mailto:campfun@acfellowship.org)

Missions, Local & International – [missions@acfellowship.org](mailto:missions@acfellowship.org)

Prayer Team – [prayer@acfellowship.org](mailto:prayer@acfellowship.org)

Tech & Production Team – [production@acfellowship.org](mailto:production@acfellowship.org)

### **How can your giftings benefit the local community and our ministry partners?**

We partner with ministries throughout the Austin area that need you! Connect with our Missions Ministry at [missions@acfellowship.org](mailto:missions@acfellowship.org) to talk about how to put your gifts and skills to use serving locally and around the world. (Link to our local [ministry partners](#))

*"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." ~ 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 (NIV)*

## Serve Together

Being others-centered and outward-focused is what we're about as a church! The heart behind serving at ACF is our desire to respond to Christ's example throughout scripture to serve others. As we serve, we love and help others causing us to live beyond ourselves. When you give your time, talent and treasure it's an act of worship to God!

*"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." ~ John 13:14-17 (NIV)*

Key points about serving together:

- We want your group to serve our local community.
- We hope service will become a consistent part of your group experience.
- When your group prioritizes serving it encourages each member to take a next step in their spiritual growth by creating a lifestyle of service.
- If you prioritize serving it will increase the overall quality of your group experience.
- Find a person in your group who is passionate about serving others and ask her/him to take the lead.
- Come up with a plan to serve and put it on the calendar for your group!

*"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." ~ 1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)*

### Where should we serve?

- Look around your neighborhoods and see if there are any immediate needs, such as an elderly neighbor or single mom who might need yard work, home repairs, a weekly meal or help purchasing groceries.
- Consider serving together in a ministry at ACF, such as Guest Services, Camp Fun or the Prayer Team.
- See who in your group already has an existing relationship with a nonprofit or organization needing help.
- Check with ACFmissions to see what needs they know of and to ask for assistance connecting with the need or ministry.
- Show up! Don't forget that showing up, calling, texting or checking in on someone and listening to them is a ministry of presence that adds value when someone is hurting, feeling lonely, grieving, or going through a hard season.
- "[Additional Serving Ideas](#)" (see appendix)

Another approach is to ask the group a series of questions that might narrow in on where and how your group would like to serve:

- What topics does your group get EXCITED about?
- What does your group DREAM about accomplishing?
- What things have you done in your past that have ENERGIZED your group?
- What SKILLS, TALENT and GIFTINGS are represented in your group?
- What CAUSES or PEOPLE GROUPS are your group members most drawn to serving and getting to know?
- What EXPERIENCES have members in your group had that God might want to use to help others? (These might include educational, ministry, hard and/or joyous experiences, etc.)

After your group has talked through these questions and narrowed things down, reach out to our Missions Ministry to see what suggestions they have for organizations to contact. (Link to our local [ministry partners.](#))

Last, your group should come together after a time of serving to debrief about the experience. You can share thoughts, prayers, stories and ideas for possible next steps.

Note: If there are project costs related to what you'll be doing and your group is not able to cover those costs, we encourage you to apply for an ACF Impact Grant: <https://www.acfellowship.org/impact/>.



# Appendix

## Create a Compelling Story to Share

Here are a few tips to help shape your story and share it with others:

- **Take some time and actually write or type out your testimony.** See the notes in the next section below for the three main parts you will want to include.
- **Look it over and pull out several threads or themes** in your testimony that you might have opportunities to share with someone. Themes might have to do with trusting God to provide, having courage to step out in faith, freedom from destructive behaviors, acceptance of God's love, or restoration of a relationship, for example.
- **Important point:** You don't have to tell your WHOLE God story and ALL the parts and details of your faith journey every time you get the chance! In most situations, you'll adapt your story to your audience (their gender, age or cultural context) and the situation. Practice pulling out parts of your faith journey that might help your listener connect your testimony to God's bigger story of redemption.
- **Practice sharing parts of your story** with a friend or family member and get their feedback to help you focus on the most important elements of your story.
- **God, not you, should be the hero of the story you tell others.** Make sure your testimony points back to the redeeming work of Jesus in your life!
- **Pray for God to give you opportunities to share** about what He has done in your life.
- **Trust God with the results** after you tell someone part of your story. You often can't see how He will use your testimony to soften and open the hearts of non-believers.

*"One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts....They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness." ~ Psalm 145:4, 6 (ESV)*

### What are the basic parts of a testimony?

Just like in any story, your testimony about God will have a beginning, middle and end! Here are the three basic parts in most testimonies:

Part 1: Life before Christ/your background

Part 2: Conversion experience (when, why & how you came to commit your life to Christ)

Part 3: Life now with Christ

Use the space provided below to jot down notes for what you would share in each of the three sections.

## **Outline for Your Story**

**Part 1: Life before Christ/your background**

**Part 2: Conversion experience**

**Part 3: Life now with Christ**

# Prayer Time Guide

## Use these questions to lead individuals through a reflective prayer time

Instructions: Ask Jesus the following questions as you talk with Him in prayer. He is eager to answer!

- Jesus, which one of Your Names are You calling me to worship today? (e.g., El Shaddai~All-Sufficient God, Jehovah Jireh~God the Provider, Jehovah Rapha~God the Healer, etc.) You can view a list of 30 names and attributes of God here:  
<https://www.navigators.org/resource/praying-names-attributes-god/>
- Is there anything hindering me from being able to hear or see You today? (agree/ repent/ forgive) - Psalms 139:23,24; Proverbs 3:5,6; Isaiah 55:8,9; Psalms 46:10
- What are You doing within me today? - Philippians 4:8; Philippians 3:13,14; Ephesians 5:14-17; Psalms 9:1,2
- What do You want to do through me for another person? - I Thessalonians 1:2,3; Psalms 19:14; Ephesians 4:32; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Micah 6:8; Ephesians 3:16-19
- How do You feel about me? - Romans 8:35-39; I Corinthians 2:9; Psalms 9:9,10; Psalms 17:8; Psalms 23
- What is one way You would have me encourage someone today? - Psalms 19:14; Philippians 2:3-7; Philippians 2:13, Romans 15:13; Romans 8:28-29
- Pray: Lord Jesus, please shield me from any temptation coming my way. Please show me even now how to fight back "Kingdom style". - Ephesians 6:10-18; I Peter 5:8,9; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

*"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."*

*~ John 15:7*

# Spiritual Gifts

**ADMINISTRATION (sometimes called Organization) 1 Cor. 12:28--***The ability to organize and execute plans to accomplish ministry goals.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I like to organize people, tasks and events.
- I am careful, thorough and skilled at managing details.
- I can clarify goals and develop strategies and plans to accomplish them.
- I can identify and effectively use the resources needed to accomplish tasks.
- I like to help organizations and groups become more efficient.
- I enjoy learning about how organizations function.
- I can visualize a coming event, anticipate potential problems, and develop back-up plans.

**APOSTLESHIP (sometimes called Ministry Planting) Eph. 4:11-12--***The ability to start or revitalize a ministry to increase kingdom impact.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I would like to help start churches in places where they do not presently exist.
- I am attracted to the idea of serving in another country or ethnic community.
- I am willing to take an active role in starting a new church.
- I can adapt well in different cultures and surroundings.
- I can relate to others in culturally sensitive ways.
- I enjoy pioneering new undertakings.
- I am able to orchestrate or oversee several church ministries.

**CRAFTSMANSHIP Exodus 35:31-35--***The ability to design, build, or beautify items to be used for ministry so as to reflect the character of God.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I enjoy working creatively with wood, cloth, paints, metal, glass, or other materials.
- I am skilled in working with different kinds of tools.
- I enjoy making things for use in ministry.
- I can visualize how something should be constructed before I build it.
- I honor God with my handcrafted gifts.
- I am good at and enjoy working with my hands.
- I am able to design and construct things that help the church.

**CREATIVE COMMUNICATION Psalms 150--***The ability to use the arts to communicate truth from God's perspective.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I enjoy challenging people's perspective of God by using various art forms.
- I enjoy developing and using my artistic ability (music, drama, art, photography, etc.)
- I help people understand themselves, their relationships and God better through artistic expression.
- I like finding new and fresh ways to communicate God's truth.
- I am creative and imaginative.
- I regularly need to be alone to reflect and develop my imagination.

**DISCERNMENT 1 John 4:1-6--***The ability to distinguish between truth and error in a given situation.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I can readily distinguish between spiritual truth and error, good and evil.
- I am frequently able to accurately judge a person's character based on first impressions.
- I can see through phoniness or deceit before it is evident to others.
- I tend to see rightness or wrongness in situations.
- I receive affirmation from others regarding the reliability of my insights or perceptions.
- I can identify teaching, preaching or communication that is not true to the Bible.
- I can sense when demonic forces are at work in a person or situation.

**ENCOURAGEMENT (sometimes called Exhortation) Acts 15:30-32--***The ability to strengthen people through words of comfort, inspiration or admonition.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I tend to see the potential in people.
- I enjoy reassuring and strengthening those who are discouraged.
- I give hope to others by directing them to the promises of God.
- I reassure those in need to take courageous action in their faith, family or life.
- I strengthen those who are wavering in their faith.
- I like motivating others to take steps for spiritual growth.
- I am able to challenge or rebuke others in order to foster spiritual growth.

**EVANGELISM Acts 8:26-40--***The ability to communicate the good news about Jesus in a positive, natural way so that others often respond with faith.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I communicate the Gospel to others with clarity and effectiveness.
- I consistently look for opportunities to build relationships with non-Christians.
- I am effective at adapting the Gospel message so that it connects with an individual's felt needs.
- I invite unbelievers to accept Christ as their Savior (& they do).
- I openly tell people that I am a Christian and I want them to ask me about my faith.
- I seek opportunities to talk about spiritual matters with unbelievers.

**FAITH 1 Cor. 12:9--***The ability to trust God and to act on God's promises, regardless of what circumstances may indicate.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I find it natural and easy to trust God to answer my prayers.
- I have confidence in God's continuing provision and help, even in difficult times.
- I believe that God will help me to accomplish great things.
- I trust God in circumstances where success cannot be guaranteed by human effort alone.
- I am convinced of God's daily presence and action in my life.
- I am regularly challenging others to trust God.
- I can move forward in spite of opposition or lack of support when I sense God's blessing on an undertaking.

**GIVING Luke 21:1-4--***The ability to generously contribute money and/or resources to advance ministry purposes.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I give liberally and joyfully to people in financial need or to projects requiring support.
- I give more than a tithe so that Kingdom work can be accomplished.
- I manage my money well in order to free more of it for ministry.
- I am challenged to limit my lifestyle in order to give away a higher percentage of my income. I like knowing that my financial support makes a real difference in the lives and ministries of God's people.
- I believe I have been given an abundance of resources so that I may give more to the Lord's work.

**HELPS (sometimes called SERVICE) Acts 6:1-7--***The ability to give practical assistance in a way that makes people feel cared for and loved.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I enjoy working behind the scenes to support the work of others.
- I enjoy doing routine tasks that support the ministry.
- I willingly take on a variety of odd jobs around the church to meet the needs of others.
- I see spiritual significance in doing practical tasks.
- I like to find small things that need doing and often do them without being asked.
- I feel comfortable being a helper and assisting others to do their jobs more effectively.
- I readily and happily use my natural or learned skills to help wherever needed.

**HOSPITALITY 1 Peter 4:9-10--***The ability to create environments where guests feel welcomed and at ease.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I view my home as a place to minister to people in need.
- I enjoy meeting new people and helping them feel welcome.
- I believe the Lord directs strangers to me who need to get connected to others.
- I like to create a place where people do not feel they are alone.
- I can make people feel at ease even in unfamiliar surroundings.

**INTERCESSION Col.1:9-12--***The ability to pray persistently for others in response to God's prompting.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I often see specific results in direct response to my prayers.
- I am honored when someone asks me to pray for them.
- When I hear about needy situations, I feel burdened to pray.
- I pray with confidence because I know God works in response to prayer.
- I am conscious of ministering to others as I pray.
- I enjoy praying for long periods of time and I often receive leadings from God on how to pray.
- I take prayer requests from others and constantly pray for them.

**KNOWLEDGE 1 Cor. 12:8**--*The ability to bring truth to a church body by revealing critical information or biblical insight.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I am approached by others who want to know my perspective on a particular passage or biblical truth.
- I receive information from the Spirit that I did not acquire through natural means.
- I have insight or just know something to be true.
- I have suddenly known something about someone, but did not know how I knew it.
- I discover important biblical truths when reading or studying the Scripture that benefit others in the Body.
- I confidently share my knowledge and insights with others.

**LEADERSHIP Romans 12:8**--*The ability to cast vision, motivate and direct people to harmoniously accomplish the purposes of God.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I figure out where we need to go and help others to get there.
- I am able to cast vision that others want to be a part of.
- I influence others to perform to the best of their capability.
- I set goals and manage people and resources effectively to get there.
- I can adjust my leadership style to bring out the best in others.
- I am able to influence others to achieve vision.
- I am able to motivate others to accomplish a goal.

**MERCY Romans 12:8**--*The ability to show practical compassion toward a suffering person or persons.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I empathize with hurting people and desire to aid in their healing process.
- I can patiently support those going through a painful process as they try to stabilize their lives.
- I enjoy helping people sometimes viewed as undeserving or beyond help.
- I have great compassion for hurting people.
- I can look beyond a person's handicaps or problems and see a life that matters to God.
- I enjoy bringing hope and joy to people living in difficult circumstances.
- I enjoy doing practical things for people who are in need.

**PROPHECY (sometimes called PREACHING) 1 Cor. 14:3**--*The ability to proclaim truth in a way that causes correction or repentance.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I feel compelled to expose sin wherever I see it and call people to repentance.
- I will speak God's truth, even in places or circumstances where it is difficult for others to accept.
- I like people who are honest and will speak the truth.
- I see most actions as right or wrong, and feel the need to correct the wrong.
- I boldly expose cultural trends, teachings or events which contradict biblical teachings.
- I feel responsible to confront others with the truth.
- I can speak in a way that results in conviction and change in the lives of others.

**SHEPHERDING (sometimes called PASTORING) 1 Peter 5:2-4--***The ability to nurture, care for and guide people toward spiritual maturity.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I enjoy spending time nurturing and caring for others.
- I have compassion for wandering believers and want to protect them.
- I like to provide guidance for the whole person—relationally, spiritually, emotionally, etc.
- I can faithfully provide long term care and support for others.
- I enjoy giving guidance and practical support to a small group of people.
- I enjoy patiently but firmly nurturing others in their development as believers.

**TEACHING Romans 12:7--***The ability to explain God's Word in a way that causes them to learn and implement life-change.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I enjoy explaining things to people so they can grow personally and spiritually.
- I can present information to others in a way that makes it easy for them to understand and apply to their lives.
- I can communicate Scripture in ways that motivates others to study and want to learn more.
- I like to take a systematic approach to my study of the Bible.
- I pay close attention to the words, phrases and meanings of those who teach.
- I can spend time in study knowing that presenting truth will change people's lives.
- I am able to communicate God's Word effectively.

**WISDOM 1 Cor. 2:6-14--***The ability to discover and apply God's truth in specific circumstances.*

Characteristic Statements:

- I am sought out by others for advice or spiritual counsel.
- I can find simple, practical solutions in the midst of conflict or confusion.
- I can easily select the most effective course of action from several alternatives.
- I can easily anticipate the likely consequences from an individual's or group's actions.
- I give practical advice to help others through complicated situations.
- I can apply scriptural truth that others view as practical and helpful.
- I can look at a problem and see solutions that others often do not.



## Additional Serving Ideas

### Think creatively

How will your group serve together? Remember that serving others can include things that are not “project specific,” such as:

- Praying regularly for a neighbor or co-worker who is struggling, or interceding in prayer for a people group or a ministry you care about.
- Opening your home to neighbors and getting to know them.
- Leaving your existing small group to start a new small group in order to engage with unreached neighbors or make room in groups for new people who are coming to the church.
- Working towards racial reconciliation and participating in talking circles with those who are different from you to learn about and understand their experiences.
- Writing notes of encouragement to others as the Lord puts people on your heart.
- Inviting others to attend a church service with you, meeting them in the parking lot and sitting with them during the service; or, if we're meeting online, inviting them to your home to view the service with your group and serving brunch afterwards.
- Baking goodies or a hot meal to deliver to sick or shut-in church members; your group might take it a step further and commit to providing one meal a month for a year for a single parent.
- Finding ways to secretly bless others without them ever knowing who helped, such as taking up a collection in your group and giving it to someone anonymously so he can get his car repaired.
- Committing as a group to doing yard work once a month for a year or getting a generic grocery/pharmacy list from an ill or homebound neighbor and providing those items once a week for six weeks.
- Collecting donations of items needed by an ACF ministry partner and then dropping them off for the ministry to use, such as a diaper drive, school supplies & new backpacks, or baseball/softball equipment.
- Deciding as a group to sponsor one or more children through an international ministry partner ACF works with, then regularly praying for your sponsor child as a group, sending pictures and letters to the child from your group, and pooling your resources so one or two group members can go on a mission trip to meet the child and serve the ministry partner.