



GROUP STARTER GUIDE

UP
IN
OUT

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A note to Leaders and Participants:

Thanks so much for jumping in with Grow Groups!

This five-week “Starter Series” is designed to introduce what Grow Groups are all about, help your group build connection and culture, set expectations, get organized, and choose an **Out Project**.

This curriculum is both the leaders’ guide and the participants’ guide.

Leaders: Please look over each lesson ahead of time. You can have your group read the chapter together or highlight specific sections you want to focus on.

The most important things:



Hear from everyone in the group.
(Full participation brings health.)



Keep the Bible at the center of your time together.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

This reflects what a typical week will look like after this starter series.

20 min	Welcome and Icebreaker
40 min	Bible Study and Discussion
10 min	Check in on your group’s Out Project (unless already decided/completed)
20 min	Life Check-In and Prayer

NOTES

- Add 30 minutes at the beginning if you’re sharing a meal.
- If your group includes both men and women, you may choose to split into smaller groups for sharing and prayer.



WEEK 1

GETTING STARTED

WEEK 1

OPENING

Before diving into the study, let's take a few minutes to get to know each other.

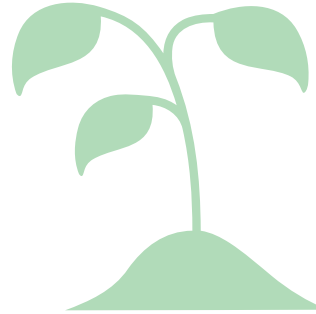
Go around the circle and introduce yourself. Share:

- Your name
- How long you've been connected to Ridgepoint
- Your favorite way to spend a free Saturday

Then answer one lighthearted question:

If you could instantly become an expert at any hobby or skill, what would it be?

Don't think too hard. This is just a simple way to learn a bit about each other and get the conversation going.



WHY WE'RE HERE

Ridgepoint Church exists to help people find and follow Jesus.

Beyond that, we also often speak of our five core values that drive our ministries. We are committed to **prayer, risk, surrender, joy, and authenticity.**

Most of us would probably agree those statements sound nice, and those are "aspirational" qualities we would probably all strive toward. However, in our actual day-to-day lives, it can be hard to make a healthy spiritual journey a priority in the midst of our overly busy lives.

Life moves quickly. Between work, family responsibilities, activities, and everything else competing for our attention, it's easy for spiritual growth to become something we hope will happen instead of something we intentionally pursue.

Grow Groups exist to create space for that growth to happen.

The goal of this group is not simply to complete a study or finish a booklet. The goal is discipleship—the lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus.

Over the next several weeks, you'll explore a simple rhythm that shaped the life and ministry of Jesus:

- **Up: A daily relationship with God**
- **In: A shared life together**
- **Out: An outward-focused faith**

Healthy spiritual lives move in all three directions. When those rhythms work together, growth happens naturally over time.



HOW THE STUDY WORKS

After this intro series, future discussion guide materials will follow the same structure. Here's the format you can expect:

Opening

A short story or illustration that introduces the theme for the week.

Up - *The Big Idea and Scripture at the Center*

The main truth we're exploring and the Bible passages that shape our understanding. This is where we receive before we respond, letting Scripture ground the conversation before diving into application.

In - *Why This Matters and Growing Together*

This is where we process the week's theme together as a community. This section explores what the truth we've just encountered means for our everyday lives, and how we can help each other grow.

Out - *Living It Out*

This includes a practical look at how our faith can flow outward toward others, toward needs, and toward the **Out Project** your group will choose together. This section keeps us from turning inward and reminds us that we're formed together for the sake of others.

Discussion & Prayer

Conversation and prayer are woven throughout each week rather than saved for the end. The real growth often happens in these moments where everyone brings different experiences, insights, and questions, and those perspectives strengthen the whole group.

LOOKING AHEAD

WEEK 1 - Introduction

WEEK 2 - Why Grow Groups Exist

WEEK 3 - **Up:** A daily relationship with God

WEEK 4 - **In:** A shared life together

WEEK 5 - **Out:** An outward-focused faith

By the end of this study, the goal is not just new information, but a deeper rhythm of faith lived together.

A FEW HELPFUL EXPECTATIONS

Healthy groups don't happen by accident. A few shared values help create the kind of environment where people can grow together.

Grace

Everyone is at a different place in their spiritual journey. We listen well and extend grace to one another.

Participation

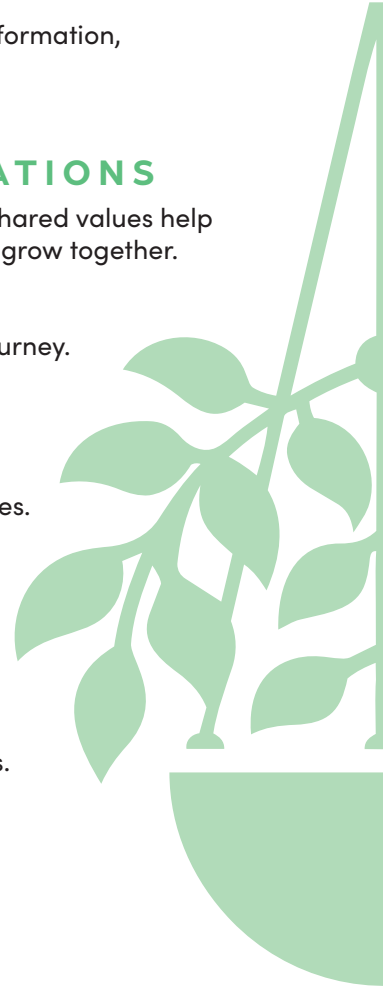
You don't have to have perfect answers. Honest conversation matters more than polished responses.

Consistency

Showing up matters. Community deepens over time as people continue to gather together.

Your first few meetings might feel slightly awkward—and that's normal. Every meaningful community starts with strangers becoming friends.

Give it time. Trust grows slowly.



PLANNING YOUR RHYTHM

Take some time together to talk through the practical details of your group. These decisions will help make the coming weeks run smoothly.

Discuss the following as a group:

Meeting Time and Location

What day of the week will you meet?
What time will you start and end?
Where will you meet?



Food

Will you share a meal together? Rotate snacks? Keep things simple?

Kids

Will childcare be arranged? Will kids play in another space? Is there another plan that works best for your group?

Communication

What is the best way to stay in touch between meetings? (Text thread, group message, email, etc.)

Prayer Requests

Consider keeping a shared record of your group's prayer requests. This can be a simple note in your phone, a group chat, or even a notebook passed around each week. Revisiting these requests over time is one of the most encouraging things a group can do together. It becomes a tangible record of how God has been at work in your midst.

Off-Ramps

We intentionally built Grow Groups to be flexible for your season of life. In the past, at Ridgepoint there was some pressure to join a small group (or "LifeGroup") with the expectation that the group would be together for several years. While there are some real benefits to long-term groups like that, Grow Groups are intentionally different.

We built Grow Groups to have natural "off-ramps" at the end of every semester. Maybe you'll try this group for a few months and decide it's not a good fit for you, or maybe you know your schedule is realistically too full for the next semester to really engage in another group.

We understand those realities, and these groups are built with that structure in mind. For now, we ask you to stay committed to this study and take each following semester one at a time. Join when you can, step away when you need to. No judgment; that's how these are designed on purpose! With all of those things in mind, take a few minutes to agree on a basic plan that works for everyone.

DISCUSS

Take a few minutes to talk together:

What made you interested in joining a Grow Group?

What do you hope might be different in your life five weeks from now because of this group?

Which part of the Up, In, and Out rhythm are you most curious to explore?

THE BIG IDEA

God never intended us to follow Jesus alone. Throughout the New Testament, believers gathered in both large and small settings so they could worship, learn, encourage one another, and grow into Christlikeness.

SCRIPTURE AT THE CENTER

We Need Both Large Gatherings and Small Gatherings

In Acts, Paul writes, "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house." (Acts 20:20, ESV)

Paul describes two complementary environments: public gatherings where people heard God's Word and worshiped together, and house-to-house gatherings where relationships deepened, questions were asked, lives were shared, and discipleship became personal.

The early church didn't choose between large gatherings and small gatherings—they embraced both.

DISCUSS

Why do you think the early church valued both settings?

What can happen if we only attend large gatherings?

What are the unique strengths of meeting in a home or small group?

Many Commands in the New Testament Require Community

There are nearly 100 references to “one another” in the New Testament, representing about 59 unique commands.

You can’t “one another” by yourself. Jesus never intended the Christian life to be lived in isolation.

Many of these commands (i.e., loving one another, encouraging one another, confessing sins to one another, bearing one another’s burdens, praying for one another) simply can’t be practiced well by sitting in rows once a week. They require relationships. They require circles, not just rows.

Here are just a few:

- **Love** one another (*John 13:34–35*)
- **Honor** one another (*Romans 12:10*)
- **Accept** one another (*Romans 15:7*)
- **Serve** one another (*Galatians 5:13*)
- **Comfort** one another (*1 Thessalonians 4:18*)
- **Admonish** one another (*Colossians 3:16*)
- **Don’t envy** one another (*Galatians 5:26*)
- **Don’t slander** one another (*James 4:11*)
- **Don’t grumble** against one another (*James 5:9*)
- **Don’t lie** to one another (*Colossians 3:9*)

WRAP-UP DISCUSSION & PRAYER

Discussion Questions

1. Which “one another” command listed above has impacted your life the most?

2. Which is easiest for you? Which is most difficult?

3. How can our group become better at living these out?

Suggested Prayer

Before closing in prayer, we encourage you to go around the circle and share one thing you’d like the group to pray for you about this week. Even something small and simple is a great place to start.

After praying through those requests, here’s a simple prayer that can conclude your time together.

God, thank you for bringing this group together. As we begin this journey, help us grow closer to you and to one another. Give us honesty in our conversations, patience as relationships grow, and openness to the work you want to do in our lives. Guide this group in the weeks ahead. Amen.

WEEK 2

AN INVITATION TO GROW

WEEK 2

OPENING

Growth rarely happens by accident.

In most areas of life (relationships, health, skills, leadership), growth requires intentional effort, structure, and time. It is logical that our relationship with Jesus would be no different. While God is always the one who brings transformation, the Bible makes it clear that he uses our rhythms, habits, experiences, and the people around us to shape us into who he designed us to be.

Grow Groups exist to be that kind of community. These are not simply “another church thing” to add to your calendar. These new groups are designed to help each of us grow—together—in a way that is sustainable, relational, and deeply rooted in the lifestyle Jesus modeled for us. Said another way, Grow Groups help you become a more devoted disciple of Jesus.

Further, Ridgepoint is a large church, and we’re aware that it can be really easy to remain on the outskirts. Maybe you attend faithfully, but you’ve never really dug in. You might want to follow Jesus well, but you’re unsure of how to go about a discipleship journey. That’s exactly what Grow Groups are for, a new model that invites you to dive deeper in a smaller group in ways that just aren’t possible in worship services or even in larger classes.

There are several different definitions of what exactly a “disciple” is. When we hear that word, our brains might jump straight to the 12 disciples of Jesus. Or maybe we think of someone whose deep, steady faith inspires us and shapes what we hope to grow into.

The truth is, we are all called to be disciples. This doesn’t mean you have to be “extra” spiritual or “advanced” in your Christianity. For the sake of this study, when we use the word “disciple,” we’re referring to anyone who follows Jesus. That’s it; a disciple is a follower. Therefore, the process of “discipleship” (acting as a disciple) means we are working at becoming more like Jesus.

To be more like Jesus, we have to live like he lived.

The Example of Jesus

Jesus began his public ministry when he was around 30 years old. Early on in this season, Jesus chose 12 men to be his closest followers to help accomplish his mission of spreading the good news of the Kingdom of God. But before they got very far, Jesus did something very strategic.

“One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night. At daybreak he called together all of his disciples and chose twelve of them to be apostles.” (Luke 6:12-13, NLT)

A few verses later, Jesus takes his disciples with him to meet the needs of the world around them.

“When they came down from the mountain, the disciples stood with Jesus on a large, level area, surrounded by many of his followers and by the crowds. There were people from all over Judea and from Jerusalem and from as far north as the seacoasts of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those troubled by evil spirits were healed. Everyone tried to touch him, because healing power went out from him, and he healed everyone.” (Luke 6:17-19, NLT)

This simple story reveals a pattern that shows up again and again in Jesus’ life, and it shapes how we view spiritual growth.

- First, Jesus **withdrew to pray**.
- Second, Jesus **gathered a small group**.
- Third, Jesus went **with them into the world**.

In other words, Jesus had an intentional rhythm of living **Up, In, and Out**.

- **Up:** Spending intimate time with God,
- **In:** Intentionally investing in a close, smaller group, and
- **Out:** Purposely living on mission in the larger, outside world.

This wasn’t a one-time accident. This was Jesus’ way of life. He routinely moved between solitude and community, spiritual formation and evangelistic mission.

Grow groups are designed to follow a similar rhythm. If it worked for Jesus, it can work for you, too.

DISCUSS

Looking at Jesus’ rhythm of Up, In, and Out, which of the three comes most naturally to you? Which feels most like a stretch? Why do you think that is?

Jesus moved intentionally between solitude with God, close community, and engaging the world around him. What would it look like for your week to reflect even a small piece of that rhythm?

WHY THIS MATTERS

Based on your personality and your interests, it can be very natural to emphasize one of these elements while neglecting the others. Some people focus heavily on **Up**, devoting significant time to personal prayer and increasing Bible knowledge, but they remain disconnected from meaningful community. Others prioritize **In**, developing fun and beneficial relationships, but with a lack of depth that ignores spiritual conversations. Others are quick to jump to **Out**, eager to act and serve, but hesitant to actually open up authentically to a group of friends.

Jesus’ model shows us that faith grows best when all three directions are present and connected. No one will do this perfectly, and it’s natural to have areas of strength and areas to improve. The mature Christian needs to be aware of those tendencies and constantly lean closer and closer to the proven model of Jesus.

What a Healthy Grow Group Looks Like

Remember, growth doesn’t happen by accident. If you want to grow, certain values will matter deeply as you launch into Grow Groups.

So what does a healthy Grow Group look and feel like?

First, a healthy Grow Group is a place where people feel **known**, not just present. Don’t just show up—engage! This is a place where questions are welcomed, faith is nurtured, and life is shared honestly.

Second, Grow Groups are built on **trust**. What is shared in the group stays in the group. Confidentiality isn’t just a kind concept; it’s a way to truly honor one another’s stories and create a safe space for vulnerability.

In practice, here are some things to remember:

- Prioritize *listening* over *fixing*.
- Make room for a variety of opinions, personalities, and perspectives.
- Show up consistently.
- Be quick to extend grace when life gets extra messy.

No one expects perfection, but it's OK to expect effort and consistent presence. We'll discuss this further in a future lesson.

Growth Takes Time

Growth—real growth—rarely happens quickly.

That doesn't mean this group needs to stay together for years to produce something meaningful. Grow Groups are designed with natural stopping points built in, and that's intentional. But within whatever season your group shares together, consistency matters deeply.

Jesus didn't rush his disciples. He invested in them steadily—correcting, encouraging, and providing opportunities to lead along the way. The lesson isn't that growth requires a long timeline; growth requires showing up faithfully within whatever time you have.

This is why consistency within a semester matters more than you might expect. Trust develops gradually, not all at once. Conversations deepen the more often people gather. You can't really rush the process of becoming known, but you can protect it by showing up regularly and engaging honestly when you do.

Your first few meetings may feel slightly awkward, and that's completely normal. Every meaningful community starts that way. Give it time, and give it your presence.

Grow Groups are not ultimately about working through content. The goal is discipleship, the process of becoming more like Jesus. That process doesn't end when the semester does. The hope is that the rhythm you build here—**Up, In, and Out**—becomes a way of life that continues long after this particular group wraps up.

Start somewhere. Stay consistent. Trust what God can do in the time you have together.

PAUSING TO REFLECT

Why Are You Here Right Now?

Before moving forward, take a moment to reflect personally:



What do you need the most from a Grow Group right now? (community, prayer support, practical advice, deeper Scripture engagement, encouragement, accountability, rest, friendship)

Which of the three directions (Up, In, and Out) feels most underdeveloped in your life right now?

What would it look like to commit to growth, even if it feels uncomfortable?

WRAP-UP DISCUSSION & PRAYER

Discussion Questions

- 1. What stands out to you about Jesus' rhythm of Up, In, and Out?***
- 2. What has helped—or hurt—your spiritual growth in the past?***
- 3. What are you hoping God might do in you through this group?***

Suggested Prayer

Take time to share personal prayer requests and pray for one another before concluding for this week. If you have both men and women in your group, it may help to separate into smaller groups. Feel free to include this prayer:

God, thank you for inviting us into a life of growth. Help us follow the rhythm of Jesus, grounded in you, shaped together, and sent with a purpose. Give us patience with ourselves and grace for one another as we learn and grow together. Amen.

WEEK 3

UP:

A DAILY RELATION- SHIP WITH GOD

**Salvation is the doorway.
Relationship is the life
inside the house.**

WEEK 3

OPENING

The Gate Was Never the Destination

There once was a man who lived outside the walls of a great kingdom. The estate belonged to a generous King. High stone walls surrounded it, and the gates were beautifully carved. The man could hear music and laughter drifting over the walls, and sometimes he caught the scent of freshly baked bread.

One day, a royal messenger came to the man and handed him a letter sealed with golden wax. Inside were these words: *"You are invited! The gate has been opened to you, and you may freely enter."*

The man was overwhelmed with joy. He wept and excitedly told everyone around him, "I've been invited inside! The king has accepted me!"

The next morning, the man walked to the gate, and it opened just as he had been promised. He anxiously stepped across the threshold—and then stopped. Just inside the gate, there was a bench along the wall, and he sat down.



"I finally made it inside!" he thought.
"That's all that matters."

Days passed. People walked by carrying baskets of fruit. Children ran through the courtyard. Music filled the air. But the man stayed right by the entrance. Whenever someone passed, he would proudly say, "I was once outside. But now I'm in!"

Years later, the king came walking toward the entrance. He saw the man still seated on the bench.

"My friend," the king said gently, "why have you stayed here?"

The man looked up. "I didn't want to lose what I had gained."

The king knelt beside him. "I did not invite you merely to enter," he said. "I invited you to walk with me."

***The gate was never the destination.
It was only the beginning.***

DISCUSS

Have you ever experienced a season where your faith felt more like “staying at the gate” than actually walking with God? What did that look like?

What do you think holds most people back from moving deeper into relationship with God once they’ve accepted his invitation?

Our sin interrupted that original relationship, but salvation restores it. Jesus makes this clear when he prays: *“And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.”* (John 17:3, NLT)

“Eternal life” isn’t really first and foremost about the duration of life, but instead the connection that God desires in his relationship with you.

THE BIG IDEA

We are saved for relationship, not just a rescue.

Salvation through Jesus is the doorway.

Relationship with God is the true reward offered to all of us.

Many of us were taught how to get saved, but not how to truly live!

SCRIPTURE AT THE CENTER

God has always wanted to walk with his people.

Early in the story of Scripture, we are given a striking image of God’s original intent for humanity: *“When the cool evening breezes were blowing, [Adam and Eve] heard the Lord God walking about in the garden...”* (Genesis 3:8, NLT)

Before sin and separation, God walked with his people.

Even earlier, Scripture also tells us God said: *“Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us...”* (Genesis 1:26, NLT)

We are made to be like God. Being made in God’s image isn’t only about form, function, or authority. At its core, it points to relationship. God didn’t make humans to simply obey commands or fulfill tasks; God created us to share life with him.

DISCUSS

The word “know” in John 17:3 implies deep, personal relationship, not just intellectual awareness. What’s the difference between knowing about someone and truly knowing them? How does that apply to your relationship with God?

Genesis tells us that we were made in God’s image, and it’s implied that we were designed for relationship. Does that change how you see yourself? How does being made for a relationship with God shape how you think about your own worth and identity?

WHY THIS MATTERS

There’s a difference between knowing about God and knowing God.

Remember our opening story: Salvation is the door, not the destination. Many people seem to accept the salvation of Jesus, and then they stop. There is no further relationship. No growth. No desire for discipleship. They entered the gate through salvation, but Scripture repeatedly reminds us that salvation is not the end of the story—it’s the beginning!

God, forever rich in mercy, saves us not only from sin and death, but also for something far greater.

“God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!) For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:4-7, NLT)

God reconciled us to himself through Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:18), and true relationships grow over time. So how do we do this?

Abiding vs. Performing

Jesus invites us into a very specific kind of spiritual relationship: *“Remain in me, and I will remain in you.” (John 15:4, NLT)*

The word “abide” (sometimes translated as “remain”) simply means to stay, to dwell, to make your home somewhere. It’s not a mystical or complicated idea. To abide in Jesus is to live in ongoing, conscious connection with him rather than only showing up when you need something or feel spiritually motivated. It’s the difference between visiting a place and actually living there.

Many of us naturally drift toward a relationship with God based on performance. We measure our faith by our activity, discipline, or output. We may serve God, but we also struggle to simply be with him.

But abiding was never meant to be passive. Just a few verses later, Jesus adds: *“When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.” (John 15:8, NLT)*

The picture Jesus paints isn’t either/or. Abiding and fruitfulness belong together. In fact, Jesus makes it clear that lasting fruit only comes from abiding. A branch doesn’t strain to produce fruit; it simply stays connected to the vine, and fruit is the natural result.

The gospel of Luke tells a famous story of two sisters named Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). Martha is busy and distracted with the many tasks of hosting Jesus—the food preparation, the cleaning, the work. Meanwhile, Mary sits at his feet in a posture of worship and adoration. Jesus doesn’t criticize Martha’s desire to serve. But he does redirect her priorities: *“Mary has chosen what is better.” (Luke 10:42, NIV)*

The point isn’t that serving is wrong. Jesus himself said that those who love him will obey him and bear fruit. The point is that service disconnected from closeness with God becomes exhausting and hollow. When we perform in order to earn God’s favor, faith becomes something we have to maintain rather than a relationship we get to live in.

Abiding comes first. Fruitfulness follows. Together, they are what it looks like to truly follow Jesus.

Daily Relationship, Not Occasional Encounters

When we initially think about an ongoing rhythm of connecting with Jesus, our minds might first jump to Ridgepoint’s weekly church service. More than that, God invites us into daily (even constant) awareness.

“Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, NLT)

“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.” (Psalm 16:8, NIV)

“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Colossians 3:17, ESV)

God doesn’t show up only on Sundays in a church service. God desires to be present in our everyday, ordinary lives—on our commutes, in conversations, at work, in rest, and through our routines.

DISCUSS

Mary chose presence over productivity. Where do you most feel the pull to perform for God rather than simply be with him? What does that performance look like in your daily life?

The Scriptures above describe a faith woven into ordinary moments—commutes, conversations, work, rest, etc. What would it practically look like to invite God into one part of your daily routine that currently feels completely separate from your faith?

GROWING TOGETHER

Walking with God reshapes how we see ourselves, and that discovery happens best in community.

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, 'Abba, Father.' For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children." (Romans 8:14-16, NLT)

"See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1, NLT)

We aren't asked to live as religious achievers or spiritual consumers. God calls us his children! We are beloved sons and daughters of the King! However, that kind of relationship isn't formed immediately in isolation. Sons and daughters spend time with their parents, learning to recognize their voices, not through a single conversation, but through years of familiarity, presence, and paying attention. We learn to recognize God's voice the same way: through regular engagement with Scripture, honest prayer, and the wisdom of community. This doesn't mean closeness with God is reserved only for structured devotional time. As we explored earlier, God invites us into constant awareness, in our commutes, our conversations, our work, and our rest.

Grow Groups exist to help us discover that kind of divine community together. These groups create space for shared formation to grow and flourish over time. Not perfection, but progress. Not performance, but presence.

DISCUSS

In what ways do you tend to perform rather than abide? Is there a daily activity where you rarely acknowledge God's presence?

This week, choose one ordinary habit—driving, drinking coffee, answering emails—and intentionally invite God into it. Share with the group what habit you're choosing and why. Plan to report back next week.

LIVING IT OUT

As you grow in your relationship with God, begin paying attention to where he might be stirring your heart outward. In the coming weeks, your group will choose an **Out Project** together, a specific way to let your faith flow into the world around you. For now, just start noticing. Where do you feel compassion rising? What needs around you are hard to ignore?

WRAP-UP DISCUSSION & PRAYER

Discussion

- 1. Do you find it easier to believe in God or to walk with him daily? Why is that?*
- 2. Where do you notice performance creeping into your faith?*
- 3. How would your life change if you lived more fully from your identity as a beloved child of God?*

Closing Prayer

Take time to share personal prayer requests and pray for one another before concluding for this week. Feel free to include this prayer:

Lord, I don't just want to be saved by you. I want to walk with you. Teach me to recognize your presence in everyday life, and help us learn to do this together. Amen.



WEEK 4

IN: A SHARED LIFE TOGETHER

*We were never designed
to walk alone.*

WEEK 4

OPENING

Staying in the Fire

Picture a fire burning on a cold winter night. The logs are stacked close together, each one touching another. Flames rise, warmth spreads, and the room comes alive. The fire works because the logs share heat. Each one strengthens the others.

Now imagine taking one burning log and pulling it away from the fire, setting it off to one side. At first, it still glows. It still looks active. It still carries warmth.

But slowly, even imperceptibly, things begin to change. The glow fades. The crackle quiets. The heat disappears. Eventually, the log grows cold. Nothing was wrong with the log itself. It was still the same piece of wood. It still had potential to burn.

The only difference was separation.

When the same log is placed back into the fire, it doesn't need to be relit. Surrounded by heat, the embers reconnect. The flame returns. What had grown cold begins to burn hot again.

*The log was never meant to burn alone.
And neither were we.*



DISCUSS

Has there been a season in your life when your faith started to cool down because you were isolated from community? What did that feel like, and what eventually helped you reconnect?

The log doesn't need to be relit when it returns to the fire; the warmth just comes back due to the proximity to the other logs and the existing fire. Have you experienced something like that when returning to community after a period of distance? What drew you back?

A NOTE AS WE BEGIN...

If you're reading this and already feel some resistance, that's worth naming.

For some people, the idea of intentional community immediately sounds life-giving. For others, it may bring up real hesitation, and that hesitation often has legitimate roots. Maybe you've been hurt in a church context before, by a group that felt unsafe, a leader who let you down, or a community that turned out to be more "performance" than genuine relationship. Maybe you're simply wired as an introvert, and the idea of opening up in a group setting feels more draining than appealing. Or maybe you've done just fine on your own, and you're not entirely convinced you need this.

Those feelings are worth honoring, not dismissing.

This chapter isn't going to pretend that community is always easy or that every past experience with it has been good. What it will do is make the case that despite those real barriers, we were genuinely designed for this, and that the right kind of community, built on trust and grace, is worth the risk of trying again.

THE BIG IDEA

Faith was never meant to be lived alone.

From the very beginning, God designed our faith to grow in the context of community. We're built not only for a relationship with God, but also for relationships with one another. That's true of life in general, but it's especially true of our faith journeys.

Like the log, we were never designed to walk alone.

While our personal faith in Jesus matters deeply, Scripture never imagines faith as a solo project. Growth happens best when lives overlap, when people stay close enough to one another to ask honest questions, share their stories, pray together, and walk through life side by side.

That's why community isn't optional for spiritual maturity; it's essential.

Grow Groups exist because faith grows best when it's lived together. Put another way: Faith grows best not in rows of seats, but in circles of conversation.

SCRIPTURE AT THE CENTER

Throughout the Bible, we see that God consistently forms people into communities rather than leaving them to grow in isolation.

For example, we read in Ecclesiastes: *"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor. If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up... Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."* (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, NIV)

As the story of Scripture unfolds, God continually gathers people into communities of faith, first through the nation of Israel, then through the disciples who followed Jesus, and eventually through the church.

God forms us through one another.

When the first followers of Jesus began to gather, their life together had a clear rhythm: *"All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved."* (Acts 2:42-47, NLT)

Notice that these early disciples wove their faith not just into weekly gatherings, but also into the routine rhythms of their everyday lives. This continued beyond the early church in Acts.

We later read these encouragements:

- *“Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.” (Romans 12:10, NLT)*
- *“Share each other’s burdens...” (Galatians 6:2, NLT)*
- *“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:24-25, NLT)*

Of course, God also works in private moments. Our spiritual lives can be dramatically shaped by our own personal prayer, reflection, and Bible reading. However, left by yourself, your spiritual growth has a ceiling. You can only go so far by yourself.

Scripture makes it clear that God works effectively between people. He uses conversations, shared experiences, encouragement, correction, and even the simple presence of others to form us into people who look more like Jesus (who also lived in community).

This leads to an important truth about growing in community: Growth doesn’t just come from what we learn, but it also comes from who we learn with.

Grow Groups are designed to create space where individual faith is strengthened, tested, encouraged, and lived out together.

God forms us through one another more than we may often realize, and he designed it that way on purpose. We need each other to grow!

DISCUSS

The early church in Acts 2 wove faith into their everyday rhythms—meals, conversations, shared life. What would it look like for your faith to be that integrated into your daily routine rather than compartmentalized to certain times or places?

Hebrews 10 warns against giving up on meeting together. Why do you think it’s so easy to drift away from community, even when we know it’s good for us? What tends to make it feel optional?

WHY THIS MATTERS

What Happens When We Stay Connected

Faith rarely disappears all at once. More often, faith fades slowly.

When we drift into isolation, the changes to our faith lives are subtle at first. Prayer becomes less frequent. Passion grows quieter. Discouragement feels heavier. Temptation becomes harder to resist. Nothing dramatic happens, but something vital is slowly lost.

This is one reason why community matters so much.

Community doesn’t create faith (God does that). But community protects and sustains it. Just like a fire stays hot when the logs remain close, faith stays alive when people remain connected.

Here’s another truth that is easy to overlook: When one log is removed from the fire, it doesn’t just grow cold itself, but it also stops contributing heat to the rest of the fire.

We are not only strengthened by community, but we strengthen others. God often uses the encouragement, wisdom, and presence of ordinary believers to help shape someone else’s faith.

Your presence matters more than you might think. Your community needs you to help keep their faith active, alive, and warm!

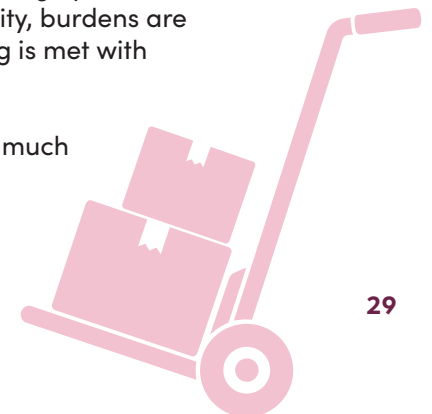
GROWING TOGETHER

Support Shows Up When Life Gets Heavy

God never intended us to carry life’s burdens alone.

Scripture repeatedly points us toward shared responsibility, reminding us of the importance of showing up for each other when life is hard. In a healthy community, burdens are named instead of hidden, and suffering is met with loving presence instead of silence.

This is where Grow Groups become so much more than just a “church meeting.”



When illness comes, when grief hits, when relationships strain, or when jobs are lost, communities turn faith into something tangible. Prayers are spoken. Meals are shared. People show up on our front porches, not with perfect answers, but with faithful presence.

That kind of care doesn't require expertise. It requires proximity.

If your group has been keeping a record of prayer requests since Week 1, take a moment occasionally to look back through them together. Celebrating answered prayers, following up on ongoing needs, and noticing patterns of God's faithfulness over time is one of the most powerful things a community can do. It turns abstract faith into something concrete and visible, a living record of God moving among ordinary people who chose to show up for one another.

Accountability That Leads to Freedom

The word "accountability" is sometimes misunderstood as control or correction—someone looking over your shoulder making sure you're on your best behavior. However, in healthy community, this is not the case.

At its best, accountability is care. True accountability asks honest questions with a posture of love. It looks like people paying attention to one another's lives. It creates a healthy space where struggles can be named without fear, embarrassment, or shame.

The book of Proverbs refers to this type of relationship: *"As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend."* (Proverbs 27:17, NLT)

Healthy people mutually "sharpen" each other with care and gentle correction. Freedom grows where honesty is welcomed and grace is freely given.

In practice, accountability in a Grow Group often looks simpler than we might expect. It's a group member following up on something someone shared the week before. It's noticing when someone has been quiet or absent and reaching out. It's asking "How are you really doing?" and actually waiting for an honest answer. It's a culture where struggles can be named out loud without fear of judgment and where growth is celebrated genuinely. None of that requires a formal system or checklist; it just requires people who are paying attention.

Accountability isn't about being watched closely, with critics nearby ready to pounce when you fall. Instead, true accountability is about being truly, deeply understood and known.

Navigating Differences with Grace

Any time a relationship is formed between two (or more) humans, differences will surface. However, conflict is not a sign of failure; it's actually a sign that community is real.

People come into Grow Groups with vastly different backgrounds, personalities, experiences, and perspectives. Disagreement is inevitable, so it is important to handle that conflict appropriately.

The apostle Paul has helpful advice for how to react when we don't see eye to eye: *"Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace."* (Ephesians 4:2-3, NLT)

However, it's also important to note that unity does not mean uniformity. You don't have to be the same. We can hold differing convictions without losing compassion. The overarching goal of community should remain to grow together in Christ, not to win an argument.

Healthy Grow Groups commit to speaking honestly, listening carefully, and protecting unity even when disagreements arise.

If these are handled well, differences in opinion can actually lead to deeper trust and richer understanding. Don't stir controversy recklessly, but be open to differences, and start with a humble desire to learn and strengthen each other.

Why Consistency Matters

Healthy community doesn't happen quickly by accident. It grows slowly over time, through consistency.

When people meet regularly, trust deepens. Conversations eventually move beyond surface-level updates. Vulnerability becomes safer. Relationships begin to carry weight.

Scripture encourages us to not give up meeting together, because spiritual momentum requires presence and repetition. Sporadic connection makes it hard to build the kind of trust real growth requires.

Grow Groups are not simply something we attend when it's convenient. This is meant to develop a steady rhythm, a place where your friends not only know your name, but they notice your absence, and they are ready to walk alongside you when life gets rough.

Consistency builds community. Community sustains faith. Together, we help keep the fire burning.

DISCUSS

Think about a time when someone's faithful presence (not advice or expertise, but just their showing up) made a real difference for you. What did that mean to you, and what does it tell you about what community is really for?

The idea of true accountability is being deeply known rather than closely watched. Is that a version of accountability you've experienced before? What would it take for this group to become that kind of safe space?

Where do you feel most tempted to carry life on your own right now? When life feels heavy, what usually keeps you from letting others in?

LIVING IT OUT

Community formed only for itself eventually turns inward. As your group continues building trust and life together, now is a good time to begin looking outward together as well.

Before your next meeting, spend a few minutes individually browsing Ridgepoint's vetted list of local ministries and service opportunities at ridgepointwichita.com/out. Come to Week 5 with one or two options that caught your attention and a brief sense of why.

You don't need to make a decision yet — just start paying attention to what rises to the surface for you personally. Next week, you'll discern and decide together.

WRAP-UP DISCUSSION & PRAYER

Discussion

- 1. Which habit did you invite God into last week? What was that experience like?***
- 2. When have you experienced your faith growing stronger because of a meaningful community?***
- 3. Why do you think spiritual growth is difficult to sustain in isolation?***
- 4. What tends to pull you away from staying connected to others?***
- 5. Where do you most need support or encouragement right now?***
- 6. How can this Grow Group help you stay "close to the fire"?***
- 7. As you look ahead to choosing an Out Project together, what kinds of needs or people do you feel most drawn toward? Is there anything already in your daily life — a neighborhood, a school, a person — that might be an invitation toward long-term faithfulness?***

Closing Prayer

Take time to share personal prayer requests and pray for one another before concluding for this week. Feel free to include this prayer:

God, thank you for designing us for community. Help us to resist isolation and choose connection. Give us courage to be known, patience to love well, and grace to stay committed to one another. Teach us how to grow together. Amen.

WEEK 5

OUT: OUT- WARD FOCUSED FAITH

Faith is meant to flow.

WEEK 5

OPENING

Picture a raging river, compared to a static reservoir.

A reservoir is designed to collect and store water. A river, on the other hand, receives water and then releases it, moving water downstream enabling life to flourish far beyond its original source.

When water stops moving, stagnation sets in. What once brought life eventually becomes unhealthy, not because the water itself is bad, but because it was never meant to stay contained.

Faith works the same way.

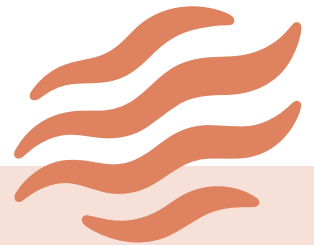
God pours his grace, truth, forgiveness, and love into our lives. That filling is real, necessary, and good. But the contents were never meant to stop with us. When faith is only received and never released, something essential is lost.

Think about a cup sitting under a running faucet. At first it simply fills, but eventually the water reaches the top and begins to spill over. What was poured in begins to overflow out.

Healthy faith flows.

It moves outward, toward people, needs, neighborhoods, and places where God's love has not yet been fully experienced. When faith flows, it brings life. When it stops, it slowly stagnates.

This outward movement isn't a sign of spiritual maturity reserved for only a few. This should be a natural outcome of all disciples of Jesus.



DISCUSS

Be honest: Does your faith feel more like a river or a reservoir right now? What does that look like in your day-to-day life?

When you think about your faith "flowing outward," what comes to mind first: a person, a place, a need, or something else? Why do you think that's where your mind goes?

BEFORE WE DIVE IN

Take a few minutes to share what came up for you as you browsed ridgepointwichita.com/out this week. What stood out? What felt compelling? As a group, see if a clear direction begins to emerge. You don't have to finalize everything yet, but aim to leave today with a shared sense of where you're headed.

THE BIG IDEA

Faith that follows Jesus never stops with us.

Faith in Jesus is never the final destination. It's the preparation. The rhythm Jesus modeled—**Up, In, and Out**—is how that preparation happens. But these aren't three steps to complete in order. They're three dimensions of a single, integrated life of faith, each one constantly informing and strengthening the others.

God draws us closer to himself (**Up**).

God shapes us through one another (**In**).

God sends us into the world around us (**Out**).

These movements happen together, not in sequence. You don't finish **Up** before you begin **In**, and you don't graduate from **In** before you're ready for **Out**. In fact, as we'll see in a moment, Jesus often used the act of sending as part of the formation process itself. The rhythm is ongoing—a way of living, not a ladder to climb.

SCRIPTURE AT THE CENTER

Blessed to Be a Blessing

From the very beginning of the Bible, God's blessing was never meant to stop with one person or with one group of people. When God called Abraham, he told him: "I will bless you [and] all the families on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:2-3, NLT)

From Abraham to us, God's people were always meant to become a channel of blessing to the world around them. The blessings we receive from God are not meant to be stored in a reservoir; they are meant to flow outward like a river.

Jesus Forms and Sends People

Jesus modeled this pattern in his ministry. Jesus didn't simply gather followers together so they could stay close to him and to each other. Again and again, Jesus formed and developed people through sending them out—formation and mission happening side by side, not one after the other.

Luke describes one moment like this: *"The Lord now chose seventy-two other disciples and sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns and places he planned to visit. These were his instructions to them: 'The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.'"* (Luke 10:1-2, NLT)

Notice the pattern: Jesus doesn't wait until his followers are fully prepared, perfectly confident, or completely fearless. He sends them as they are—together—fully relying on God to meet them along the way.

Empowered by the Spirit

Jesus also reminded his followers that they could not live this outward-facing life through their own strength alone. We would need a helper: *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (Acts 1:8, NLT)

The same Spirit who fills our lives also empowers us to carry God's love outward to others. Jesus used water imagery to describe exactly this—the Spirit flowing not just into us, but through us: *"Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'" (When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him.)* (John 7:38-39, NLT)

The promise isn't simply that we receive "living water"—it's that the Spirit flows outward through us into the lives of others.

The outward flow isn't optional. It is embedded in the life Jesus offers us. Faith that connects us to God inevitably moves beyond us, touching the lives of others in real and tangible ways.

DISCUSS

Jesus sent his disciples out before they were fully ready, together, relying on God. Has there been a time when you stepped out in faith before you felt prepared? What happened, and what did you learn from it?

Acts 1:8 says we'll receive power to be witnesses. Do you tend to think of "being a witness" as something that requires a special calling or skill set, or as something that's simply part of following Jesus? Where does that idea come from for you?

WHY THIS MATTERS

Moving Beyond "One-and-Done"

One of the most common ways groups approach serving others is with good intentions but limited imagination.

A service project is chosen. A date is scheduled. The task is completed. Everyone feels good. And then life moves on.

While short-term acts of service can be meaningful, living **Out** invites us into something deeper. The outward movement of faith is not meant to be occasional; it's meant to be formational. Over time, faithful presence shapes both those who serve and those who are served.

Jesus didn't love people from a distance or in isolated moments. He stayed in people's homes. He returned to towns he had already visited. He noticed people that others overlooked. He built relationships over time. That kind of impact doesn't happen quickly.

Outward-facing faith asks us to resist the urge to simply check a one-time service project box. Instead, we are challenged to adopt a posture of long-term engagement.

GROWING TOGETHER

A Picture of Long-Term Faithfulness

In the year 2000, a small Sunday School class from Ridgepoint was asked to take on a mission project. Three young families had committed to 10 years of missionary service to reach the unreached people of Thailand. The three families weren't from Ridgepoint, but were introduced to the class. The class was also made up of young families, and they decided to take it upon themselves to champion this team, which became known as Team 2000.

The class began praying regularly for the team. Many supported them financially, and several families even "adopted" the missionaries, sending gifts for birthdays and Christmas. After the team had been in Thailand for a few years, the class organized a short-term mission trip to visit the missionaries on the ground.

This service project lasted well past the initial 10-year commitment and became a tremendous source of blessing, strength, friendship, and inspiration for both the class and the team. What began as a little project in Wichita resulted in many lives transformed in Thailand and literally around the world.

However, we don't have to go to Thailand to live this way. Faith that flows outward can begin right where we are.

Thinking Bigger Without Overlooking What's Close

When we hear stories of large-scale impact (global missions, church planting, humanitarian work), it can be easy to assume that **Out** only applies to big, visible efforts.

Sometimes God does call groups to engage in work that stretches far beyond their immediate context, and those stories matter. They remind us that God's kingdom stretches far beyond our own neighborhoods.

However, outward faith is not measured by distance traveled or numbers reached. "Big" projects are not the only ones that "count."

Outward-facing faith can look like:

- Faithful presence in a local school
- Consistent care for a neighborhood in need
- Long-term support for a struggling family
- Showing up again and again in the same place

This kind of expression is not small. These are significant!

God uses both global vision and local faithfulness to bring his love to the world. What matters most is not scale, but commitment.

A Mindset

Living with an outward focus begins with how we see the world.

It means actively paying attention to needs instead of passively waiting for opportunities to be announced. It means asking, “Where is God already at work, and how can we join him?” It means letting compassion interrupt convenience.

Outward faith grows when we stop asking, “What’s the easiest thing we can do?” and instead start asking, “What is the most faithful way we can show up?”

This mindset takes time to develop, but once it does, serving others becomes less about planning events and more about living intentionally.

DISCUSS

The Team 2000 story started with a simple introduction and a willingness to show up consistently over time. Is there a person, place, or community already in your life that might be an invitation to that kind of long-term faithfulness—something you’ve overlooked?

This chapter describes a shift from asking “What’s the easiest thing we can do?” to “What’s the most faithful way we can show up?” What would that shift look like for you personally, or for this group?

When you think about serving others, do you tend to look for short-term tasks or long-term relationships? Where do you think that tendency comes from?

Who or what comes to mind when you ask, “Where is God already at work around me?”

LIVING IT OUT

Grow Groups are not meant to exist only for themselves; they are communities formed for the sake of others.

When a Grow Group commits to living with this perspective, service stops being an occasional activity and becomes a shared identity. This group begins to notice needs together, discern opportunities together, and respond together.

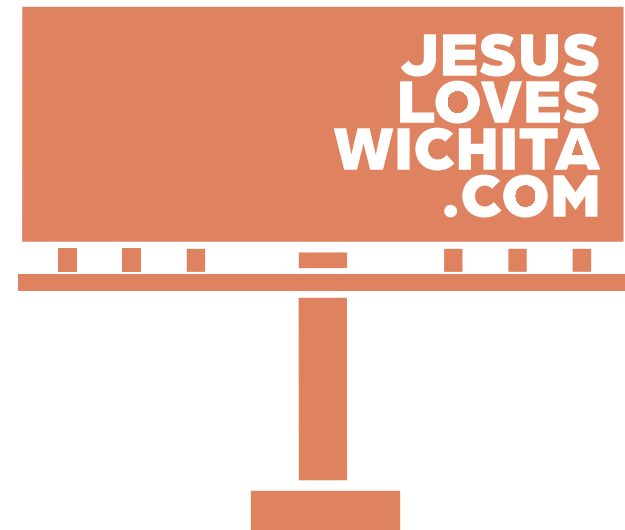
This might look different from group to group. Some will feel called toward broader initiatives, while others focus on more local relationships. Remember, both expressions matter. The important thing is to stay engaged. Keep showing up even when progress is slow or unseen.

Outward faith doesn’t rush. It remains faithful. Over time, that faith begins to change the world around us.

Choose an Out Project

By now you’ve had a chance to explore the ministry opportunities at ridgepointwichita.com/out and share what stood out to you. If your group hasn’t landed on a direction yet, take a few more minutes now to finalize your choice. The goal is to leave today with a clear commitment, not just a good intention.

If your chosen project requires financial support, Ridgepoint’s **Jesus Loves Wichita** fund may be able to help. Learn more and submit an application at ridgepointwichita.com/jlw.



DISCUSS

What stood out to you about the idea of faith flowing?

Where do you see the temptation to treat service as a one-time project rather than a long-term investment? What local needs or opportunities feel most compelling to you right now?

How could this Grow Group take a step toward living out this principle together?

A WORD BEFORE YOU GO

What you've started here matters more than you may realize. The world around us is increasingly marked by disconnection, distraction, and isolation. We have chosen something different. We've chosen to slow down, to show up, to be honest with a small circle of people, and to grow together in the way of Jesus.

That is the ancient rhythm of the church. It is what faithful discipleship has always looked like—not perfectly, but persistently. Not in rows of seats, but in circles of conversation. Not alone, but together. Keep showing up. Keep being honest. Keep moving **Up, In, and Out**.

The best is still ahead.

CLOSING PRAYER

Take time to share personal prayer requests and pray for one another before concluding. Feel free to include this prayer:

God, thank you for what you've done in this group over these weeks. Thank you for the conversations, the honesty, and the courage it took to show up. As we move forward, keep drawing us closer to you, deeper into community with one another, and further out into the world you love. Send us out together—changed, and ready to bring your love wherever we go. Amen.

WE BEGIN A NEW SERIES NEXT WEEK!

Visit ridgepointwichita.com/media to access group discussion questions.



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