

Small Group Guide: UNDER THE HOOD - Community Groups

Opening Question

If your spiritual life were a car, what would it be right now - and why? Examples: a dependable truck, a sports car, a minivan, a car in the shop, or a classic car.

Opening Prayer

God, thank You for bringing us together. Help us to listen with open hearts and not just gain information, but take steps of obedience. Show us where You want to grow us, encourage us, and help us apply Your Word in real life. In Jesus' name, amen.

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

Spiritual growth is more than church attendance. Coming to church, opening God's Word, listening, and learning are important - but they are only part of the process.

Jesus calls us to hear and obey. In Matthew 7, Jesus compares the wise and foolish builders. Both hear His words, but only the wise person puts them into practice.

Hearing without doing can deceive us. Pastor Dan emphasized James 1:22: if we only listen to God's Word but do not apply it, we deceive ourselves.

God's Word is like a mirror. It shows us what is true about our lives - what is healthy, what needs attention, and what needs to change. Looking in the mirror is not enough; we need to respond.

Obedience leads to freedom. God's commands are not meant to trap us, but to help us live free from sin, bitterness, destructive patterns, and bondage.

Transformation happens best in community. Rows matter: worship gatherings and sermons are important. Circles matter too: Community Groups help us apply God's Word through encouragement, care, accountability, and serving together.

Community Groups help move us from general to personal application. In a large gathering, we may hear about relationships or forgiveness in general. In a group, we can talk about how God's Word applies to our actual lives in a healthy and supportive way.

Discussion Questions

1. **Read Matthew 7:24-27.** What is the main difference between the wise builder and the foolish builder? Why do you think Jesus ends the Sermon on the Mount with this image?
2. In Matthew 7, both houses experienced storms. What does that teach us about the role of obedience in difficult seasons?
3. **Read James 1:22-25.** James says we can "deceive ourselves" by only listening to the Word. What are some ways people might confuse hearing God's Word with actually obeying it?
4. James compares God's Word to a mirror. What are some healthy ways we can respond when Scripture reveals something that needs to change in us?
5. Pastor Dan said, "Hearing plus doing equals the difference." Why is application such an important part of spiritual growth?
6. Pastor Dan used forgiveness as something we may hear about often but struggle to practice. Why are some commands of Scripture easier to agree with than to obey?
7. What are some benefits of discussing and applying Scripture in a Community Group instead of only hearing a sermon in a large gathering?
8. **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11.** What does it look like for a Community Group to "encourage one another and build each other up" in practical, everyday ways?

Practical Applications (Choose one or two.)

1. **Choose one thing to apply this week.** From the sermon or group discussion, identify one specific step of obedience you believe God is calling you to take.
2. **Use the mirror question.** As you read Scripture this week, ask: "What is God showing me, and what adjustment do I need to make?"
3. **Move from intention to action.** If you already know something God has been prompting you to do - apologize, forgive, serve, give, or change a habit - take one concrete step this week.
4. **Engage more fully in Community Group.** Come ready to share, listen, encourage, and help others apply God's Word - not just discuss ideas.
5. **Encourage someone.** Based on 1 Thessalonians 5:11, intentionally build someone up this week through a text, prayer, phone call, note, or act of service.

Memory Verse for This Week

James 1:22 - "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

Closing Prayer

Lord, thank You for Your Word and for the reminder that You call us not only to hear, but to obey. Help us build our lives on the foundation of Jesus. Give us courage to take the next step You are showing us, and use this group to encourage, care for, and build one another up. In Jesus' name, amen.