

“I myself will gather the remnant of my flock...
they shall be fruitful and multiply.”

Jeremiah 23:3

Gather

One Church, Encountering Jesus,
Equipping Disciples, and Living Mercy



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Objectives

1. Give participants an experience where the 4 habits converge.

A small group lectio study allows participants to grow in prayer, compassion, friendship, and invitation.

2. Facilitate an encounter with God through Scripture.

This series does not primarily provide an *education* in faith, but *life transformation* through an encounter with the living God.

3. Engage hearts through an experience of beauty.

The Psalm and painting for each week help engage the emotions and arouse the imagination as aids to prayer.

4. Form authentic friendships.

Make time for casual conversation and the sharing of life together both during and outside of the weekly meetings.

5. Send out witnesses to share the Good News.

As Pope Francis said in *The Joy of the Gospel*, "anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love." We expect that many who complete the *Gather* study as a participant will go on to lead their own group with encouragement and minimal coaching.

Who do I invite?

Those most likely to benefit from the *Gather* Bible study are those who:

- Already have a personal relationship with Jesus
- Desire to follow Jesus more faithfully
- Are becoming aware of their call to share Jesus with others

Use the Small Group Action Plan that starts on page 9 to guide you in making invitations.

Note: These characteristics refer to internal dispositions and attitudes that are best discovered through personal conversations where individuals feel heard and respected.

Disclaimers

1. *This is not group counseling.* If someone is experiencing strong emotion (particularly if it is a negative emotion), some in the group may be tempted to step in to comfort in a way that could be distracting for the rest of the group. Do your best to redirect the conversation and allow Jesus to finish what he has started in their heart.
2. *This is more than intellectual discussion.* We are not primarily seeking intellectual understanding, but prayer – a heart-to-heart conversation with God. As such, historical background, language, and other intellectual insights are best left to another time.

Suggested Meeting Outline

20 Minutes	Casual Conversation	Provide your group members an opportunity to build relationships – it will allow them to be more honest in later group discussions.
10 Minutes	Psalm & Conversation Starters	Read the Psalm aloud and check in on last week's group action.
45 Minutes	WRAP with the Gospel	Ask for a volunteer to read the Gospel passage aloud; then follow the process for WRAP as outlined in the guide.
10 Minutes	Going Deeper	Read the Scripture verses and ask the "going deeper questions" to guide your group's discussion.
5 Minutes	Group Action & Psalm	Introduce the group action and encourage your group to take the challenge. Then read the Psalm aloud as a closing prayer.
Total Time: 90 Minutes	End on Time	Everyone is free to leave at this point, but the leader should be prepared to stick around for anyone would like to continue the discussion.

1. Pray to the Holy Spirit for open hearts and the gift of prayer. Draw your group members' attention to any particular graces they are seeking in this time.
2. **WRITE**
 - a. **Read the Passage Aloud.** It is best to have a consistent reader, as some people get distracted as reading styles change.
 - b. Guide your group members to notice where the Lord draws their attention and **write** it down. This could be a word, phrase, or image. Give them permission to re-read the passage silently.
 - c. Invite anyone in your group who feels comfortable to share what the Lord is bringing to their attention. Acknowledge their contributions with a simple smile while encouraging silence rather than conversation at this point.
3. **REFLECT**
 - a. Read it aloud again
 - b. Invite your group members to deeper reflection on the scripture passage, saying something like, "Let the Lord draw your mind back to what initially grabbed your attention and use your imagination and intellect to **reflect** on what is going on in the passage."
 - c. Allow your group members time to write, then invite them to share as they feel comfortable.
4. **APPLY**
 - a. Read the passage aloud a final time.
 - b. Invite your group members to see the personal application of the Gospel passage, saying something like, "This time make it personal as you **apply** the passage to yourself. Where are you in the story?"
 - c. Allow time for writing, then invite people to share.
5. **PRAY**
 - a. Allow time for each member of your group to write a personal **prayer** in response to God.
 - b. Close with an Our Father.

The WRAP Method

*WRAP is an acronym and method for Lectio Divina from the book WRAP Yourself In Scripture © by Karen & Lawrence Dwyer published by The Institute for Priestly Formation (2011, 2018). The WRAP Method involves four steps: Write, Reflect, Apply, and Pray with Scripture.

KEYS FOR SUCCESS

1. Complete the *Small Group Action Plan* (on the next pages).

The Small Group Action Plan will guide you through all of the logistical considerations of beginning a small group.

2. Pray for your group members daily.

God is the one who changes hearts. Ask him every day to supply the grace needed for deep and lasting conversion of hearts.

3. Read and pray ahead.

Pray through the Gospel passage for the upcoming week ahead of time, and think through how you might answer the discussion questions.

4. Meet Weekly.

We recommend your group meet weekly through the initial study for consistency and maximum impact. However, it can be spread out longer if needed.

5. Facilitate discussion instead of teaching.

Setting yourself up as the "teacher" can discourage participation from group members who are unsure of what they believe or who already feel like they don't belong. Trust that Jesus is revealing himself to them through their prayer with the scriptures, in just the way they need.

6. Build relationships with your group members.

Disciples are made in the context of authentic friendships. So, your effectiveness as a group leader and disciple-maker requires that you maximize the amount of time you spend together with your group, even outside the formal group time.

7. Cast vision for multiplying groups.

As you near the end of the series, begin encouraging your group members to look beyond your group to other people in their lives who might be ready to hear the Good News of Jesus. It is important to avoid an insular mentality - sharing the love of Jesus should be a natural overflow of our own encounter.



**Small Group
Action Plan**

Questions for Reflection

Stepping Out in Faith

“Jesus said to them, ‘How many loaves do you have?’” What “loaves” do you have that the Lord can bless and multiply? (e.g., hospitality, listening ears, gift of gab, etc.).

List any fears about leading a small group that might be holding you back (e.g., lack of knowledge, fear of making invitations, disqualifying past, etc).

Help from the Lord

Who might help you co-lead as your “wingman” if you asked them?

Who will you ask to keep you accountable to this Action Plan, through both encouragement and practical coaching?

Logistics

Choose Day of the Week:

Sun

Mon

Tues

Wed

Thurs

Fri

Sat

Choose Location:

My home

Conference room at work

Someone else's home

Zoom

Coffee shop

Park

Other location: _____

Choose Time:

Before work

Over lunch

After weekend Mass

In the evening

After parish/school event

Other time

Target Start Date: ___ / ___ / ___

Make Invitations By: ___ / ___ / ___

Childcare Options:

No childcare

Grandparents

Split cost of a sitter

Other: _____

Possible Roles to Delegate to Other Members of the Group:

Provide drinks

Icebreaker

Provide snacks

Opening prayer

Other: _____

Set Time:

Start: ___:___ am/pm

End: ___:___ am/pm

Identifying your Mission Field

List the different affinity groups in which you consider yourself an “insider” (e.g., school parents, soccer moms, co-workers, neighborhood friends, etc). Consider others who belong to these groups as potential small group participants.

Use the table on the next page to plan your invitations:

1. Begin listing the names of people you could invite to your small group (6-10 attendees is ideal)
2. Ask the Lord why he wants that person to come, and write that down (use this reason when you make your invitation)
3. Think about when you will see the person and have an opportunity for a face-to-face conversation (if at all possible) – when and how will you strike up a conversation?
4. Pray for these people by name, both now and throughout your small groups

Name	How to Invite
Ex. Bob Smith	<p>Why: <i>He is new to town and I think the Lord wants him to have true friends here</i></p> <p>Method: <i>Ask him when we get coffee together in the break room at work</i></p>
	<p>Why:</p> <p>Method:</p>



Gather Study



Week One: **Prayer & Compassion**

Psalm 16:9-11

℟ You are my inheritance, O Lord.

Therefore my heart is glad, my soul rejoices; my body also dwells secure,
For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, nor let your devout one see the pit. **℟**

You will show me the path to life, abounding joy in your presence, the delights at your
right hand forever. **℟**

Conversation Starter

1. Who is a person you admire for the way they live habits of prayer & compassion?
2. What is one grace you have received from the Lord in the past week?



Resurrection of Lazarus, c. 1896 (Henry Ossawa Tanner)

Week One:
Prayer & Compassion

WRAP with the Gospel - John 11:38-43

Raising of Lazarus

Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Write

Reflect

Apply

Pray

Week Two: Friendship

Psalm 8:5-7

℞ O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!

What is man that you are mindful of him, and a son of man that you care for him? ℞

Yet you have made him little less than a god, crowned him with glory and honor. ℞

You have given him rule over the works of your hands, put all things at his feet. ℞

Conversation Starter

1. Who in your life has been a true friend to you?
2. What are some characteristics that make your friendships meaningful to you?



Jesus Washing Peter's Feet, c. 1852 (Ford Maddox Brown)

Week Two:
Friendship

WRAP with the Gospel - John 15:8-17

The Vine and the Branches

By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another.

Write

Reflect

Apply

Pray

Week Two: Friendship

Going Deeper Questions

1. What might it look like for you to lay down your life for your friends in a practical way?

2. How have you seen Jesus be a friend to you?

Summary Thought

It can be easy for us to grow complacent in our friendships, to limit ourselves to a group we have always been part of, or to be content with superficial conversation. To practice the habit of friendship means we are: (1) more intentional about forming friendships, (2) more authentic in our conversations, (3) more determined to share the greatest good (eternal life).

Group Action

Commit to making a friend. It could be someone new or someone you already know. Who will you reach out to, and how will you start a more authentic conversation with them?

Psalm 8:5-7

℟ O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!

What is man that you are mindful of him, and a son of man that you care for him? **℟**
 Yet you have made him little less than a god, crowned him with glory and honor. **℟**
 You have given him rule over the works of your hands, put all things at his feet. **℟**

Week Three: Invitation

Psalm 145:3-4, 6-7

℟ I will praise your name for ever, Lord.

Great is the Lord and worthy of much praise, whose grandeur is beyond understanding. One generation praises your deeds to the next and proclaims your mighty works. **℟**

They speak of the power of your awesome acts and recount your great deeds. They celebrate your abounding goodness, and joyfully sing of your justice. **℟**

Conversation Starter

1. What is something you never would have experienced if you were not invited by a friend?
2. What causes you to say "yes" to another person's invitation?



Christ and the Samaritan Woman, c. 1890 (Henryk Hector Siemiradzki)

Week Three:
Invitation

WRAP with the Gospel - John 1:38-46

The First Disciples of Jesus

Jesus turned and saw [two disciples of John the Baptist] following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi"... "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah"... Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John, you will be called Cephas"...

The next day he decided to go to Galilee, and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, and also the prophets, Jesus son of Joseph, from Nazareth. But Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

Write

Reflect

Apply

Pray

Week Three: Invitation

Going Deeper Questions

1. Philip responds right away to Jesus' invitation, but Nathanael is more skeptical. How do you typically respond to invitations?
2. What holds you back from making invitations to others?

Summary Thought

Often we can rely too much on generic mass communications of our parish (bulletin, pulpit announcements, etc.) to make invitations, instead of taking initiative ourselves. To practice the habit of invitation means that each one of us would make invitations to the people in our lives as a fruit of prayer and of listening to their felt needs.

Group Action

Who are some other people you know that might be excited to lead a small group for Lent? Make a list and commit to inviting them to attend a Live Lent Together training session.

Psalm 145:3-4, 6-7

℟ I will praise your name for ever, Lord.

Great is the Lord and worthy of much praise, whose grandeur is beyond understanding. One generation praises your deeds to the next and proclaims your mighty works. **℟**

They speak of the power of your awesome acts and recount your great deeds. They celebrate your abounding goodness, and joyfully sing of your justice. **℟**



Archdiocese *of* Omaha