

Picture Perfect - Participant's Guide
Real Relationships in an Imperfect World

WEEK 1: Christ-Centered Life

Bible Passage(s) for Community Group Discussion: John 15:1-17

Discussion Idea: Jesus is the true vine, and our ultimate success in life is dependent upon our attachment to him. When we abide in Jesus and his Word we are promised that fruit will be produced in our life. When we abide in Jesus and follow his commands, we have the promise of the full joy of Jesus in our life. Abiding - being attached to Jesus impacts our ability to love others.

WEEK 2: Connection

Bible Passage(s) for Community Group Discussion: Hebrews 10:19-25

Discussion Idea: We were created to do life together. This week we look at three "let us" statements that identify a connection between our relationship with God and our relationship with others. We are hardwired for deep connection with both God and other people. Therefore, if we are to remain faithful to the mission of Christ, we need to intentionally invest in both our relationship with God and our relationships with other believers, especially those people in our home and church spheres.

WEEK 3: Communication

Bible Passage(s) for Community Group Discussion: James 3:2-12

Discussion Idea: Good communication has far more to do with our hearts than with our tongues. James is not calling for will-power and determination to control our tongue, rather he is identifying that our heart is the key to controlling our tongue. As we submit our lives to Jesus, and allow him to give us a new heart we can, then, begin taming the wild re of our words. As our hearts are filled with Jesus, with His Word, with His salvation and grace, our words reveal that our heart is under new management. How we speak and how we listen directly affect our relationships with others.

WEEK 4: Commitment

Bible Passage(s) for Community Group Discussion: Joshua 24:14-27

Discussion Idea: God displays faithfulness and commitment to us, his people, again and again. Relationships that last require commitment. Commitment involves saying yes to something and saying no to things that undermine the commitment. It also means working through challenging moments. Commitment starts with our relationship with Jesus, which then impacts all other relationships.

WEEK 5: Community

Bible Passage(s) for Community Group Discussion: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

Discussion Idea: God draws people to Himself to be his children, to be his body. This changes how they interact with each other. It impacts how they value each other and press into building relationships that support and strengthen each other. Every individual person must choose to respond to Christ, but we do not follow Christ alone. We become a community that follows Christ together. This is how we reflect Jesus to the people around us. We need the example and support of other believers to succeed. Healthy relationships do not exist in a vacuum.

RELATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: GROUP GUIDELINES

Setting some basic group guidelines for how we will honor one another in our group discussions is important.

- Ground rules give boundaries for people to operate within.
 - They help with the flow and pace of discussions.
 - They help us value one another.
 - They help people to be more comfortable sharing deep and meaningful things.
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SAFE GROUP: We strive to create an environment where everyone can be real, open, and honest with their struggles and victories.

CONFIDENTIALITY: What is said in the group stays in the group.

LISTEN: Let's value one another during the discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Try to avoid thinking about how you are going to respond, or what you are going to say next.

PAUSE: Allow a pause in conversation after someone shares. Give the person sharing the chance to finish and the group the opportunity to consider what was just shared before responding.

SILENCE: It is important to allow silence in the group as it provides an opportunity for someone to share and for members in the group to process the topic or question being considered.

NO "CROSS TALK": Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations.

NO FIXING: We are not here to fix each other. Jesus does that part. Give encouragement; speak truth, and point to Jesus. Don't try to solve or fix each other.

NO RESCUING: When people are sharing something deeply personal, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation by providing immediate condolences. This will often cause them to stop sharing. Resist the temptation to rescue people.

SHARING: Be sensitive about the amount of time you share.

CONFLICT: We will commit to resolve conflict biblically. When conflict or sin issues between group members arise, we want to make sure that we are

honoring God and each other in the way we deal with these issues. The following are a few key Scriptures in this regard (*there are many others*).

- If someone sins against you – ***Matthew 18:15-20***
- Restoring someone in sin - ***Galatians 6:1-5***
- Forgive a sinner - ***Colossians 3:12-13***
- Reconciling differences – ***Matthew 5:23-24, Matthew 7:1-5***

BE SELF-AWARE: Be self-aware of how you are personally effecting the environment through your words, actions, and non-verbal communication.

USE “I” STATEMENTS: It’s easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Try to use “I” statements rather than “them”, “the church”, “us”, “we”, etc.

Picture Perfect - Week 1 - Participant's Guide

Christ-Centered Life

John 15:1-17

Discussion Idea: *The target for today's group discussion:*

Jesus is the true vine, and our ultimate success in life is dependent upon our attachment to him. When we abide in Jesus and his Word we are promised that fruit will be produced in our life. When we abide in Jesus and follow his commands, we have the promise of the full joy of Jesus in our life. Abiding - being attached to Jesus impacts our ability to love others.

John 15:1-17: *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will[b] ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. 9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. 11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. 12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. 17 These things I command you, that you love one another.*

Group Discussion Questions:

1. What does this passage show you about abiding or remaining and fruit?
2. What does it say about not abiding?
3. As a follower of Jesus, what determines what kinds of fruit (attitudes, actions, words) will be produced in your life?
4. What does it look like for you to abide in Jesus?

5. How have you grown in abiding? (Being connected to Jesus this last year or so?)
6. What has helped you abide - be attached to Jesus?
7. Pruning is a process necessary for producing fruit and more fruit. You have probably experienced running as you follow Jesus - you might even be in the midst of that process! Share your experience with the group.
8. Read Galatians 5:22-23. When you think about your life, what kind of fruit do you want to produce?

Galatians 5:22-23: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

9. How does this fruit affect your relationships?
10. Take some time to examine your abiding relationship with Jesus. Ask him what fruit he would like to grow in you and what branches he is running. Pray over your family, your fellow Christ followers, and church leaders. Pray for your neighbors, co-workers, and city officials.

Prayer Time: Pray for one another

Picture Perfect - Week 2 - Participant's Guide
Connection
Hebrews 10:19-25

Discussion Idea: *The target for today's group discussion:*

We were created to do life together. This week we look at three “let us” statements that identify a connection between our relationship with God and our relationship with others. We are hardwired for deep connection with both God and other people. Therefore, if we are to remain faithful to the mission of Christ, we need to intentionally invest in both our relationship with God and our relationships with other believers, especially those people in our home and church spheres.

Hebrews 10:19-25: *Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Group Discussion Questions:

1. There are three “let us” statements in verses 22-25 of this passage. List them together as a group and talk about what each of them means.
2. How are these statements connected to each other?
3. What is important about meeting together?
4. How do you grow in being connected in your key relationships?
5. What happens if you don't connect or you get disconnected in relationships? How do you get reconnected or help someone get reconnected?
6. What does it look like to “spur one another on toward love and good deeds”? (Hebrews 10:24)
7. Give an example of how someone has “spurred” you on in your own life?
8. Is there someone you know that needs to be connected into real relationship? What's your part in helping them?

9. In what specific ways can you spur others on towards love and good deeds?

10. What do love and good deeds look like in your community? Think of how they could provide a platform for connecting people and sharing your life and the gospel.

Prayer Time: Pray for one another

Picture Perfect - Week 3 - Participant's Guide
Communication
James 3:2-12

Discussion Idea: *The target for today's group discussion:*

Good communication has far more to do with our hearts than with our tongues. James is not calling for will-power and determination to control our tongue, rather he is identifying that our heart is the key to controlling our tongue. As we submit our lives to Jesus, and allow him to give us a new heart we can, then, begin taming the wild re of our words. As our hearts are filled with Jesus, with His Word, with His salvation and grace, our words reveal that our heart is under new management. How we speak and how we listen directly affect our relationships with others.

James 3:2-12: *We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check. 3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. 5 Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. 11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12 My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.*

Group Discussion Questions:

1. What are the different ways this passage describes the power of our words? List as many as you can.
2. How does the tongue get tamed? Take a look at:

Luke 6:43-45: *"No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. 44 Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briars. 45 A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.*

3. As you follow Jesus, what has changed in the way you communicate?

4. Think about how you interact with others, (e.g. The words and tone you use, how you listen, etc.) What tendencies do you notice? What are you recognizing about your heart as you listen to yourself?
5. When miscommunication happens ... what helps you be willing to participate in clearing it?
6. Help each other to think of ways to speak “blessing”. Make it a point to speak “blessings” to those in your family or close friends this week. Ask someone in the group to pray for you and then check-in with them next week to share how this mindset affected your relationships.
7. Take a look at Proverbs 4:23 and Philippians 4:8 and James 1:19. Mediate on these verses for the next few weeks. Watch to see how this impacts your communication.

Proverbs 4:23: *Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*

Philippians 4:8: *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

James 1:19: *My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry*

Prayer Time: Pray for one another

Picture Perfect - Week 4 - Participant's Guide

Commitment

Joshua 24:14-27

Discussion Idea: *The target for today's group discussion:*

God displays faithfulness and commitment to us, his people, again and again. Relationships that last require commitment. Commitment involves saying yes to something and saying no to things that undermine the commitment. It also means working through challenging moments. Commitment starts with our relationship with Jesus, which then impacts all other relationships.

Joshua 24:14-27: *"Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." 16 Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods! 17 It was the Lord our God himself who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. 18 And the Lord drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God." 19 Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the Lord. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. 20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you." 21 But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the Lord." 22 Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord." "Yes, we are witnesses," they replied. 23 "Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel." 24 And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the Lord our God and obey him." 25 On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws. 26 And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the Lord. 27 "See!" he said to all the people. "This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the Lord has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God."*

Group Discussion Questions:

1. What is Joshua asking the people to do?
2. What had they experienced in their relationship with God?
3. What does this passage show about God's heart and commitment?

4. In what ways has God shown his faithfulness to you personally? How does that encourage you in your commitment to relationships in your life?
5. Commitment involves choice and remaining faithful when it's challenging. Identify some things that can be challenging to commitment in your relationship with God and with others. (Think about relationships at home, or with fellow Christ – followers or relationships at work and neighborhood?) How do you respond when relationships are challenging?
6. What is God saying to you personally in this passage as it relates to your closest relationships?
7. As you consider your commitment to the Lord in this season of your life, How will you live that out this week?
8. Think of the biggest commitments you have made in your life. How can you strengthen/demonstrate your commitment to those promises this week?

Prayer Time: Pray for one another

Picture Perfect - Week 5 - Participant's Guide

Community

1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

Discussion Idea: *The target for today's group discussion:*

God draws people to Himself to be his children, to be his body. This changes how they interact with each other. It impacts how they value each other and press into building relationships that support and strengthen each other. Every individual person must choose to respond to Christ, but we do not follow Christ alone. We become a community that follows Christ together. This is how we reflect Jesus to the people around us. We need the example and support of other believers to succeed. Healthy relationships do not exist in a vacuum.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-22: *Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. 13 Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. 14 And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 15 Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not treat prophecies with contempt 21 but test them all; hold on to what is good, 22 reject every kind of evil.*

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Paul, the writer of Thessalonians, is encouraging the people at Thessalonica to build a community that reflects Jesus and his kingdom way. What does he encourage them to do and be?
2. What stands out to you in the instructions Paul gives to aid in building community relationships with each other? (Particularly verses 13-18)
3. What is important about sharing life together with a group of people as followers of Christ?
4. What motivates you to participate and be a part of a growing a community of Christ like relationships? What can de-motivate you?
5. What is God saying to you personally in the passage as it relates to your closest relationships?
6. How do you build this kind of community with your family? Think specifically about your spouse. Then your kids - even if they are adults. Then your

extended family. What will you do this next week or two to practically act on what you are discovering?

7. What are specific ways you can practice creating community in your community group or your circle of close friends?
8. Think of where you live and work. Who are people that need to experience the kind of love and unity that Jesus followers work towards? How can you serve them this week?

Prayer Time: Pray for one another