

## Pray Together

**Use the first few minutes of your time together to lead your group in a focused prayer time.**

- **Praise:** Spend time praising God for who He is.
- **Repent:** Take a few moments to silently confess any sin that is lingering in your heart.
- **Ask:** Verbalize your needs and the needs of others to God.
- **Yield:** Surrender your will to God.

## Read Together

In its 30 year history, the Barna Group has distinguished itself as the leading research organization focused on the intersection of faith and culture. In 2000, Barna reported that almost six in 10 adults (58%) had attended church in the past month. In 2015, that number had decreased to 46%. A change of twelve percentage points. In that same 2015 study, Barna reported:

*Although church attendance had declined significantly, the drop in those who continue to call themselves "Christian" has not been as pronounced. This has created an interesting group of "spiritual but not religious" Christians who self-identify as Christian and say "faith is very important in my life"—but do not regularly attend church. Their mantra might resemble something like: "Forget the Church, Follow Jesus."*

Though justification of sins has never hinged on one's church attendance record, regular worship, Christ-like service, and meaningful connection within the local church plays an important role in shaping the identity of growing disciples. Biblical community matters.

But in a day in time where you can access great Biblical teaching at the tap of a finger, why do we still need a local church? Do passages like Hebrews 10:25 still have relevance today? In an increasingly post-Christian society, what is the value of a local church both to disciples of Christ and to those who are far from Him?

## Discuss Together

**Use these questions to engage in an informative and impactful discussion.**

- Read Ephesians 4:20-24. In this passage, Paul calls believers to live the change that Christ has made in their lives. Their identity is in Christ, therefore they should no longer live in a way that reflects the darkness, alienation, and despair that characterize those who are far from Him. Instead, they should be continually renewed by a pursuit of Christ and His Lordship. Envision that you are counseling with someone who is considering trusting Christ as his/her Savior. How would you describe the process of "putting off the old self"? What actions/disciplines/etc. would help this person be "renewed in the spirit of their minds" as they "put on the new self"?
- Read Ephesians 4:25-32. The love of God provides the model for individuals within the church to follow in their relationships with one another. Paul identifies five areas that pertain to growing disciples' relationships with one another.
  - 1) Do not use falsehood, but speak truth (4:25)
  - 2) Do use anger, but do not sin (4:26-27)
  - 3) Do not steal, but work to give to needy (4:28)



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- 4) Do not use corrupt words, but edify with words (4:29-30)
- 5) Do not be malicious, but edify in action (4:31-32)

How can a community of faith help shape and form the identity of a disciple in these areas? How can the community of faith then use these actions to advance the Gospel in their neighborhoods?

- Warren is a community of believers surrendered to the authority of Jesus Christ and dedicated to advancing the gospel together in our neighborhoods and around the world as we make disciples and multiply disciple-makers. Every member has a role in supporting this mission. How are you actively supporting the church's mission? Share some practical and helpful ways people in your Life Group can support this mission.
- In what ways does being a part of a local church matter in our increasingly post-Christian society? How would you describe to someone far from Christ, why we still need churches? To someone who says, "Forget the Church, Follow Jesus"? Consider the relevance of a passage like Hebrews 10:24-25 in our present context.
- Why do you still attend a local church? How do you maintain the discipline of regular church involvement?
- What does a truly compelling church community look like in the CSRA? Describe the marks of a church that matters. What does this look like from the perspective of believers? What does this look like from the perspective of those who are far from Christ? How are the two perspectives similar and how are they different?
- How has a consumer mentality adversely affected the way you engage in biblical community? Why is a consumer mindset destructive to the mission of the church?
- How has our radically individualistic culture, which values autonomy and privacy, affected the way you engage with a biblical community?

## Do Life Together

**These questions are designed to be asked in a smaller group of 2-4 people. The smaller setting will provide better opportunity for authentic responses. In your smaller group time, take notes to help others remain accountable to their answers. Grow together!**

- How is God calling you to "grow up" in Christ this week?
- How can Jesus redeem this area? How has Jesus proven that in Scripture?
- Who will keep you accountable to this commitment this week?

## Pray Together

**Pray through Ephesians 4:12-15.**



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