

QUICKSTART: COMMUNITY ROLE

Welcome! Thank you for trying out the Community Role in your group! We want to equip you to do well, and pray that through your kind service your group becomes a place where people are known, loved, and served – whether it's their first week or their ninety-ninth.

WHY DO WE EMPHASIZE COMMUNITY?

"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." – Jesus in John 13

There are endless biblical reasons we could point to for why we emphasize community – God is three-in-one, a perfect community to himself, and we reflect him by being united with each other; the New Testament commands mostly emphasize things we are to do to "one another" – obedience that requires relationships with others; and the list goes on and on. But the simple focus here is that we want Living Stones to be a light in Reno, and one of the best ways to be a light is through loving one another. Loving one another requires that we first know one another, and then that our words of love are equaled by actions of love. This happens by being together, in community. When Christian community is working well (loving one another), the world sees Jesus in us. And, it's how we were created to live and thrive!

PERSONAL GOALS FOR A ROLE HOLDER

1. Leaders Go First. Whichever material you choose to lead your group through, please do it yourself first. This accomplishes many things: a) you're only asking others to do something you have done yourself; b) you may identify something that doesn't make sense, or work, or fit with your group before asking everyone to try it – and you have time to adapt; and c) you can present the material with a personal example as appropriate to help those in your group get an idea of how the practice plays out.

2. Think Hospitality. For people to build community together, they have to be welcome and able to actually come together without unnecessary distractions or discomfort. Snacks and beverages are enjoyable, but they also provide a way to take hunger/thirst off someone's mind to allow them to relax and focus on conversation and getting to know one another. Warmly welcoming someone new and taking the time to introduce them to others in the group is a way to take away the awkward discomfort of them having to introduce themselves to everyone. Think about ways to remove simple distractions and discomforts: cleanliness, noise-level, roaming pets, comfortable seating and temperature – these are all fair things to think about in making the Community Group a hospitable space.

3. Group Ownership. As a role holder, you are not responsible for the group in the way that the Community Group leader is, but you can provide a lot of needed support for the leader. Rather than waiting on the leader to initiate all community-building within your group, you can come alongside and help by leading here. Ideas for your group, leading one of the included 15-minute activities during group, intentionally personally welcoming new people, following up with visitors, enlisting the help of another group member or two to be the "welcomers" for new people, or the "check-in team" to follow up with those who haven't been to group for a few weeks... your joint effort with the other role holders and leader will form a strong team to love and serve those in your group and sets an example of team leadership and collaboration

COMMUNITY TOOL #1: ICE-BREAKERS!

If your group is just getting started and/or a lot of new people have joined recently, it might be nice to do a lighter “get to know you” ice-breaker. Ask just one of these questions and let everyone respond – this can be a nice opener to group and help people laugh and be more comfortable.

- What was the first music album you owned?
- What was the first movie you owned?
- What was your favorite game as a child?
- Share something mischievous you did as a child.
- What’s your favorite holiday, and why?
- List three things that drain your energy.
- List three things that bring you energy.
- If you had the option to live in any period of history, what era would you select, and why?
- If you could have lunch with someone famous, dead or alive, who would it be?
- What was your favorite subject in elementary school?
- What would you be happy doing for hours on end?
- What is your biggest pet peeve?
- What is a favorite spot of yours in Reno?
- If you had to move out of the country, where would you move to?

Variations:

- “What if...” Have each person at group write down a “what if” question on a card; then collect the cards, mix them up, and hand them out – each person reads the question aloud and then answers.
- “Hi-Los” Have each person at group share their “high” and their “low” of the week.

A little more serious questions:

- What does it take for you to trust someone?
- Who is the one person who has done the most to make you who you are today? How was that person significant to you?
- Name one thing you could do to improve an important relationship in your life.
- Imagine that you could go back in time and change one decision in your life. What decision would you change and why?
- Who is someone you would like to apologize to but haven’t? What is the situation? Why haven’t you apologized?
- Is it easy for you to accept help when you need it? Will you ask for help?
- Think of a positive or negative remark that was said to you as a child. How did it affect you then? What is the impact of it on you now?
- Talk about a time when you have lost your temper.
- What are 3 things you hope to accomplish this year?

COMMUNITY TOOL #2: "ONE ANOTHER" DISCUSSION

Did you know that the term "one another" is used 100 times in the New Testament? One third of those are about church unity; one third are about loving each other; and fifteen percent are about humility. Here's a list of some of them:

- Be at peace with one another (Mk 9:50)
- Don't grumble among one another (Jn 6:43)
- Don't boastfully challenge or envy one another (Ga 5:26).
- Gently, patiently tolerate one another (Ep 4:2)
- Be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving to one another (Ep 4:32)
- Confess sins to one another (Jas 5:16)
- Regard one another as more important than yourselves (Php 2:3)
- Serve one another (Ga 5:13)
- Be subject to one another (Ep 5:21)
- Clothe yourselves in humility toward one another (1 Pe 5:5)
- Do not judge one another, and don't put a stumbling block in a brother's way (Ro 14:13)
- Bear one another's burdens (Ga 6:2)
- Don't lie to one another (Co 3:9)
- Comfort one another concerning the resurrection (1 Th 4:18)
- Encourage and build up one another (1 Th 5:11)
- Stimulate one another to love and good deeds (He 10:24)
- Pray for one another (Jas 5:16)
- Be hospitable to one another (1 Pe 4:9)

Ask the group:

- Which of these do we do well as a group?
- Which of these could be ones that we start doing?
- What's easier personally? What's harder personally?
- Which of these one-another commands might God be asking me to put into practice this week?

Bonus: hand out index cards for people to choose a 'one another' verse to practice and pray through that week and ask as a follow-up the next week about how it went.

This infographic is worth posting to share in your group's page: <http://overviewbible.com/one-another-infographic/>

COMMUNITY TOOL #3: TESTIMONIES

Ask members of your group (well in advance!) to share their life story, including coming to Jesus and growing in knowing him (testimony). Plan extra time for these nights – it could be 10-30 minutes, depending on the person sharing.

The testimony-giver can use these questions to help them prepare, if it is helpful for them:

- What was my life like that will relate most to the non-Christian? What did my life revolve around the most? What did I get my security or happiness from? How did those things let me down?
- When was the first time I was exposed to the gospel or Christianity? What were my initial reactions/attitudes, and how did they change? What were the final struggles that went through my mind before I accepted Jesus?
- What is different about me since I have been saved? What different motivations do I have?
- What do I personally love most about God?

PRO TIPS:

- Especially with shy/quiet members, give them time to prepare – ask at least 2 weeks in advance.
- Don't ask the person with a dramatic story to go first – it can make others feel like they need a sensational story of coming to Jesus.
- It might make others feel more comfortable if you go first. Alternatively, if a member in your group has given a testimony before, they may feel fine going first as well.

Source: <https://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/share-the-gospel/evangelism-principles/how-to-tell-your-story-worksheet.html>

COMMUNITY TOOL #4: SINGLE-TOPIC TESTIMONIES

While full-story testimonies are a very helpful way to us to get to know each other, single-topic testimonies can be more focused and illustrate specific truths in our walks with God, and provide tangible examples of faith. Here are some ideas, but you might think of a single topic testimony question that goes along with the current sermon series, too. Try to give people some time to prepare their answer so they don't draw blanks when put on the spot.

Ask someone to share a story of:

- Being forgiven
- Forgiving someone
- Someone who was a big influence in their faith.
- Healing (physical, emotional).
- Sharing the gospel with a friend.
- Being corrected or confronted by a friend.
- Overcoming a fear with God's help.
- Overcoming a sin with God's help.
- Receiving grace from a person (getting something they did not deserve).
- Giving grace to a person.
- A scripture that really changed their thinking and living.
- An "a ha!" moment in their walk with Jesus – where they discovered something about their faith that changed them.
- Ask someone to share a story that goes with the sermon topic (you can often look ahead in the series to plan).

COMMUNITY TOOL #5: BURDENS VS. LOADS

Read Galatians 6:2-5:

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load.

In the same passage we hear these phrases:

"Bear one another's burdens" and "each will have to bear his own load." What does this mean, practically – do we help each other or not? Is the Bible contradicting itself?

Burdens and loads are not the same thing. A **load** is a regular, normal responsibility for someone. Working a job, cleaning a home, caring for children – these are all a load. The Bible expects us to shoulder our loads ourselves – not that no one can ever help, but that generally we don't overload someone else with what we can and should do ourselves. A **burden**, on the other hand, is a temporary and/or more exceptional circumstance – a car accident with big medical bills, a parent dying in the hospital, mental illness, a man without a father to show him how to be a good husband and father, an overwhelming stage of parenting, etc. The Bible commands us to *help* others in handling burdens.

To continually "help" someone with their load is actually unloving – they need to grow strong in handling their own responsibilities. But to *not help* a person with a burden is callous and may leave them to be completely crushed.

Discuss briefly: What are some things that come to mind as "load" responsibilities? What are some things that come to mind as "burdens"? What's easier for you? Helping with everything? Or helping with nothing?

Hand out copies of these questions for your group:

Take some time to sort out your own life in terms of burdens and loads. Ask yourself:

- What are "load" items in my life? Are there any that I have been shirking or expecting someone else to help me with?
 - What are the "burden" items in my life? Are there any that I am trying to hide, or handle on my own?
 - Have I been "helping" with someone's "load" items? Is it actually helping them, or enabling them?
 - Have I ignored someone's burdens, either by expecting someone else to help, or thinking that they handle it themselves, or by being preoccupied with myself?
 - In all my answers, where am I sensing most conviction to change?
 - Is there someone in group I need help in bearing a burden? Is there a burden I have that I should share with the group?
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Ask the group to take some time to answer the questions over the next week and come back ready to discuss the following week:

- As a group, how can we practically bear one another's burdens? Are there burdens could we address now?
- Where did you personally sense conviction in this topic of loads versus burdens?

COMMUNITY TOOL #6: DINNER & DISCUSSION

Organize a group dinner – if it's at someone's home, help to organize the food; if it's at a restaurant, be sure to select a location where you can hear each other talk at a large table. If someone likes to cook, great! Otherwise, keep it simple and order pizza – the focus should be for everyone to be able to sit down and relax for extended time in each other's company.

During dinner, use an app like "Table Topics" or another conversation starter. Start by opening one of the questions in the app and choose one person to answer the question. After they have answered, pass the phone to them so they can open the next question and select the next person to answer. Keep the roundtable interview going until you run out or need to go home! Let the conversation flow from the topics – don't worry about getting through the questions so much as keeping the conversation rolling and interesting. Some questions may be answered in five seconds, some may be 15-minute discussions that rabbit-trail into other things. The idea is to have the conversation be fresh – the topics bring up things to talk about that might not naturally present themselves and the ruts of topics we normally discuss.

For a more serious discussion, have dinner party attendees write down serious questions or topics they would like to discuss on slips of paper and collect the papers in a bowl or basket. During dinner, go through the anonymous questions/topics and discuss together