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# DISCUSSION

## Group Guide

For Discussion Group Facilitators and  
Participating Volunteer Companions

# INTRODUCTION

The theme for this year's Summer Friendship Gatherings (SFG) is "REIMAGINE COMMUNITY". John 13:34-35 states, "I give you a new command. Love one another. You must love one another, just as I have loved you. If you love one another, everyone will know you are my disciples."

This week, we will be studying the importance of Christian community in our lives. The adult friends, volunteers, families and direct support staff will learn about belonging in community through the story of Naomi and Ruth. The second day will focus on growing in community through learning that Jesus is the source of all Christian community. Day 3 will look at loving in community through the story of Jesus washing His disciples' feet. It is only through Jesus' love and the Holy Spirit in our lives that we can share love with others, and come together in community.

**As a companion in the Discussion Group, it will be important to emphasize the following key points during the three-day study:**

## **DAY 1**

### **WE BELONG IN COMMUNITY**

Naomi and Ruth (*Ruth 1-2*)

#### **Lesson Objectives:**

1. God intends us to be in community, and it is vital that we come together in fellowship, prayer, and study of the Word.
2. Jesus is at the center of all Christian community, large or small.
3. God created us to belong in community, and to share that fellowship with others.

#### **Daily Bible Verse:**

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 NIRV)

## **DAY 2**

### **WE GROW IN COMMUNITY**

The Vine and the Branches (*John 15:1-17*)

#### **Lesson Objectives:**

1. Our spiritual growth depends on remaining in community, where we study God's Word, pray together, and fellowship together.
2. It is in community where we stay connected to God.
3. It is only through God's love and power given to us through the Holy Spirit that we can love others as Jesus loves us.

#### **Daily Bible Verse:**

John 15:5 (NIRV)

## **DAY 3**

### **WE LOVE IN COMMUNITY**

(this lesson is taught during the Day 3 worship service)

Jesus Washes Disciples' Feet (*John 13:1-17; 34-35*)

#### **Lesson Objectives:**

1. Jesus calls Christians to carry out His mission through the power of the Holy Spirit, and through the love we experience being in community with Jesus.
2. It is only through Jesus' love for us and the Holy Spirit in our lives that we can love other people.

#### **Daily Bible Verse:**

John 13:35 (NIRV)

# HELPFUL HINTS

## BE PREPARED!

To be properly prepared to participate in your discussion group please read through this guide, watch the Discussion Group video by following this link; <https://connection-ministries.org/summer-friendship-gathering-training/> and study the following Biblical passages prior to the event:

### Day 1

#### WE BELONG IN COMMUNITY

Naomi and Ruth (*Ruth 1-2*)

### Day 2

#### WE GROW IN COMMUNITY

The Vine and the Branches (*John 15:1-17*)

### Day 3

#### WE LOVE IN COMMUNITY

Jesus Washes Disciples' Feet (*John 13:1-17; 34-35*)

## REVIEW EACH DAY'S OUTLINE

In each day's outline, you will find 4 sections: Background Information, Discussion Questions, Reflection Questions, and Group Prayer. These are to help you participate in your group. All companions should help the adult friends understand the lesson.

## INVOLVE EVERYONE IN THE GROUP

Everyone in the group should be encouraged to participate in the discussion, including the adult friends, families and direct support staff, and volunteers. It will be important to moderate the conversation so that all participants have a chance to share. Even though our adult friends may be nonverbal, they can hear, listen, and learn from the discussion.

## HAVE PARTICIPANTS READ ALOUD

If you have adult friends with disabilities, direct support staff, volunteers, or a family member in your group that is a good reader, consider having them read aloud Bible passage references, if time allows. This encourages group participation and involvement.

## WAIT PATIENTLY FOR A RESPONSE

When asking an adult friend a question, take a moment to wait for his/her response. Those with disabilities sometimes need a moment to process the question, and to formulate their answer. If he/she does not respond after a minute, ask the question again or rephrase it. Do not hesitate to ask for help from our friend's direct support staff and housemates in the group. Companions can whisper answers in adult friend's ear.

## CONNECT THE BIBLE LESSON TO REAL LIFE

Connect the Bible lesson to a real-life situation. This helps everyone relate the Bible lesson to their lives. And whenever possible, tie the discussions back to the importance of having Christian community in our lives.

# DAY 1

## **WE BELONG IN COMMUNITY**

Naomi and Ruth (*Ruth 1-2*)

### DAILY BIBLE VERSE

“Two people are better than one. They can help each other in everything they do. Suppose either of them falls down. Then the one can help the other one up. But suppose a person falls down and doesn’t have anyone to help them up. Then feel sorry for that person!” *Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (NIRV)*

### **LESSON** **OBJECTIVES**

1. God intends us to be in community, and it is vital that we come together in fellowship, prayer, and study of the Word.
2. Jesus is at the center of all Christian community, large or small.
3. God created us to belong in community, and to share that fellowship with others.

### **BACKGROUND** **INFORMATION**

God created us for community. He made the first woman, Eve, to be a companion for the first man, Adam. He brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt as a community. And many years later, God’s own Son called disciples to follow Him as a community.

Some Christian communities can be very large, such as a thriving church, or very small, like two believers praying together. **1 John 1:7** reads, “*Suppose we walk in the light, just as He [God] is in the light. Then we share life with one another. And the blood of Jesus, His Son, makes us pure from all sin.*” Whether big or small, God intends us to be in community, and it is vital that we come together in fellowship, prayer, and study of the Word.

**DISCUSSION GROUP**

**DAY 1**

**BACKGROUND  
INFORMATION CONTIN.**

- A. We need to experience Christian love and fellowship, prayer, a place of belonging, and a place to share our gifts.

**DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS**

Note: Be sure to leave about 10 minutes for prayer time after discussion.

**1. What does the memory verse say about the importance of community?**

- A. Answer: We need others.  
B. If we are alone, we will have no one to come alongside us when we fall or have troubles.

**2. What are some of the struggles that happened to Naomi?**

- A. Answer: Food shortage in her home country of Bethlehem in Judah.  
1. Her husband died.  
2. Her two sons died.

**3. What did Ruth give up so she could stay with Naomi and return to Bethlehem?**

- A. Answer: She left her family, friends, her gods, and her customs.  
B. She was going to a place where she didn't know anyone.

**4. Did Naomi ask Ruth to stay with her? What did Naomi tell Ruth to do?**

- A. Answer: No, Naomi told Ruth to return home.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**  
**CONTIN.**

**5. How did God use the community between Naomi and Ruth for His purpose?**

- A. Answer: God brought Boaz from Naomi's family together with Ruth in marriage.
- B. Boaz and Ruth had a son called Obed, and became part of the direct family line to Jesus Christ.

**REFLECTION**  
**QUESTIONS**

Note: Discuss Reflection Questions if time permits.

**1. Who can you invite into Christian community today?**

**2. Do you have the boldness to share with others what Christ means to you? If not, pray for boldness to share the love of Christ with others.**

**GROUP**  
**PRAYER**

Take this time to collect prayer requests *(for all adult friends, companions, families and direct support staff).*

# DAY 2

## **WE GROW IN COMMUNITY**

The Vine and the Branches (*John 15:1-17*)

### DAILY BIBLE VERSE

“I am the vine. You are the branches. If you remain joined to me, and I to you, you will bear a lot of fruit. You can’t do anything without me.” *John 15:5 (NIRV)*

### **LESSON** OBJECTIVES

1. Our spiritual growth depends on remaining in community, where we study God’s Word, pray together, and fellowship together.
2. It is in community where we stay connected to God.
3. It is only through God’s love and power given to us through the Holy Spirit that we can love others as Jesus loves us.

### **BACKGROUND** INFORMATION

In **1 Corinthians 12**, the image of a Body is used to describe the Church with Jesus Christ as the head. As parts of Christ’s Body, God gives each of us different spiritual gifts. By ourselves we can do nothing. A hand by itself can’t do anything. But a hand that is connected to an arm, that is connected to a shoulder, and is connected to a head, can do many things.

When we are connected in community as parts of the Body of Christ, God can do wonderful things through us! It is through our relationships with each other and with Jesus Christ as our head that we grow in faith and produce fruit for God.

DISCUSSION GROUP

DAY 2

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Note: Be sure to leave about 10 minutes for prayer time after discussion.

**1. What happens to the branch of a fruit tree that is cut away from the larger trunk? Why?**

- A. Answer: The branch dies and will no longer bear fruit.
- B. The branch dies because it is no longer connected to the trunk which is its source of nutrients and water.

**2. Why is it important that Christians continue to grow spiritually?**

- A. Answer: We are supposed to grow closer to God and to each other.
- B. To stay connected with Jesus we need to obey His commands by loving each other. This requires us to grow in our faith.

**3. Why is it important to be in community with other believers?**

- A. Answer: When we are connected in community as parts of the Body of Christ, God can do wonderful things through us!

**4. What was Jesus' command for us in this passage from John 15?**

- A. Answer: Love one another, just as I have loved you.

**5. Where do we get the ability to love others in the same way Jesus loves us?**

- A. Answer: 1 John 4:19 says, *"We love because He [God] first loved us."*
- B. It is through God's love and power given to us through His Holy Spirit that we can love others as Jesus loves us.

## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

Note: Discuss Reflection Questions if time permits.

1. What are ways you can remain connected to Jesus?
2. How can you bear fruit for God in your everyday life?

### **GROUP**

Take this time to collect prayer requests *(for all adult*

### **PRAYER**

*friends, companions, families and direct support staff).*

There will be no discussion group on Day 3.  
The Day 3 Reflection Questions can be found in the  
Discussion Booklet. You can take the booklet home  
today.

References:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-International-Readers-Version-NIRV-Bible/>

New International Readers Version (NIRV) Bible



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Connection Ministries

P. O. Box 29495

Indianapolis, IN 46229

317-646-5067

<https://connection-ministries.org>

[www.facebook.com/connectionministries1](http://www.facebook.com/connectionministries1)

@connection\_ministries