

# APPRENTICE GROUPS

Pursue Growth at NLCC



*It is my prayer that your  
love may abound more and more,  
with knowledge and all discernment,  
so that you may approve what is excellent,  
and so be pure and blameless  
for the day of Christ,  
filled with the fruit of righteousness  
that comes through Jesus Christ,  
to the glory and praise of God.*

**Philippians 1:9-11**

# APPRENTICE GROUPS @ NLCC

The gospels describe a special connection between Jesus and three of his followers – Peter, John and James. Together they join Jesus in some of his most intimate moments: times of intense ministry (Luke 8:51), transcendent encounter (Luke 9:28), and painful vulnerability (Mark 14:33). This connection prepared these three to be key leaders among the early Jesus-followers.

Today, through the Holy Spirit, every one of Jesus' apprentices can experience this intimate connection with him. With this in mind, NLCC invites men and women to form Apprentice Groups ("A-Groups").

An A-Group is 2-5 peers of the same gender (possibly part of the same Life Group; 3 is ideal) who want to be intentional about growing and enduring as apprentices of Jesus. Like Jesus' "inner circle," these groups meet together in the presence of Jesus to share the ways they are learning to hear from God, resist sin, and be servants of the gospel in the context of their personal lives.

They are based on five commitments:

# COMMITMENTS:

- **Grow Together:** Together we desire, aim and commit to grow as apprentices of Jesus. The aim of our social connection is to fuel our love for Jesus and for people (see Matthew 22:34-38), to train us for godliness (see 1 Timothy 4:8) and to lead us to abandon any allegiance that rivals Jesus.
- **Meet Together:** Except in emergencies, we will make every meeting we schedule together a priority. *This may be as frequent as once a week, but should be no less than once a month.* We can expect immediate follow up if we miss a meeting.
- **Maintain Confidentiality:** We will be trustworthy for one another, never sharing with others the confidential things we discuss, unless we are given permission or it involves the potential harm of a vulnerable person.
- **Share Truthfully:** Seeking true self-awareness, we will trust each other with ourselves, sharing our worst parts just as much as our best parts. We will speak honestly and share the whole truth as best we know it.
- **Stand Guard for Each Other:** In a spirit of love, we give each other permission to give and receive encouragement, exhortation, and correction from one another. We are committed to guarding one another's integrity as fiercely as we guard our own, and to walking alongside one another as we take responsibility for our actions.

**APPRENTICE GROUP COVENANT** Date: \_\_\_\_\_

To the best of our ability, we agree to uphold these commitments to one another, within the following parameters:

We will meet every \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_ am/pm.

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

We will renew or revise our commitment to one another on this date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
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Name Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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Email

# BEGINNING WELL:

We recommend the following approach to beginning well together.

## First Meeting

Purpose: Learn one another's story, and form a climate of support and encouragement.

- Take a few minutes to connect. Then go over the commitments above together. Share your own hopes for the role of the group in your apprenticeship to Jesus.
- Share the short version (5-10 min) of your faith story. Include some key turning points, mentors, decisions, and/or priorities that led you become a Christian and shape what you believe about yourself.
- Share something that you are anticipating in the coming week about which you are (1) excited, (2) anxious, and (3) potentially vulnerable to stumbling.
- Review the structure for the second meeting, which will require some preparation (below).
- Agree on a meeting schedule, and sign the group covenant above.
- Pray for one another, and invite God to use these meetings to work his will in your lives.

## Second Meeting

Purpose: Establish a climate of vulnerability and truth-telling.

- Now is the time to set a norm for vulnerability and trust together!
- Review the commitments above.
- Briefly revisit what was shared last time you met (excited, anxious, vulnerable). How did things go for you this week?
- Next, give each member 10-15 minutes to share their answers to the following questions.
  - How would you describe your personal relationship with Christ in this season?
  - What 5 words describe the person you desire to be/become?
  - What is one challenge that you are currently facing, that, if addressed, would make a big positive difference in your relationship with God or others in your life?
  - If the evil one sought to destroy you and discredit Jesus through you, what area of your life would be the most strategic target right now? What would be the consequences if he were to be successful?
- After each member has shared, the other members can share 1-2 insights, observations, encouragements or questions that were sparked by what they heard.
- Pray for one another, with specific attention to what has been shared.
- Review and agree on the 7 questions below (or develop your own) as a typical meeting structure.
- Confirm the date, time and location of your next meeting.

## Subsequent Meetings

Purpose: Nurture an environment of vulnerability, trust, support, and truth-telling.

- After a brief time of check-in/catch-up, review the commitments you have made to each other.
- Use the recommended questions provided below, followed by a time of prayer for each other.
- Periodically allow time to evaluate your group's effectiveness together (suggestions below).

### *Questions for Accountability*

In your regular meetings together, share with one another how you have heard from God, faced temptation and/or sinned against God or others, and had opportunity to share and live the gospel in the past week.

In mutual accountability, our goal is not "sin management" or motivation through guilt or shame. It is a way of getting our false beliefs and misplaced trust out in the open, so that we can be healed and inspired to obedience by the grace and love of God.

As sin is confessed, help one another discern the thinking patterns and allegiances that lead to disobedience. Remind one another of truths of the gospel (*Who is God and what has He done? Who am I? What is the "good life"?*) that can restore faith and inspire obedience for the coming week.



Since we have last met...

### 1.Spiritual Vitality: John 15:4-5

- *In your regular time with God, what is one thing you heard from him, and how will you respond?*
- *Are your spiritual disciplines working to grow your love for God and others, joy in Christ, and dependence on the Spirit? What needs to change?*

### 2.Relationships: Romans 13:8

- *Is there any relationship in your life that needs attention or repair? What is your responsibility in connecting or making peace?*

### 3.Vulnerability: 1 Corinthians 10:13

- *When were you most vulnerable to discouragement, fatigue, despair, temptation (including sexual) and/or spiritual attack? What happened?*
- *What repentance and self-care is needed to find wholeness?*

### 4.Stewardship & Witness: Colossians 3:17

- *Are you stewarding time, talent, treasure, advantage and/or influence to reflect God's priorities? What needs to change?*
- *Have you been praying for, and engaging in, opportunities to share the gospel with someone who is new to Jesus?*

### 5.Pure Heart & Mind: Proverbs 4:23

- *Can you say that your thought life is pure, untainted by bitterness, lust, greed?*
- *Has your "shadow side" (character defects<sup>1</sup>, escape, fantasies, drugs of choice<sup>2</sup>, typical fears/prejudices, idolatrous motives) negatively influenced your decisions?*

### 6.Full Disclosure: Ephesians 4:25

- *Have you been completely honest with us? What else should be shared?*

### 7.Take-Away: Luke 8:15

- *What is the most important insight or revelation you're taking away from our conversation together? What are you going to do with it?*

We encourage the group to adopt a common daily Bible reading plan together. We recommend NLCC's Life Journal. Information can be found here:

[nlcc.ca/lifejournaling](http://nlcc.ca/lifejournaling).

<sup>1</sup> Defects of character are prevailing attitudes, inclinations, vulnerabilities, areas of brokenness that are the "root" cause of destructive and consequential sinful behaviours, e.g. blaming, judging, sarcasm. ([Freedom Session](#))

<sup>2</sup> Drugs of Choice are "things or behaviors we run to when life gets hard, e.g. food, affirmation, alcohol, sex, work, TV, etc." ([Freedom Session](#))

# ON OUR KNEES (10-15 minutes)

Using the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) as a guide, and based on what has come to the surface in your sharing together, lift one another to God in prayer.

## WORSHIP

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.

Express your thanks and praise to your heavenly Father for his work in your lives.

## PETITION

Your Kingdom come,  
your will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily  
bread.

Invite God to be King in the various areas of your life, as well as for practical needs, people far from God, the church's mission and its leadership.

## CONFESSION

And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have  
forgiven our debtors.

Repent of any sin, express forgiveness regarding any broken relationship, and ask for God's help in bringing reconciliation wherever it is needed.

## ENGAGEMENT

And lead us not into  
temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil  
one.

Ask God to lead, protect and heal you wherever it is needed. Give time to listen and respond to the Spirit's voice.

## WORSHIP

For yours is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
forever and ever.  
Amen.

Close by praising God for who he is, and for anticipated opportunities and answers to prayer.

# RE-GROUPING: PERIODIC EVALUATION

Every 8-10 weeks, improve the quality of your group's experience with a discussion about the following questions:

- *How has this A-Group been helpful for your apprenticeship to Jesus? What would have been helpful?*
- *Each member asks: How could I improve my side of this relationship? Is there anything I am doing (or not doing) that is standing in the way of this group's impact in your life?*
- *What could we do in subsequent meetings to take our relationship and apprenticeship to the next level?*
- *What is something we've learned together that could be transferable to others, and how can we share it?*
- *When do we anticipate multiplying, and what is our plan to facilitate this?*

Identify 1-2 take-aways that you can begin to implement at your next meeting.

# CELEBRATION, TRANSITION & MULTIPLICATION

- Every 4-6 months, go out for a great meal, and spend time celebrating what God has done in your lives in the past season.
- Every 12 months, discuss together the future of your group. Give each person an opportunity to determine whether they will remain with the group in the next season, “multiply” by starting a new group, or some other path. Based on your decision together, pray for one another and/or renew your commitment for another season.

## When might it be time to multiply?

- When group membership is changing naturally, e.g. someone is moving or can no longer attend. The inevitable change in dynamics will be similar to beginning a new group anyway.
- When members’ participation in the group has established a degree of spiritual and emotional health and stability (i.e. less vulnerable to immediate failure).
- When one or more members of the group become aware of others who would benefit from participating in an Apprentice Group.
- When the Holy Spirit makes it clear!