

who can join?

- Anyone interested in growing closer to God
- Anyone who wants to find a way to fix something broken about him/herself
- Anyone who wants to make a difference in their community and world
- Anyone who wants to develop deep, genuine, life-long friendships
- Anyone, whether a committed follower of Jesus or a newcomer to the faith

suggested format

- Take turns asking each other the formation questions from the conversation guide and praying for each other.
- At the end of the meeting, each participant will have shared and facilitated another person's sharing.
- Be sensitive to leave enough time for each group member to share.
- For example, if your group has three members, each person has 15-20 minutes to share - leaving time at the end to choose the weekly Scripture reading and pray for the empty chair.

starting new groups

- Formation groups generally consist of 2-3 people of the same gender. When a fourth person joins and begins participating consistently, the group reproduces and becomes two groups of two.
- Formation groups reproduce for two reasons: 1) to involve new people; and 2) to keep groups small enough for participants to share at a deep level.

conversation guide

1. **Check in: What is the state of your heart today?** (e.g., sad, angry, scared, anxious, happy, excited or a combination)
2. **How have you been listening to God? What are you hearing?** (e.g., Scripture reading and contemplation)
3. **What brokenness do you need to confess?** (e.g., addiction, anger, anxiety, dishonesty, envy, gossip, greed, harshness, lust, etc.)
4. **How do you sense God calling you into mission?** (e.g., engaging your neighborhood, showing hospitality, working for justice, telling God's story)
5. **Pray for the person who shared.**

as you conclude...

1. What section of Scripture do we want to read together this week?
2. Pray for the empty chair: who might God be calling to join this group?



Storyline
christian community

formation
groups

formation groups

Formation groups are gender specific groups of 2-3 people that gather an hour each week for spiritual formation and encouragement.

values

Formation groups are an expression of Storyline's values for dependence on God, mission, life change and genuine relationships at the smallest level.

spiritual practices

- sharing your heart
- listening to God
- confession of brokenness
- participation in mission

sharing your heart

Group members begin their meetings by sharing their hearts with each other - by sharing how they're feeling.

Feelings provide a window into deeper motivations for action and patterns of behavior.

Sharing with each other at a heart-level allows group members to get beneath the surface and prepares each to hear from God.

listening to God

Listening to God in formation groups takes place through two approaches: **Scripture reading** and **contemplation**. Through Scripture, we hear the story of God in the world. Through contemplation, we hear how God wants our story to become part of his story.

Formation groups choose a section of Scripture to read each week. Suggestions for Scripture reading: pick a large chunk (20-25 chapters); read an entire book several times; vary readings in the Old and New Testaments; read sections group members haven't read.

Contemplation is an art, not a science. There's no formula to hearing from God. But we can posture ourselves in ways that help us to listen and hear.

- Find a quiet place
- Spend a moment checking in with God - share the state of your heart with God
- Ask God to check in with you, then sit in stillness listening for God
- Pay attention to spontaneous thoughts - God often speaks through 'distractions'
- Write down what you hear
- Sometimes contemplation flows out of Scripture reading, but it doesn't have to
- Share what you hear with your formation group and let them help you discern if what you're hearing is from God or from your own brokenness, broken cultural ideas, or Satan.

confession

Confession flows out of Storyline's value for life change. Confession assumes that all of us are constantly struggling to overcome our brokenness - the ways that we fail to reflect the character of God. Confession gives us an avenue for sharing our struggles and receiving forgiveness from God (1 John 1:9). Group members confess their brokenness by admitting that their brokenness is contrary to God's character and resolving to refrain from it in the future.

Brokenness comes in different shapes and sizes: lust, greed, anger, gossip, anxiety, addiction, envy, harshness, dishonesty, etc. As group members confess their brokenness, fellow group members respond with grace and God's offer of forgiveness - rather than trying to fix the person. Only God can do that. Group members keep everything shared in confidence to build trust and avoid gossip.

mission

Five elements make up Storyline's approach to participating in God's mission to bless and restore the world:

- Listening to God
- Engaging our neighborhoods (i.e., going out and getting involved on our street, in our workplace, and at our social hangouts)
- Showing hospitality (i.e., welcoming strangers or outsiders)
- Working for justice (i.e., befriending the poor, helping the helpless, and caring for the earth)
- Telling God's story

Formation group members share with each other the ways they hear God calling them to participate in these expressions of mission.