

Community Groups are the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering. It is through the interaction that takes place in each of these groups around our area that will enable people to begin to move from being drawn to God to a life that is being deepened by God. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word through His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

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## HEY!

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

**Greet each other**—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

**Week in review**—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time. Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to revisit the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

**Opening prayer**—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.

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## SAY!

Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications in our lives:

### Message Summary

Our 5<sup>th</sup> value falls under the UNBREAKABLE Body of Jesus: we value **Authentic Relationships** and expect our faith in God to be firmly connected to our faith with others. Paul explained 4 characteristics of authentic relationships.

1. **They are risky:** The fact that most of us are more comfortable with things at arm's length isn't that surprising. What is surprising for many believers is that loving Jesus doesn't make relationships simple. We think of Jesus as the "magic pill" or the "easy button" when the reality is that we're still human, and so we've still got personal space issues that are at risk in authentic relationships. Clearly, though, Ephesians 2:12-14 shows a Savior Who wants us closer together rather than farther apart. Risk will be involved.
2. **They are revealing:** True unity is only possible with true honesty. As relationships are brought into the light (1 John 1:7), we are able to know and be known free from the fear of rejection.
3. **They are redeeming:** The fact that God's redemption plan involved Jesus coming to live with us (John 1:14) is evidence of the importance of relationships in the redemptive process. Simply put, we can't share Jesus with people we don't know. Relationships open the door for the gospel.
4. **They are rewarding:** Authentic relationships give us confidence vertically with God (1 John 4:16-17) and horizontally with men (James 5:16).

# Community Group Guide

## @ our core – Authentic Relationships

The Gathering

Paul Jenkins

March 11, 2012

various

### **Discuss**

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- In the message, Paul talked about the different levels of personal space, which range from intimate to public. Just for fun, take turns “testing” your personal bubble by pairing up and standing closer until one of the pair feels the need to back away. Discuss the feelings involved in that exercise.
- Of course there are risks involved in pursuing authentic relationships, but what specifically do you think is at risk?
- Read Genesis 2:25 (don’t laugh) and Genesis 3:8-10. How were Adam and Eve’s reactions to their revealing condition different? What caused the change?
- What did God provide for their shame (see Genesis 3:21)? What is His plan for how we can deal with hurts and sins in our relationships with each other (see Proverbs 10:12; 17:9; 1 Peter 4:8)?
- Authentic relationships are redeeming in nature, and so Jesus is always the focus in our interaction. How can knowing this – and the truths found in Ephesians 4:15 and 4:32 – help when the areas of our heart that were hidden are revealed?
- James 5:16 is clear that we need the prayers of others, and relationships can’t be authentic without the asking (confessing) and receiving (intercession) of prayer. Give time for people in the group to request prayer from the group and then “pray for each other so that you can live together whole and healed” (The Message).

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### **PRAY!**

*Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of the message. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:*

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from the message?
- According to the truths from the message, what does God want you to desire/value?
- How do your desires/values need to change to align with His desires/values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this message?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength in the application of these truths and for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel.