



WELCOME TO GROW GROUPS AT PLATTE WOODS!

You have made a courageous decision to dive deeper into your faith and GROW closer to God. These materials are designed to help guide you either for personal devotion or, ideally, in conversation with others. It is our hope that you can invite friends, family or neighbors so that you can GROW together!

These materials were created to be adapted and shared. What does that mean? They should be used to fit your personal needs and the needs of the group. This isn't a task to be completed; rather, this is a guide to bring additional insight into your life. It's another voice to encourage you as you learn and grow as a follower of Jesus.

This journey, and these resources, are not meant to be kept private. In fact, we want you to share them with others! Matthew 5:16 tells us to "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." With you, we believe that sharing these resources will reach people we never dreamed of reaching. We hope that everyone would know the comfort of community and the fullness of God's love!

– The Pastors at Platte Woods UMC

TIPS FOR YOUR GROW GROUP

As a host, you want everyone to have the best possible experience in a Grow Group and we realize when people get together it can be a bit messy. Everyone has different experiences, backgrounds, and understandings of God and the world around us. Here are some helpful tips for your group!

1. **Check in with each other.** Make time each session to check in as a group. Lead this by sharing "highs" and "lows," using a scale of 1 to 10, or another fun method. It is suggested to do this before your group dives into the material.
2. **Pray for one another.** The group that prays together grows together! Prayer opens our hearts and expands our world. When we pray, we increase our compassion and empathy for one another; groups will have disagreements along the way and prayer helps us overcome those barriers.
3. **Be concise.** Healthy groups create space for one another. One of the best things you can do is listen. Make sure not to overshare which may cause others to feel they don't belong.
4. **Communicate regularly.** A simple message of, "I hope you have a great week!" goes a long way. Think about how your group would like to communicate. You can use a group text messaging app, email, or create a Facebook group. Regular communication has a big impact.
5. **Meet regularly.** Our recommendation is to meet weekly or bi-weekly. Don't worry if your group needs to take a break. Schedule it in and come back when the group is ready!
6. **Share your needs.** The pastors and staff at Platte Woods UMC are here to serve you. If there are questions that need further exploration or a major need comes up, we want to know about it!



Week 1 – Full to the Brim – Even in the Desert

OPENER

Have you ever traveled to the desert? What was it like?
If not, how do you imagine it?

FOCUS TEXT – Luke 4:1-13 (CEB)

Jesus returned from the Jordan River full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. There he was tempted for forty days by the devil. He ate nothing during those days and afterward Jesus was starving. The devil said to him, “Since you are God’s Son, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.”

Jesus replied, “It’s written, *People won’t live only by bread.*”

Next the devil led him to a high place and showed him in a single instant all the kingdoms of the world. The devil said, “I will give you this whole domain and the glory of all these kingdoms. It’s been entrusted to me and I can give it to anyone I want. Therefore, if you will worship me, it will all be yours.”

Jesus answered, “It’s written, *You will worship the Lord your God and serve only him.*”^[a]

The devil brought him into Jerusalem and stood him at the highest point of the temple. He said to him, “Since you are God’s Son, throw yourself down from here; for it’s written: *He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you and they will take you up in their hands so that you won’t hit your foot on a stone.*”^[a]

¹² Jesus answered, “It’s been said, *Don’t test the Lord your God.*”^[d] ¹³ After finishing every temptation, the devil departed from him until the next opportunity.

ADDITIONAL TEXT Deuteronomy 26:1-11

GROUP DISCUSSION

- What are the desert spaces you see in your community?
How is God present there?
- Where have you experienced God’s abundance?
- In what ways does a scarcity mindset tempt you?

TAKEAWAY

No matter where you are, God meets you there. Whenever you feel separated from God, remember: God is with you – even in the deserts of life!

PRAYER

God Who Exists Everywhere Always,
Thank you for showing up in my life – in the barren places, the lonely places, the dry places and tired places. When I feel tempted to turn away from You and Your way, remind me: God, You are with me.
Amen.

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PRAYER REQUESTS

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Week 2 – Full to the Brim – Under God’s Wing

OPENER

Tell us about your pets: past, present or ones you wish you had!

FOCUS TEXT – Luke 13: 31 – 35

At that time, some Pharisees approached Jesus and said, “Go! Get away from here, because Herod wants to kill you.”

Jesus said to them, “Go, tell that fox, ‘Look, I’m throwing out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will complete my work. ³³ However, it’s necessary for me to travel today, tomorrow, and the next day because it’s impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who were sent to you! How often I have wanted to gather your people just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you didn’t want that. Look, your house is abandoned. I tell you, you won’t see me until the time comes when you say, *Blessings on the one who comes in the Lord’s name.*”

ADDITIONAL TEXTS - Psalm 27

GROUP DISCUSSION

- What surprised you about the image of God as a mother hen (found in Luke 13, above)? How does it make you feel?
- How have you felt God’s love most surely or most profoundly? Was it a specific moment or a season?
- Think of a time you saw a parent/guardian showing a child unconditional love, even when the child has chosen a destructive or difficult path. What do we learn about God’s love through their example?

TAKEAWAY

God loves you and fiercely watches over you. God seeks to show and share with you this radical love and grace!

PRAYER

Protector God,
Thank You for Your eternal presence in my life, for Your watchful eye and the shelter of Your wings. The way You love me is amazing. Help me to love others the way You love me! Amen

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PRAYER REQUESTS

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Week 3 – Full to the Brim – You Are Worthy

OPENER

What is your favorite fruit? Why?

FOCUS TEXT – Luke 13: 6-9

Jesus told this parable: “A man owned a fig tree planted in his vineyard. He came looking for fruit on it and found none. He said to his gardener, ‘Look, I’ve come looking for fruit on this fig tree for the past three years, and I’ve never found any. Cut it down! Why should it continue depleting the soil’s nutrients?’ The gardener responded, ‘Lord, give it one more year, and I will dig around it and give it fertilizer. Maybe it will produce fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down.’”

ADDITIONAL TEXTS - Isaiah 55:1-9

GROUP DISCUSSION

- Have you ever felt like the fig tree, not producing any visible fruit? If so, how did this feel?
- Have you ever felt like the landowner, seeing someone or something as a waste of resources? What does it look like to practice audacious hope in these circumstances?
- Jesus didn’t offer an explanation at the end of this parable. What do you hear Jesus trying to say?

TAKEAWAY

When we see others being wasteful, God calls us to inspire hope. When we feel like we are a waste, God reminds us there is always hope in the One from whom all blessings flow – Jesus!

PRAYER

God of Hope,

Even when we let ourselves down, others down, and even You down, there is always hope. Help us to know the hope that comes from You, the One who draws all creation into a future filled with hope! May it be so! Amen.

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PRAYER REQUESTS

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- Luke 15:1-3; 11b-32
- 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

- What irks or challenges you about the story of the prodigal son? What comforts and surprises you? Now ask yourself why. What do your reactions tell you about your internalized beliefs about grace and worthiness?
- Recall a time in your life when you have either received or given prodigal grace, grace that is lavish, illogical and unearned. How did that experience change you?
- Reread this story as a group or as an individual. What does expansive grace look like for each character?

God's grace is also prodigal in the way that it is extravagant, lavish and illogical. There's no limit to the grace that we can experience with God because God puts no limits on grace!

Holy God, remind me that when it comes to the story of the prodigal son, I play all three roles. I can make the same mistakes, but I can also make the same gracious choices. Therefore, help me be like the prodigal son who was quick to apologize, be like the older brother who aimed for righteousness, and be like the father who celebrated love at every turn. With you, I can be all three. Amen.

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PRAYER REQUESTS

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Divine Composer, you created the symphony of nature. Help me to cry out, lifting voices, not silencing injustice. You gave me a voice, teach me how to use it for your glory. Amen.

PRAYER REQUESTS

PRAYER REQUESTS



Week 7 – Full to the Brim – An Expansive Life
Happy Easter!

OPENER

Share a favorite Easter memory!

FOCUS TEXT – Luke 24:5b-8 (CEB)

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶ He isn’t here, but has been raised. Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Human One[a] must be handed over to sinners, be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” ⁸ Then they remembered his words.

ADDITIONAL TEXTS

- Luke 24:1-12

GROUP DISCUSSION

- This Easter, what are you invited to lay down or let go of in order to step into what is next?
- What does it look like for you to be like Peter, to be curious enough to go where new life is blooming and take notice?
- What is the expansive life God is inviting you to live? What does that life look and feel like? How can you continue to live into God's expansiveness?

TAKEAWAY

We are Easter people, Jesus is alive! Rev. Larissa Kwong Abazia writes: “We open ourselves up to the unexpected as we arrive at the tomb and realize we have to lay our own spices down, letting go of what we know how to do to step toward whatever is next.” Jesus has called you to expansive life, join him!

PRAYER

Living God, you create for good. Day after day, Easter after Easter, you call us into new life! Thank you for overcoming the world. Thank you for new life. Thank you for showing me what expansive life is. In Jesus' resurrected name, Amen.

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PRAYER REQUESTS

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