



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 Church

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 Church 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 – From Generation to Generation
There is Room for Every Story

FOCUS TEXTS

Matthew 1:1-17
Isaiah 2:1-5

GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

- Luke’s genealogy of Christ diverges from Matthew’s. Some scholars propose that the Aramaic in verse 16 should introduce Joseph as Mary’s father, not her husband, therefore tracing the genealogy through Mary. In some ways, the record of Jesus’ family tree is like a tapestry of mismatched strings woven together. Theologically, how does the untidiness of Jesus’ lineage emphasize how God grafts family in different and unexpected ways? How might this create room for stories of blended families, families through adoption, or families who don’t know their ancestry? How does this create room for your story?
- Isaiah’s prophecy paints a powerful illustration of regeneration—of weapons of war becoming plows that break up soil and shears that prune away dead branches. Within your life, church, or community, what needs to be unearthed or dug up? What needs to be pruned away? What steps are required for this work to take place? Where is God regenerating a new path forward?

PRAYER

Family of faith, we who feel scattered are held together. We who have lost our way are forgiven and found. And we who are lonely are brought into the fold and are told, “There’s room for you here.” From generation to generation, this is the good news of the gospel. In Jesus Christ we are held, forgiven, found, and welcomed. Thanks be to God! Amen.

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**Week 2 – From Generation to Generation
God Meets Us in Our Fear**

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FOCUS TEXTS

Luke 1:26-38
Isaiah 11:1-10

GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

- After Mary’s initial skepticism about what sort of message she is receiving, the angel says, “Do not be afraid” (v.30). He shares with her the message of what will come and then explains how it will occur, responding to Mary’s questioning. Then he points to her cousin Elizabeth as an example to prove that “nothing is impossible for God” (v.37). At this point, Mary replies, “Let it be.” What changes Mary’s mind? What convinces her to trust this message? From where—or from whom—does she summon her courage?
- In Isaiah 11, the stump of Jesse alludes to the Davidic dynasty, believed to be the arbiters of God’s goodness throughout the generations. In Isaiah’s vision, God’s spirit will intervene, leading to a world of righteousness and peace. Prey will no longer fear their predators. The vulnerable will be protected. All of creation will be filled with the wisdom of God. Where do you see glimpses of this vision coming to life? What actions can we take today to help bring this prophecy into fruition for the generations that come after us?

PRAYER

Family of faith, even when we forget God’s words, God does not forget us. Even when we lose our way, God does not lose us. Even when we fall short or make mistakes, God forgives and holds onto us. We are known, forgiven, and loved. Thanks be to God! Amen.

PRAYER REQUESTS

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**Week 3 – From Generation to Generation
We Can Choose a Better Way**

FOCUS TEXTS

Matthew 1:18-25
Isaiah 35:1-10

GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

- Consider what could have happened if Joseph did not choose to heed the angel's command and take Mary as his wife. What might have happened to Mary and her newborn? Engage your imagination and ponder the other ways the Christmas story could have unfolded had Joseph made a different choice.
- What choices—made by former generations—have you inherited? When have our ancestors chosen the better way, and when have they not? How do we experience the consequences of those actions?
- When have you risked your power and privilege to do the right thing? Or when have you experienced those with power and privilege evading justice?
- In Isaiah 35, note all the images of transformation occurring in this prophetic vision. The prophet envisions a Holy Way where everything becomes more alert, more joyful, and more vibrant. What choices can we make each day to bring forth God's Holy Way?

PRAYER

Family of Faith, hear this good news: We who have chosen wrong, are given a second chance. We who have lost our way, are welcomed into community. We who feel alone, are seen, held, and known. This is the good news of the gospel. No matter how many times we choose wrong or lose our way, God continues to be a God of second chances, community, and love. Thanks be to God! Amen.

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**Week 4 – From Generation to Generation
We See God in Each Other**

FOCUS TEXTS

Luke 1:39-45; 56-68
Luke 1:46-55

GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

- Mary greets Elizabeth at a literal threshold (the doorway of Elizabeth’s home) and goes to her at a threshold moment in her life when all is about to change. Recall a threshold moment in your life. Who were the people who greeted you and supported you through that transition?
- In the Roman empire, there were two main motivations for requiring a census: to count the number of able-bodied men who could be drafted for war, and to determine the number of taxpayers in every location. In other words, the census was designed to consolidate the empire’s military strength and economic power. In contrast, Mary sings about dethroning the powerful and lifting up the lowly (Luke 1:52). How does Mary’s song disrupt systems of power and generate a new world? In what ways does Magnificat comfort you? In what ways does it unsettle you?

PRAYER

Friends, this is what I know—God delights in us. God throws open the door, just like Elizabeth, and says, “Come on home. There is room for you here!” And in that moment, we are blessed. In that moment, we are forgiven. In that moment, we are seen, healed, and welcomed home. So rest in this good news: you are saved by grace. Amen.

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