



## 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 – Starting Over – Unlikely Relationship

### OPENER

Do you like to engage in small talk with strangers? Has that ever led to an unlikely conversation?

### FOCUS TEXT – Ruth 1:16-17 (CEB)

<sup>16</sup> But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to abandon you, to turn back from following after you. Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. <sup>17</sup> Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord do this to me and more so if even death separates me from you.”

### ADDITIONAL TEXTS

- Ruth 1:1-18

### GROUP DISCUSSION

- What unlikely relationships need your attention or loyalty in this new year?
- What is it like to have relationships with people who can promise you nothing? Have you ever entered a relationship expecting nothing only to be surprised?
- Where are you meeting or intentionally being with people to foster unlikely relationships?

### TAKEAWAY

When we are bold enough to engage in unlikely relationships, we have the opportunity to see God alive in others and in new ways. In this new year, be intentional about seeing the people around you and you may be surprised by the ways you are blessed in return.

### PRAYER

Connector of Creation, you have woven our stories together in powerful ways. You, Your Son, and Your Spirit have come to be with us in the most unlikely relationship of all. Magnify your spirit of connection and relationship within me. Amen.

## JOURNAL

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## PRAYER REQUESTS

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**Week 2 – Starting Over – Unlikely Place**

**JOURNAL**

**OPENER**

Have you traveled to a place where you encountered a different culture? Share your experience!

**FOCUS TEXT – Ruth 2:7; 10-11a; 12a (CEB)**

<sup>7</sup> She said, ‘Please let me glean so that I might gather up grain from among the bundles behind the harvesters.’ She arrived and has been on her feet from the morning until now, and has sat down for only a moment.” ... <sup>10</sup> Then she bowed down, face to the ground, and replied to him, “How is it that I’ve found favor in your eyes, that you notice me? I’m an immigrant.” <sup>11</sup> Boaz responded to her.... <sup>12</sup> “May the Lord reward you for your deed.”

**ADDITIONAL TEXTS**

- Ruth 1:19-2:23

**GROUP DISCUSSION**

- When you find yourself in a difficult or unfamiliar place, how do you function within it?
- Do you in habit places that are inhospitable to people who are new there? How can you make them more hospitable?
- What can we learn from Ruth’s story and the life of Jesus about welcoming others?

**TAKEAWAY**

We will experience seasons where we are the outsider and where we get to receive the outsider. Ruth offers us a bold example of carving out space in unlikely places and Boaz shows a way to welcome others with grace and compassion.

**PRAYER**

Hospitable God, you sent your Son to earth as an outsider and blessed those that received him with love. Your Spirit is a Spirit of warm reception to all of the souls that you have wonderfully created. Open my eyes to receive the outsiders in my life. Amen.

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**PRAYER REQUESTS**



## Week 3 – Starting Over – Unlikely Future

## JOURNAL

### OPENER

If you could know one thing about your future, what would it be?

### FOCUS TEXT – Ruth 4:14-15; 17b (CEB)

<sup>14</sup> The women said to Naomi, “May the Lord be blessed, who today hasn’t left you without a redeemer. May his name be proclaimed in Israel. <sup>15</sup> He will restore your life and sustain you in your old age. Your daughter-in-law who loves you has given birth to him. She’s better for you than seven sons.” <sup>17</sup> ... They called his name Obed. He became Jesse’s father and David’s grandfather.

### ADDITIONAL TEXTS

- Ruth 3-4

### GROUP DISCUSSION

- What decisions or life choices, for yourself or others, are you making now that will likely impact your future?
- As you think about your future, what do you feel? Do you feel moved to action, paralyzed by decisions, hopeful, anxious, etc.?
- How do you trust God to write your future for and with you?

### TAKEAWAY

There are so many unknowns in our world, and we approach the future in different ways in different seasons. The decisions, habits, and relationships that we form now can impact the life that is ahead of us. Ruth artfully lives in the present, doing what she can today and trusting that God will hold her future in his hands.

### PRAYER

Keeper of the Future, you have lovingly written the story of our lives with us each moment. You can redeem all for good both now and what has yet to come. Give me peace to trust your working hands and confidence to follow your loving narrative. I lay my future in your hands, God. Amen.

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### PRAYER REQUESTS

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