

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.

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.

SAY!

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

Message Summary

What an honor to have Gina Russell with us from the Pregnancy Resource Center to share about "new life" during week 4 of our "new" series. Some of the highlights from what she shared with us are below:

1. **Abortion statistics:** 42 million worldwide/year (1.2 million in the US) ~ 93% of all abortions happened as a result of social reasons (inconvenience, lack of money, etc) while less than 1% are due to rape and other violent sexual crimes. In 2010, there were just over 25,000 abortions in NC.
2. **John 4:1-30** guides every interaction Gina has with her clients at the PRC. Some of the truths in this passage deal with our need to be rescued (v. 7) and our need to have long lasting relief (v. 10). It wasn't perfection that Jesus was seeking from the woman, but honesty, and when she was honest, she found herself leaving behind her greatest need and burden (the water jug in v. 28).
3. **God wants to give you a weird blessing!** Often, the greatest blessing that God gives us is actually a burden, which seems weird. For Gina, her blessing is a burden to see hurting men and women healed through the ministry of the PRC, and so her commitment at the PRC isn't so much about being committed to pro-life as much as it is about being committed to the cause of Christ. She challenged all of us to allow God to help us see our burdens as blessings.
4. **God values all life!** Gina sees many people who have come through the trauma of the abortion process, and God gave her a specific burden for those in The Gathering who feel that pain. She made it clear, though, that God values all life.



Discuss

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

- Since World War 2 there have been 1.5 billion abortions worldwide. **That's the equivalent of 5 UNITED STATES!!** Gina mentioned that when she first started volunteering at the PRC she felt like "the darkness overwhelmed her." It's easy to understand that in light of these numbers, and it's easy to remain silent, but Proverbs 31:8 demands that we speak the unspeakable. James 1:5 promises that God will give us wisdom if we lack it and ask Him for it, so spend the first few moments asking for Him to give you and our church wisdom about how we can stand against what feels so overwhelming.
- Read John 4:16-18 and discuss how willing you are to "come clean" with Jesus.
- Jesus praised her for telling the truth, even though she held back some important information. Discuss the difference between our need to expose every detail about others (which often just makes them look worse) and Jesus' ability to move past the details in order to focus on the heart of this woman (which leads to healing).
- Read Matthew 21:28-32. Only one son changed his mind, because only one son was honest. Change isn't possible without honesty. What light does this shed on the apparent lack of change among people in our American churches?
- Why do you think Jesus said that the tax collectors and prostitutes were entering the kingdom of God ahead of the religious leaders?
- Discuss the benefits of a church family and church culture that allows people to dialogue honestly about where they are? What are some potential problems with honesty? Ultimately, who is responsible for changing the course of an honest heart (hint, see Proverbs 21:1)? Do you trust Him with the process? Do you trust Him with your heart and the hearts of the others at The Gathering?

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.