

WEEK 10 | BECOMING A COVENANT COMMUNITY

WEEKLY OVERVIEW

In week 10, we'll move from "commitment to the church" to "commitment to the life group." The conversation will be how your group is the strongest place of connection between personal formation and the mission, vision, and priorities of The Creek.

To prepare through the week, you will reflect on the covenant and be prompted to write gratitude and words of blessing that will be shared during the Celebration time. As you sit with the covenant, you will also be invited to discern if you are ready to commit to this life group.

NOTE

- All readings and devotions will come from the Companion Guide this week.
- You will be writing words of blessing for each member of your group. These will be read during the Rooted Celebration time.

DAILY WORK

Day 1: Gratitude and Blessings

Day 2: Partnership Reflection

Day 3: From Creek Family to Life Group Family

Day 4: Life Group Covenant → Expectations

Day 5: Committing

MEMORY VERSE

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. All the believers were together and had everything in common." - Acts 2: 42, 44

BEFORE YOU BEGIN...

Pause and ask God to show you what is most important for you to pay attention to in today's reading and reflection questions. Ask Him to help you discern where He is leading you and what He wants to show you today.



DAY 1: GRATITUDE AND BLESSINGS

To begin your week (this assignment will most likely continue through the week), you will be writing thank you notes and blessings for each person in your group using the provided cards. These blessings will be shared with each group member during the Rooted Celebration.

Philippians 1: 3-6 says, *"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."*

One of the beautiful parts of the Rooted experience is the joy of partnering with others in the Gospel – the encouragement you've received and have been able to share. In this final week, whether you are continuing with your life group or not, you'll have an opportunity to share and receive blessings from other group members.

- **Part 1:** Write one word or a short phrase of blessing or affirmation over every member of your group, using one card per person. Call out something God is doing in them or an attribute of God you see in them. These will be collected and read over each person in the group meeting.
- **Part 2:** For those you want to thank or share more with, you can write that on the back of the card. You're welcome to write a note to everyone, but that's not necessary. These notes will not be read out loud.

DAY 2: PARTNERSHIP REFLECTION

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. - Acts 2: 42-47

Take some time to read the Acts 2 passage. Read it slowly a few times over. Pause between readings to allow space to listen and soak in the words. After reading and sitting with the passage, reflect on the questions below.

Reflection:

- What aspects of the early church do you see evident here at The Creek?
- Now that you have had a chance to read the partnership document and hear more at the Partnership Class, are there any lingering questions you have?

DAY 3: FROM CREEK FAMILY TO LIFE GROUP FAMILY

Before jumping into today's devotional reading, spend some time re-reading Acts 2: 42-47.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. - Acts 2: 42-47

In light of these scriptures, consider: What aspects of the early church do you hope will emerge in your life group?

In general, life groups gather weekly in a home to share with one another about life. They discuss the sermons using a discussion guide provided by The Creek, they pray with and for one another, confess, and hold one another accountable. Often, food is involved (praise the Lord!). As a regular group rhythm, groups serve together or share extended times of prayer. In some groups, men or women meet monthly to check in and share more deeply. For some groups, kids are a weekly presence, sharing the meal with everyone, then going to another area to play together. In other groups, the kids stay home so that mom and dad can have some uninterrupted time with the group.

Hopefully, you can see that no two groups look the same – life groups are called that, not just because we share life with one another, but because they have to work in real life, whatever your current stage of life is. So they will most likely need to flex based on the season. They won't be perfect, and they don't need to be. They need to be real. They need to be covenantal.

What is a covenant community? It is a group of people who willingly bind themselves together to be committed to pursuing God together. It means you care not only for your own growth as a Jesus-follower, but also for the growth of the other members of your group. Your community becomes a priority in your life because you believe it's important enough to say yes to your group, even if it means saying no to other possible commitments. The reason you enter into a covenant with one another is so that when you look around the circle of your group, you can know that each person there is committed to the same goal with the same conviction. That is how groups grow together in relationships and in Christlikeness – which is always our ultimate goal. And it's how they make a difference in one another's lives, in the church, and in the world.

With that understanding, let's move on today and tomorrow to the actual words of the covenant. Here is the first part of The Creek's Life Group Covenant:

As disciples, we pursue formation into Christ's likeness by abiding in Christ through worship, teaching, Scripture, prayer, and community. We live this out through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in accountability with others. We acknowledge the authority of Scripture and pursue emotional and relational health all as a part of growing in spiritual maturity.

As people with a purpose in the Kingdom of God, we seek to proclaim the Gospel in our community by serving others and sharing the hope of Jesus. We partner with God by generously giving our time, gifts, and resources. We understand that each group will live out these aspects of community a little differently.

Reflection:

- How is covenant community different than how you might've been thinking about life groups before?
- As you review your current life circumstances, what might stand in the way of agreeing to join a covenant community?
- How will you work through those obstacles to make your life group a priority?

DAY 4: LIFE GROUP COVENANT- EXPECTATIONS

In any contract or covenant you sign, there are stipulations on how to keep that covenant. In order to participate in a covenant community, there are things you can expect from others and that they can expect from you. In the small print that sometimes we humans don't like reading, that means that you are also giving authority to others in your group to hold you to these expectations and to have a loving accountability conversation if they are seeing or sensing something in your life that is out of line with these promises you're making. In The Creek's covenant, you'll see these expectations listed:

In order to accomplish this goal, we expect each life group participant to:

- *Attend your life group regularly.*
- *Pursue a life of abiding in Christ that reflects the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23)*
- *Contribute to group discussion with vulnerability and transparency.*
- *Engage in weekly worship gathering.*
- *Pray for and care for your group members.*
- *Speak the truth in love and humbly receive loving accountability.*
- *Maintain confidentiality of what is shared in the group.*

It's been mentioned before that each group is in a different season of life, is made up of people in various stages of their faith journey, and has a blend of passions and gifts that makes it unique. That is why, when you first discuss this covenant at your Week 10 group gathering, you will have a chance to look over each expectation and to create others that are fitting for your group. Some groups add expectations about how they will handle childcare, how they will manage the use of phones during their meetings, how they will specifically approach serving or prayer times, etc. There is a lot of flexibility, and our team would be happy to talk through those options with your group.

Any list of expectations your group creates is not set in stone; there are times built into each year (i.e. Life Group Vision Nights) where your group will reflect on your covenant and make adjustments to better fit your current season. You don't have to wait for those times; your group can review your covenant at any time that seems necessary.

Now that you understand what the covenant says and what you'll be saying yes to, it's time to decide. Are you ready to step into a long-term committed relationship with the people you've been engaged with over the past several weeks? Yes, if you're thinking this sounds like a marriage proposal, you're not too far off! When you say yes, you're saying yes to a family – not just some people who happen to get together to pray, read, and talk about the sermon. You're stepping into a beautiful picture of the church and of the relationship we have with Jesus.

Saying yes to a commitment like that isn't to be taken lightly. It will most likely be an important stepping stone on your way toward being more like Jesus – one you will not regret. But perhaps this isn't the right time or maybe you're not quite at the point of wanting to make that kind of commitment. Don't rush into making a decision either way; whether it's a yes or no, you need to cover your decision in prayer and careful thought. In a similar situation, Jesus warned his followers to not take their decision lightly:

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' " Luke 14:26-30

A decision to join a life group that will help you pick up your own cross and give you a chance to help others bear their cross is no small decision. Your decision doesn't have to be made today! If you need more time for praying or more conversation, that's ok too! Just make sure you carve out intentional time to have those conversations with God and with others.

There is great power in inviting others into your life in this way – transformative power. We pray that you will find this kind of community. If not now, soon. May God bless your decision making!

Reflection

- What does it look like to say yes to this group? What costs do you need to count?

- Which of the expectations stand out to you? Why?
- Your group will brainstorm about additions to the covenant for their group. What ideas might you bring to that conversation?
- What excites you about being part of this group? What hesitations do you have?

DAY 5: COMMITTING

After praying and reflecting, write out your intention to continue with this group or not. These will be read during your Week 10 group discussion.

- Write what led you to that decision.
- Write what obstacles you perceive might get in the way.
- Write the value of continuing or not continuing.
- Write your hope for what it will mean to be part of this group. (OR)
- Write your hope for a future in community if your answer is no.
- Use today and the next week to finish up your gratitude and blessings to be shared during the Celebration.



PARTICIPANT COVENANT

A life group is a community of disciples intent on loving God, loving others, and making disciples in order to connect people to Jesus.

As disciples, we pursue formation into Christ's likeness by abiding in Christ through worship, teaching, Scripture, prayer, and community. We live this out through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in accountability with others. We acknowledge the authority of Scripture and pursue emotional and relational health all as a part of growing in spiritual maturity.

As people with a purpose in the Kingdom of God, we seek to proclaim the Gospel in our community by serving others and sharing the hope of Jesus. We partner with God by generously giving our time, gifts, and resources. We understand that each group will live out these aspects of community a little differently.

In order to accomplish this goal, we expect each life group participant to:

- Attend your life group regularly.
- Pursue a life of abiding in Christ that reflects the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23)
- Contribute to group discussion with vulnerability and transparency.
- Engage in weekly worship gathering.
- Pray for and care for your group members.
- Speak the truth in love and humbly receive loving accountability.
- Maintain confidentiality of what is shared in the group. *

In addition to the guidelines listed above, our life group desires to:

I hereby understand and commit to upholding the expectations laid out for life group participants at The Creek and I commit myself to being and making disciples of Jesus.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

*Everything in a group is to be kept confidential, but according to Indiana law^[1], we do have a duty to report abuse or neglect of a person whether they are a child or an adult. If you feel like harm is going to happen to any individual let a leader on staff at The Creek know. In addition, information may be shared for the express purpose of resource recommendations, accountability, discipleship, or for legal and safety reasons. [1] Indiana Code 31-33-5-1, Indiana Code 12-10-3-9(a) and 12-10-3-2(a)