

Every Member a Minister — Small Group Guide

Belong: Building His Family · Week 2 *Romans 12:4–6 · John 15 · Ephesians 4:11–12 · 1 Peter 4:10 · John 12:24*

A word for the leader. This guide carries the heart of Sunday into the room — it's a conversation, not a course. Don't feel you have to cover every question; choose what fits your people and your time. Leave room for silence. The aim isn't to recruit anyone onto a roster — it's to help us each ask whether we're abiding in Christ, and what it looks like to be poured out for one another from that place. Throughout, we speak in "we," never "you should." Grace, not guilt.

Connect — to open

1. Think of someone who quietly served you in a season you couldn't serve yourself — a meal, a message, a presence. What did it do in you?
 2. When you hear the word "ministry," what's the first picture that comes to mind — and where do you think that picture came from?
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Our golden thread this week: **God did not give you to yourself. He gave you to this body — and He gave you to this body by first giving you to His Son.**

The heart of the message

For a long time the church borrowed a model from the world: find your gift, serve your gift, deploy your gift. Well-intentioned — but somewhere it taught us to relate to the church like an employer. We served when it suited us, in the areas we enjoyed, as long as we felt appreciated. We made ministry about the gift and forgot the Giver.

Scripture flips the order. Before Paul talks about what we do, he tells us who we are: members of one body in Christ. Identity first, function second. So the first question is never "where can I serve?" It's "am I abiding in Christ?"

Into the Word

1 · The body before the gift (Romans 12:4–6)

3. Paul calls us a body — not an audience, a crowd, or a volunteer pool. What changes for us when we really believe "each member belongs to all the others"?
4. The word for "gift" here is *grace* — given, not earned, not developed by effort. How does that dismantle both "I'm not gifted enough to contribute" and "my gift is the important one"?

2 · Abide before you produce (John 15)

5. Jesus doesn't say "identify the fruit you're best at and focus there." He says "remain in me." Where are we tempted to chase fruit while neglecting the connection it grows from?
6. A cut branch can still *look* like a fruit-bearing branch for a while. What does it look like, honestly, to keep serving while quietly disconnected — and what restores the connection?

3 · Every member a minister (*Ephesians 4:11–12*)

Leaders aren't given to do all the ministry — they're given to equip the people to do it. Sunday isn't the destination; it's the fuel stop. We're strengthened, then sent into the week.

7. The workshop, the classroom, the hospital ward, the kitchen table — each is named as a place of ministry. Where is the ground God has already placed you in this week, and who is around you there?
8. The goal of every member ministering isn't a busy, well-staffed church — it's a church that looks like Jesus. How would that goal reshape *why* and *how* we serve?

4 · Stewards, not owners (*1 Peter 4:10*)

9. A steward manages what belongs to Someone else — and only has to be faithful, not impressive. What pressure lifts off us when we stop trying to be the most gifted person in the room?
10. "Whatever gift you have received" — not the one we wish we had. What has actually been placed in your hand right now that could be poured toward the person in front of you?

The turn — the seed and the soil (*John 12:24*)

The volunteer model asked for the fruit without the death. It said "give us your gift" but never led people to the cross that makes the gift mean anything. Jesus describes a posture, not a programme: the life that clings to itself produces nothing; the life that is yielded multiplies — not through striving, through surrender.

And when the seed falls, it disappears into the dark, where no one is watching. The shell cracks. If you dug it up, you'd think it was dying. But that breaking in the dark is the growing.

When it feels hidden, He is not absent. He is at work. The breaking is not the end of you. It is the making of the minister He's calling you to be.

11. Surrender is described as costly and real. What does Jesus seem to be asking you to release: comfort, reputation, control, the right to be appreciated?
12. Have you walked through a "dark of the soil" season — where it felt like nothing was growing, but later you saw God had been at work? What helped you keep trusting?
13. The door into all of this isn't talent — it's a yielded heart, and every one of us can open it. What's one honest "yes to the soil" you could pray this week?

This week — carrying it out the door

Not a commitment to a programme. Just a willingness to fall into the ground. Pick one:

- **Abide first** — set aside unhurried time with Jesus *before* you do anything "for" Him this week. Let the serving flow from the connection.
- **Steward what's in your hand** — name one person God has placed near you, and take one ordinary, unposted step toward them.
- **Open your hands** — pray the surrender prayer below, and ask God to show you what He's calling you to.

Pray together — open hands

Leaders: keep it gentle and unhurried. Invite the group to open their hands where they sit — a closed hand holds on; an open hand says, "Lord, I'm willing."

"Father, I'm not holding anything back from You today. Take my hands, my time, the parts of me I'd rather keep safe. I trust You with the dark soil and the slow growing, even when I can't see what You're doing. I don't need the whole picture — I just want to be where You are. Plant me, break me open if You must, and grow whatever You please. I'm Yours, and I'm willing."

You are not just saved from something. You are shaped for something. And the moment you fall into the ground — the harvest begins.
