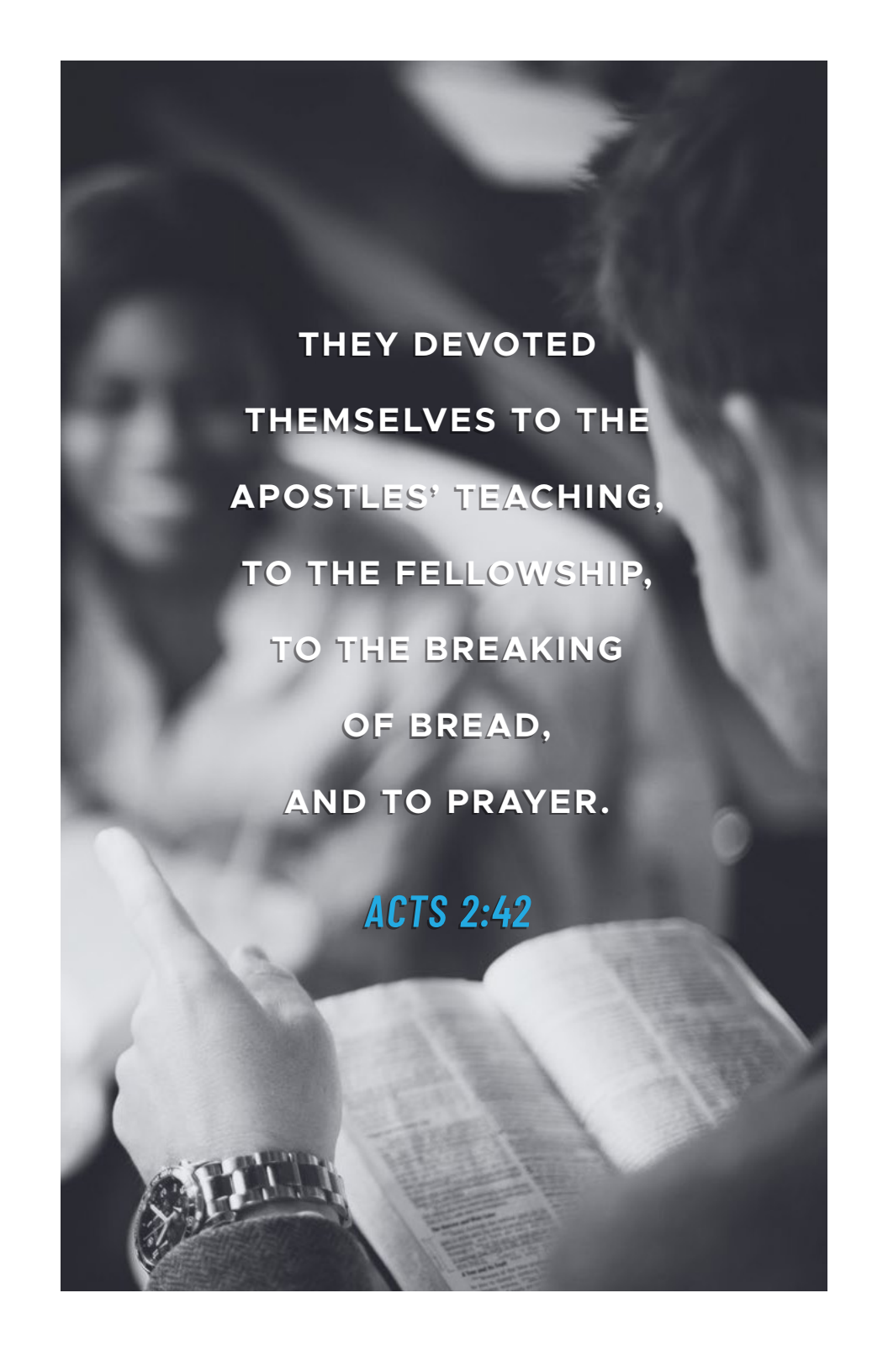




Group**Launch**

- *BELONG*
- *BELIEVE*
- *BECOME*





THEY DEVOTED
THEMSELVES TO THE
APOSTLES' TEACHING,
TO THE FELLOWSHIP,
TO THE BREAKING
OF BREAD,
AND TO PRAYER.

ACTS 2:42

WE BELIEVE THAT LIFE CHANGE HAPPENS BEST IN CIRCLES, NOT ROWS.

In his book *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam claimed that the greatest epidemic in American life is not a disease, but loneliness. Despite technology making communication easier, true connection is rarer. No matter who you are, everyone has a craving for true, meaningful relationships. This is because God created us for community—both with Himself and with each other. RidgeGroups exist to help foster each of these connections.

Our aim is to not provide just any type of community but the life-changing community that we see clearly in the Bible. An all-inclusive community centered on Christ that allows His Spirit to move mightily in and through us.

At River Ridge, we define RidgeGroups as life-changing communities where you can belong, believe, and become.

BELONG

A place where you can meet Jesus in a group where you are welcomed and accepted.

BELIEVE

A place where you can know Jesus through His Word and His people.

BECOME

A place where you can follow Jesus as you become who God designed you to be.

This booklet will unpack this definition and prepare you to lead your own RidgeGroup with your friends. As you read, answer the questions at the bottom of each page so that we can discuss the booklet with you.

WHAT MOST EXCITES YOU ABOUT CREATING A COMMUNITY LIKE THE ONE ABOVE?

KEY COMPONENTS OF A LIFE-CHANGING COMMUNITY

In Acts 2:42-47, we see a snapshot of the life-changing community that our RidgeGroups foster.

⁴² *They devoted themselves to the apostles' **teaching**, to the **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread**, and to **prayer**.*

⁴³ *Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. ⁴⁴ Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. ⁴⁵ They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need.*

⁴⁶ *Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. **They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts,** ⁴⁷ **praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.***

Acts 2:42-47

RIDGEGROUPS ENGAGE WITH THE BIBLE, PRAYER, AND ONE ANOTHER

In verse 42, Luke describes how the Early Church was engaged in the apostles' teaching, fellowship, and prayer. These three things guide our RidgeGroups today. In all our discussions, we focus around biblical passages. Though we may reference other books or use other speakers to help further our discussion, the biblical text always is our focal point.

Though we study the Bible in RidgeGroups, it is more than a Bible study. We take the fellowship part (and the breaking of bread) of Acts 2:42 seriously. The Greek word for fellowship (koinonia) means something deeper than a friendly association. It describes people who gather under a common idea or purpose. Though they may differ in wealth, social status, ethnicity, interests, and maturity, they are unified by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It's the unity of the whole, despite its diversity, that makes Gospel fellowship (koinonia) so powerful. Also, once a month, we have a Hangout Night where there is no set agenda, but to connect with one another "and invite new people in."

INWARD AND OUTWARD FOCUS

As the early church committed to the Word, fellowship, and prayer, God did something in them (inward) and through them (outward). Starting in Acts 2 and continuing throughout the book (6:7, 9:31, 16:5), Luke describes the church’s two-fold impact: the strength of the community and the advancement of the mission. The Church grew both in depth (discipleship, or maturing believers) and in breadth (evangelism, or new believers).

It is our hope that RidgeGroups would feel like a group of close friends or family, and that they would reflect the kind of unity the Acts 2 Church had. We will approach this kind of unity by living out the “one anothers” of the faith. In doing so, we put Christ on display and share the Gospel with each other through every selfless act.

In verse 47, Luke describes not just the impact the Early Church had with each other, but outside the church. It says that they had favor with “all people” and that the “Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

When our RidgeGroups function as Acts 2 fellowships, we will provide a life-changing community where non-believers, new believers, and mature believers can belong, believe, and become.

**WHO IN YOUR LIFE (2-8 PEOPLE)
WOULD BE INTERESTED IN STARTING
THIS RIDGEGROUP WITH YOU?**



A WELCOMING AND ACCEPTING PLACE

If you look at the life of Jesus, He spent time with tax collectors, prostitutes, and non-believers. He always met people where they were and never required people to clean up their lives before He loved them. Just as Jesus did, we strive to create an environment where everyone feels like they belong.

OPEN GROUPS

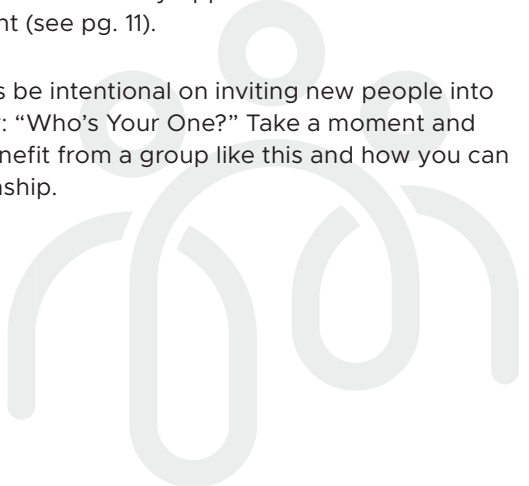
RidgeGroups create a place where people come just as they are, and meet Jesus just as He is. Our groups are open to anyone at any time, and we create an environment where everyone is welcomed and accepted. When this happens, people are able to experience Christ through the life-changing power of Biblical Community. Todd Engstrom described it this way:

“The most persuasive argument for the Christian faith is the Christian community. The majority of conversations throughout church history have come not through argumentation, but through belonging to a meaningful community before belief is ever required.”

INTENTIONALLY INVITING

We want every member of our RidgeGroup to ask, “Who in my life would benefit from a group like this?” And for this person, we want the members of our group to pray for that person, invest in that relationship, and invite them to join the group. Once a month, we create easy opportunities to invite our friends by hosting a Hangout Night (see pg. 11).

To help our RidgeGroup members be intentional on inviting new people into their group, we ask each member: “Who’s Your One?” Take a moment and identify who in your life would benefit from a group like this and how you can pray for and invest in that relationship.



A WELCOMING AND ACCEPTING PLACE

At River Ridge, we want every believer to identify ONE person in their life who is far from God and intentionally pursue that person with the hope of the gospel by praying, investing, and inviting. Take a moment and identify one person in your life who either doesn't have a relationship with Jesus or is disengaged with the local church. This person should be someone you see on a regular basis (Example: Choose your friend in Putnam County over your friend in Seattle). Consider your family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, classmates, etc. Once you identify this person, write their name down on a card, as shown below.

WHO'S YOUR ONE?

(FIRST NAME ONLY)

PRAY DAILY

INVEST WEEKLY

INVITE TO THE NEXT RIGHT THING

After you identify who this person is, we want to commit to doing three things:

PRAY - I will pray daily for my ONE.

I will ask God to make my ONE aware of Christ's love and their need for Him (2 Cor. 4:4; Matt.13:15) and to give them the faith to repent and believe (Acts 20:21; Romans 10:9-10). I will also ask that God allows me to share the Gospel with them.

INVEST - I will create ways to invest weekly in my ONE.

My hope is to build a relationship where I can share Christ's love with my ONE (1 Cor. 9:19-23). Simple investments like text messages, phone calls, and acts of kindness are easy, but impactful ways to invest in the relationship, thus building trust which creates more opportunities to share the Gospel.

INVITE - As I pray and invest, I will invite my ONE to the next right thing.

The ideal would be to share your faith and invite your ONE to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When he or she isn't there yet, I will invite them to an intentional environment where they can belong before they believe. I will do this by inviting them to events like RidgeGroup, a Hangout Night, a church outreach event, or a Sunday morning service, either online or in person.



ENCOUNTERING JESUS THROUGH HIS WORD AND PEOPLE

Along with creating a welcoming and accepting place where you can meet Jesus personally, our RidgeGroups provide a place where you can know Jesus through His Word and His people. When you meet weekly, you will facilitate group discussion where people can encounter Jesus and experience life change. Here are four key elements of life-changing discussion:

BIBLICAL: Life-changing discussion starts and ends with God’s living and active Word. We believe that the Bible is sufficient and relevant for all issues of our life (Heb. 4:12).

CONVERSATIONAL: Life-changing discussion focuses on facilitating a conversation, not teaching a Bible lesson. Better learning and connection are accomplished when people are able to ask questions and share their personal insights and experiences.

AUTHENTIC: Life-changing discussion happens when people are real with themselves, with God, and with others. We foster this authenticity by providing a safe environment where people can be honest and transparent.

APPLICABLE: Life-changing discussion focuses on application because the measure of maturity is not information, but obedience. Healthy Bible discussion doesn’t just answer the question “What does the Bible say?” but it also helps people answer, “How does this personally impact my life today?” That is why we end each discussion by helping people identify a personal, relevant, and practical next step in their journey with God.

WEEKLY CURRICULUM: Whether your group watches the sermon online together or you discuss it later in the week, we will provide questions each week to help you facilitate discussion. We will email the curriculum in our weekly Group Leader Update and post on the RidgeGroup Leaders Facebook Page.

CURRICULUM INCLUDES FIVE SECTIONS

- 1 ICEBREAKER:** Starting your time off with something light-hearted helps you get to know one another more and gets people talking.
- 2 CONTEXT:** This quick summary will give you the context of the passage and help you best understand what the author's intention is.
- 3 PASSAGE:** We will include a primary passage for your group to read together.
- 4 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** These questions will help you understand the passage and its importance in your life today.
- 5 NEXT STEP:** These final 1-2 questions will help each person identify how they personally should respond to what they have read and discussed.

HOW COMFORTABLE DO YOU FEEL FACILITATING A GROUP DISCUSSION WITH THE RESOURCES MENTIONED?

BECOME



BECOMING WHO GOD DESIGNED YOU TO BE

Lastly, our RidgeGroups provide a place where you can follow Jesus as you become who God designed you to be.

One of the best ways to do this is to encourage your group members to not just attend RidgeGroup, but to participate. Encourage people to share their perspective in the discussions and consider how they might contribute their time, talent, and resources to serve the group.

We provide multiple opportunities that help people participate in the group, with suggested meeting rhythms listed on the following page.



RECOMMENDED MEETING RHYTHMS

Our groups have a simple, dynamic rhythm:

• **MEET WEEKLY** • **PARTY MONTHLY** • **SERVE QUARTERLY**

This simple framework helps our groups provide a life-changing community where you can belong, believe, and become.

MEET WEEKLY

Our RidgeGroups meet every week because consistency builds community. We want our groups to become part of the weekly rhythms of our people's lives.

Whenever you schedule RidgeGroups less frequently, it can be difficult to gain traction and if someone misses, they will go a month without seeing the group members. By meeting weekly, you make the group a priority on your calendar and community forms quickly.

PARTY MONTHLY

Once a month, our groups host a Hangout Night, which is when the group intentionally creates a warm and welcoming place to invite new people to experience their life-changing community. These nights provide strategic invite opportunities for each person's ONE that they are praying for and investing in.

SERVE QUARTERLY

Along with your weekly and monthly rhythm, we want groups to choose one way that your group can reach your neighborhood, city, or world. One of the ways you can do this is by joining something called Go Local. Throughout the year, the church hosts multiple events each year focused on serving the city and the world and we want your group to join us in these efforts.

Another way that you can serve together is to adopt a local school or gathering of people to partner with through service projects. Paint hallways, trim hedges, mend fences. Dream up a local outreach that you would want to lead. Periodically, we provide groups with the money to fund events like big neighborhood block parties. As you serve together, it is amazing the memories you will make as a group and what God will begin to stir in the hearts of your members.

**“WE WANT
OUR GROUPS
TO BECOME
PART OF
THE WEEKLY
RHYTHMS OF
OUR PEOPLE'S
LIVES.”**

**WHAT DAY OF THE WEEK DO YOU
PLAN TO HOST YOUR GROUP?**

**HOW DO YOU SEE HANGOUT NIGHTS
ENHANCING YOUR RIDGEGROUP
EXPERIENCE?**

**CREATE A LIST OF POSSIBLE
HANGOUT NIGHTS.**

HOW TO SHARE RESPONSIBILITY

“ RIDGEGROUP IS NOT A GROUP OF PEOPLE WITH A GIFTED LEADER, BUT A LEADER WITH A GROUP OF GIFTED PEOPLE.”

A good leader shares responsibility; they don't hoard it. Hosting and leading RidgeGroup should be a team approach. For the sake of the leader's health, we don't want any individual to have all the responsibility, but instead to share it with other capable members. When you are able to not just give, but receive from the group, leadership becomes a blessing, not a burden.

Secondly, we share leadership for the sake of our people. RidgeGroups are not a group of people with a gifted leader, but a leader with a group of gifted

people. A good leader creates opportunities for people to use their gifts to contribute to the group. However big or small the contribution may be, we encourage people to not just think about what they can receive from the group, but what they can give. We are contributors not consumers.

THERE ARE AT LEAST FIVE DIFFERENT ROLES THAT WE RECOMMEND FOR OUR GROUPS.

This is not an exact science, but an art. Certain individuals may lead in two roles or multiple people can help facilitate the discussion weekly. We just don't want one person doing all five roles.

FACILITATOR

The Facilitator leads the group discussion weekly. This role may be done by one person or by a couple. The important part of this role is that the leader facilitates a discussion rather than preaching a message. We want as many people to participate in the discussion as possible. As people contribute to the discussion it creates a sense of belonging and it helps them better process what they are hearing.



HOST

The Host opens up their home for the group to meet. They also think through their living spaces and design them in a way that accommodates the group and helps foster connection. For example, the host may reorganize their living room to create one big circle so that it better facilitates discussion.

COORDINATOR

The Coordinator focuses on organizing and communicating with the group. If your group has a snack list, the coordinator organizes whose week it is and sends reminders. They also communicate with the whole group about what is coming up this week. If the group meets online, the coordinator can set up and send out the link each week. Lastly, if your group does childcare, this person will coordinate with the babysitter and the group.

HANGOUT NIGHT LEADER

The Hangout Night Leader helps the whole group get involved in your monthly Hangout. This includes planning activities that are welcoming to new people and encouraging current group members to invite their ONE. The Hangout Night Leader should be familiar with the Hangout Night overview found on our Group Leader Resource Page.

SERVING COORDINATOR

The Serving Coordinator focuses on organizing serving opportunities and communicating serving projects to the group. They will be in communication with our Serving and Missions Director to identify different serving opportunities quarterly.

