



PIVOT NW GATHERING GROUPS LEADER GUIDE

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Email feedback to beta@pivotnw.org

WHAT IS A PIVOT GATHERING GROUP?

These groups are designed for 20-somethings that hunger for real conversations about the things that matter. There just aren't that many places today to have conversations about the big things in a way that goes beyond the trivial, where people can share themselves safely, without judgment, without trying to be fixed, without polarizing discussions, without being preached to. A place where they can talk about subjects that are "too dangerous" to bring up. The guides are designed to create that space where people can meet, have real conversations, and walk away changed—knowing themselves and others a little bit better.

By the way, you can name your group whatever you want and still use our information. We don't even want credit except where it helps others find and use our resources. We just want to help grow the church by empowering young adults and leaders of young adults.

THE HOW & WHY OF PIVOT GATHERING GROUPS?

As humans, we are wired to share ourselves with each other over a meal where we find nourishment for our bodies and souls. Families that eat together are emotionally and physically healthier—the research evidence is clear. And one of the most common images of how Jesus spent his life on earth was eating with the people around him—with his friends Mary and Martha; at a wedding banquet; and in the upper room of a house with his disciples.

Someone might host the place and people bring food (for each conversation we have suggested food themes), find a nook in a beloved restaurant, or share lunch together at work. Whatever the specific place, make it a sacred place where people are invited to show up as they are.



THE APPROACH

The Pivot Groups are designed for people to have open discussions about a number of topics that are particularly relevant to 20-somethings. The gatherings are structured to be a time when people can get to know one another to think about the deep questions in our lives. The questions are built around the intersection—the “good news” that the church has to offer and the place where everyone struggles. They are designed to be open discussions where people can bring their experience and thoughts to explore themselves and a pressing topic in more depth.

WHO ARE THEY FOR?

Anybody! The topics chosen are particularly relevant to people in their 20s, but could include anybody.

Beyond that, the groups will be most powerful when they include a wide variety of people—men, women, married, unmarried, Christian, religious, or not religious. The only guide is to create a space where everyone can bring their authentic selves and views of the world, while also creating a safe space that invites others to be authentic as well. The questions have been specifically selected so they won’t have the “right” answers.

WHO SHOULD LEAD THE GROUP?

The groups might start within a church, be self-created by a group of good friends outside the church, or even take place at work as lunchtime conversations.

As Part of a Church. If established from a church, we recommend that the facilitator be someone with a leadership role in the church—an emerging 20-something leader, a mentor who loves and is committed to working with 20-somethings in the church, or someone from the church staff. The groups are a chance where the church community can engage with 20-something adults. The groups aren’t meant to be marketing or things done “for” 20-somethings. It is a way to learn alongside them and should include upward mentoring and downward mentoring. The groups are a chance for members of a church to engage in authentic conversations with a generation that increasingly doesn’t see many reasons to engage with the church, let alone participate regularly in the community.

Self-Organized. If self-organized, find a group of about six people and divide up the tasks. One person might organize the time and place, another the food, and another person is in charge of facilitating the discussions.

This first page (front and back) is designed to situate the leader in the role that best fits the accompanying guides. The 2nd page (front and back) is designed as a resource for refreshers and pointers before and during a group. Although some people are naturally good group discussion leaders, we believe anyone can learn or improve in this task. To that end this is a Beta document and we invite suggestions for improvement.



WHAT IS THE LEADER'S ROLE?

As the leader of the group, your role is not to have the answers, but to be a facilitator of the discussion. You are the “Sherpa,” a guide to help the group on their journey. Your job is to involve people who might be quiet and make sure everyone has a voice. How can the group listen and learn from each other?

Don't be surprised if some stories bring tears. The conversations, at their best, will be a mixture of laughter, tears, silence, and encouragement. Christians believe we can rest in the assurance that the Holy Spirit is present and serving as a comforter and connector to each other and to God's love.

HOW BIG SHOULD THE GROUPS BE?

The groups should be about 6 people. If more people come, then divide into sub-groups of 6 people for the conversations.

GATHERING GROUP PHASES

1. GREETINGS

Welcome everyone. Share names with each other. Make sure everyone feels welcome.

Share a blessing before eating. How this is done might vary widely from a formal prayer, to a poem that captures the spirit of your time together.

2. JUMPSTART QUESTIONS

Use the jumpstart questions to open the conversation. Find one or two questions that are most compelling for the group. Use them as a way to get to know one another.

We highly recommend that you start with the jump-start question at the beginning. This creates an invitation for everyone to join the conversation in a low-pressure icebreaker. The leader ought to invite every person to answer the question so that every voice has a chance to be heard at the outset of the conversation.

3. GOING DEEPER

Suggested guidelines for more powerful conversations.

These questions are designed so people can share themselves at a deeper level. They are designed so people can humbly share their stories and experiences in the world and humbly listen to others do the same. Focus on the questions that are most compelling to the group. Don't feel compelled to cover them in order or cover them all. Let the conversation go wherever there is energy and the group wants to go.



GATHERING GROUP PHASES

continued

Stay away from: a single person dominating the conversation, evaluations, and advice. There are other places to have these conversations.

Feel free to move the discussion from “I->we” or “we->I,” inviting the discussion to vacillate between the personal and the communal.

Take your leadership role seriously. Do not shrug it off or diminish it. People will feel safe knowing there is someone in charge of the discussion who will step in to protect their vulnerability if they share, and/or protect their time, if things are going long.

Stick to the arranged time of the conversation. It is actually really good to end the conversation when it is still going strong. It is good to encourage people to bring questions and comments back in at a later date. Encourage them to write them down or record them and intervening thoughts between the just-finished group time and the next.

This is not a forum to solve things personally or institutionally. The church has mechanisms for making institutional change. Instead this is a place to plumb the experiences, histories, feelings and curiosity of faith experience.

This is also not a place to collect or share gossip. Be clear of the need to maintain that culture to protect the intimacy of the group.

Silence is a great tool to slow things down, or create a pause after a particularly poignant story or share. In today’s tech-infused world it is an expensive luxury that can create and maintain a sacred space. Use it strategically and demonstrate as a leader that silence doesn’t need to be filled. The more your group learns to sit in “awkward silence” without anxiety, the less awkward the silence will feel and the more you will incorporate voices in the conversation that needs more time to process.

4. CLOSING THE TIME

Acknowledge the gift of everyone sharing their time, listening and sharing. If applicable acknowledge and thank specific folks in the group for any challenging or being vulnerable (often one in the same).

Feel free to incorporate any other “examen” practices that may help the group to bookend the time with an awareness of any emotions or anxieties that surfaced or that people are bringing in. There are many great ways to punctuate and sacralize a group that come out of various traditions. A few are highlighted on pivotnw.org.

Review the time for the next conversation. Point people to any web link for the prompts for next conversation.

These questions are also designed to be returned to from time to time. Annual or semi-annual repetition of a discussion (depending on frequency of meetings) may reveal the way our worldviews transform with our exposure to new people and ideas in a group setting like this.