



LOVE
YOUR
CHURCH



gather

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions in conjunction with the videos and worksheets in the small group kit for *Gather* by Tony Merida.

TONY MERIDA

SESSION 1

1. Read Hebrews 10:19-25. What does the writer say about what Jesus has done and what he is like? What does the writer say about the impact of that on us?
2. What motivates you to worship? Do you agree that “Jesus’ work, and Jesus’ work alone, enables and motivates our worship and obedience” (p 22)? What would our relationship with God be like if it weren’t for Jesus?
3. What does it look like to worship wholeheartedly, sincerely, and passionately?
4. In the chapter, Merida wrote about the impact on us of gathering together in worship. We remind each other of the gospel, and this should bring us joy, confidence, hope, and perseverance. What aspect of your church gatherings helps you the most with these things? *Refer to the session 1 worksheet to flesh this out further.*
5. What could you personally do to help others in your church draw near to God and persevere in hope?
6. Read the Action Steps on pages 31-32. Some of these things might be your practice already. If so, what has their impact been on you? If not, which would you like to try?

SESSION 2

1. When have you been most encouraged by a conversation you've had at a church gathering? Why?
2. Why is physical embodiment so important? In what ways does what Merida says about this on pages 35-36 tally with your own experience?
3. Read Hebrews 3:12-13. Why is encouraging each other so crucial, according to these verses? What do you think the writer has in view when he uses the word "encourage" (or "exhort") here—what kinds of encouragement will stop us being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin?
4. Practically speaking, what's the difference between attending church gatherings purely for our own sake and attending with the specific purpose of encouraging and stirring up one another?
5. One of the Action Steps at the end of the chapter talks about having gospel-centered conversations. How easy do you find it to turn to spiritual matters in your conversations before and after a church gathering? Can you think of some questions you could ask that would be really helpful for those you're talking to? *Refer to the session 2 worksheet to flesh this out further.*
6. What is one thing you'll do this Sunday to help you encourage someone?

SESSION 3

1. What do you think people in your church would say about the point of preaching? What does Merida say it is?
2. Read Nehemiah 8:1-12. What phrases in verses 1-5 tell us about the people's attitude towards God's word? What impact does it have on them in verses 6-12?
3. If you could be more like the people in Nehemiah 8 in one respect, what would it be?
4. How easy do you find it to listen attentively to the Sunday sermon and to understand what's being said? What practical steps do you think would help you with this? (Have a look at the Action Steps on page 54.) *Refer to the session 3 worksheet to flesh this out further.*
5. How could you get better at remembering what is said on a Sunday and applying it to your own life? (Again, look at the Action Steps for some ideas to start you off.) *Refer to the session 3 worksheet to flesh this out further.*
6. Based on Nehemiah 8, and on what you've read in chapter 2 of Gather, why do you think it is important to hear God's word preached publicly, not just to read it privately?

SESSION 4

1. Read Philippians 2:6-11. This passage may have been part of a song sung by early Christians. How would you sum up these verses in ordinary language? What is the effect of putting them in poetic language like this?
2. Why do you think singing has such an impact on us?
3. What would you say to someone who said they didn't enjoy the singing in church, or even avoided it?
4. Read Luke 1:46-55. What do you think Mary means when she says, "My soul magnifies the Lord"? How would you put that into your own words?
5. In our own singing, how can we put into practice the four things Merida highlighted about Mary's song (see Gather p 62)? *Refer to the session 4 worksheet to flesh this out further.*
6. What is one thing that will help you to sing with your heart, not just with your lips?

SESSION 5

1. Look up some of the examples of prayers in the book of Acts (listed on p 67-68). What would it look like for us to imitate each of those examples?
2. Think about the four benefits of corporate prayer highlighted in the video and in the chapter. Did any of them surprise you? Which is the most important benefit to you personally, or to your church, at the moment?
3. What is special about praying together as opposed to on your own? What is special about praying out loud instead of in your head?
4. What do you think it looks like to fully participate in corporate prayer, even if you are not the one leading the prayers?
5. How did prayer contribute to revival in the 18th century (see pages 71-72)? What will you commit to praying for today's church?
6. What do you need prayer for today? Put the final two Action Steps into practice together. Try using one of the psalms mentioned on page 66. *Refer to the session 5 worksheet to flesh this out further.*

SESSION 6

1. Read Matthew 28:18-20. What does Jesus command? Where do we see the theme of commitment and loyalty in his commands?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 11:22-28. Why do we celebrate the Lord's Supper, according to these verses?
3. Why is it important to examine ourselves before we come to the Lord's Supper? How can we do this without losing sight of the fact that we are saved by grace alone?
4. Have you heard people make any of the objections listed on pages 78-79? What would you say to such a person about the importance of these sacraments?
5. What do you tend to focus on most when you celebrate the Lord's Supper—your sin, Jesus' forgiveness, your unity with other believers, our future in glory, or something else? Are there any aspects you forget? How could you keep reminding yourself of the significance of this meal? *Refer to the session 6 worksheet to flesh this out further.*
6. How much of an impact do baptism and the Lord's Supper have on you? What is so impactful about them? Or if you don't find them impactful, how might you recover a sense of awe when you see or participate in these practices?

SESSION 7

1. What are the problems with seeing church gatherings as mainly for outsiders, or only for believers (see pages 93-94)?
2. Read John 17:20-26. Jesus is praying for his disciples—including us. According to this prayer, what will cause unbelievers (“the world”) to believe in Jesus? What is our role, what is Jesus’ role, and what is the Father’s role?
3. In the chapter, Merida discussed various ways in which the way we behave can commend the gospel to outsiders (see especially pages 97-101). In what ways do you think you and/or your church are doing this well? Where do you see potential for growth?
4. What kinds of people are there living in the community around your church? Consider the four key points in this chapter (put yourself in the shoes of outsiders; make the service intelligible; care about what unbelievers see in us; invite them to other events) and how you could apply those to your particular community.
5. How confident are you to invite outsiders to church? Spend some time planning how you could invite some unbelievers you know. *Refer to the session 7 worksheet to flesh this out further.*
6. If you think of yourself as a missionary at church, how will it change your attitudes and behaviors before, during, and after the gathering?

SESSION 8

1. Read 1 Peter 2:9-12. Why are we still “the church” when we are scattered (not just a bunch of separate individual believers)? What’s our purpose as the church, according to verse 9?
2. Why are actions of justice and care for others an act of worship? In what sense do they glorify God?
3. On pages 108-109 and 115, Merida discusses different ways of caring for other believers. How can we care for those who are caught in sin, in particular? How do the verses quoted from Galatians 6 help us to have the right attitude here?
4. Do you think of yourself as being “in ministry”? Which of the ministries outlined by this chapter do you think you are already doing? What would you like to do more of? *Refer to the session 8 worksheet to flesh this out further.*
5. Do you think your church gatherings help you to live a life that honors God throughout the week? What steps could you take to help you take what is done and said at church gatherings into your daily life? *Refer to the session 8 worksheet to flesh this out further.*
6. Who could you care for, stand up for, pray for, or share the gospel with this week?