

Video Study Guide for a three-session discussion of *The Scattering*

Leader's guide

Welcome to a quick and easy way to guide a group through an exploration of the central thesis of *The Scattering: Imagining a Church that Connects Faith and Life*. Talking about how the concepts in the book might enrich your life, the lives of members in your congregation, and the work of your congregation will be time well spent. This guide will help you lead that conversation.

This three-session study will work well with leadership groups in your congregation, as well as with other interested groups. Each session centers on a four-minute video presentation by the author. Options for tailoring the discussion to your particular context are provided for use before and after the video.

It is *not* necessary that participants in this study read the book before being part of this study. (There is a separate, in-depth study guide available at <http://thescattering.org/about/the-book> for groups that have read the book and want to discuss it in more detail.) It is important that the leader(s) of these sessions read the book beforehand. Leaders will find notes below that call on them to introduce concepts from the book before participants see the videos so that the content of the videos make more sense.

Note: Each segment makes reference to a different passage of scripture. (Genesis 12:2, Matthew 25:31–40, and Mark 8:35, respectively.) The reading from Matthew is the only one that is not read in its entirety in the videos. While it is suggested that each session begin with devotions related to the theme of that session, it will be particularly important to introduce Matthew 25 at the beginning of the second session so that the reference in the first few words of the second video is fresh in the minds of participants.

Session 1 –Introduction to the concept/series

Devotions

Open with scripture and prayer. Genesis 12:1–3 would be a good choice, focusing on the purpose of the church (to bless the world/work for shalom). Based on the lesson plan decide how much time you want to spend discussing the reading; you can discuss it now, or you may just want to get the reading “on record” and then discuss it later. If possible, it would be appropriate to read or sing one of the many hymns that speak to ministry in daily life. (e.g., “We Are Called” by David Haas; “Here I Am, Lord” by David Schutte; or “Take My Life, That I May Be” to name a few.) Close the devotions with prayer.

Introductory exercise:

If participants already know each other, have them imagine (or act out) being at a party with people they don't know. They offer their hand and tell another person their name. After the obligatory, “It's nice to meet you,” what is said next? Something along the lines of, “What do you do?” or “Where do you work?”, right? Have participants describe how they answer such questions.

OR

If participants don't know each other, have them introduce themselves with 1) their name, and 2) something about who they are. When they are finished, review what participants shared about “who they are.” Note the frequency with which participants described themselves in terms of something they do: a teacher, banker, farmer, or parent.

THEN

Lead participants through the following conversation:

You have probably never used it to introduce yourself, and you've probably never seen it on a name tag, but we have an identity that supersedes any other identity that we might assume for ourselves. It is an identity that God bestows on us in our baptism. Do you know what that is? "Child of God." We baptize with the candidate's first and middle name, but we don't use the last name. Why is that? Because in baptism we are given a new last name: Child of God.

Briefly pursue these questions:

- What does it mean to be a child of God?
- How does that change us?
- What would it mean if we lived our lives, 24/7, with an acute awareness that we are, indeed, children of God?

These three sessions will be about uncovering a richer, fuller understanding of what it means to be a child of God—not just when we gather with our sisters and brothers in Christ at church, but in all of life. Our conversation will be about finding a new perspective on our day-to-day activities—at work, at home, at the gym, and at the coffee shop—places where we encounter real people who have real needs that are important to God.

So let's try that introduction exercise again. Introduce yourself using this formula: State your baptismal name, then follow it with one example of how God is at work in your life for the benefit of someone else. For example, "Hello, my name is Robert Edward, Child of God; I am called to raise my children so that they might make the world a better place." Or, "Hello, my name is Ellen Elaine, Child of God; I am called to provide accounting services that keep companies fiscally sound and ethically responsible." (Note: for now, let's not use examples like "serve on church council" or "work in the food pantry." Examples should focus on our call in the activities of our everyday lives.)

A general introduction to the concept of the gathered and scattered church would be in order before showing the first video. While the concept is used in all the segments, it's not described in detail. It might be helpful to provide a brief orientation to the metaphor and the helpfulness of this new/old language. (A condensation of pp. 18–19 and 89–91 in *The Scattering* would appropriate.)

Watch Video #1

After the video, preface the discussion with an introduction along these lines:

One of the author's central points is that we all know that the church exists for mission—for promoting God's purposes in the world—but we often (unfortunately) speak and act as if that mission only happens in and through what we do in our congregation, or as the author labels it, in the gathering. The author doesn't want to devalue what we do when we gather, but to hold the gathering and the scattering as equal parts of a single reality. Let's see what it might mean to bring gathering and the scattering into alignment:

Distribute the handout for the first video ("On the one hand...On the other hand") and walk through the questions provided. If your group has eight or more participants you might consider working through these questions in small groups and then reporting back when everyone finishes.

If you have time to pursue the conversation further, pick one or more of the pairs on the handout that seem to be of the most interest to the group (you could assign different pairs to small groups if there is more than one topic of interest) and have them pursue how you might work for better alignment between the gathering and the scattering.

As an example, focus on the first pair of items in the list. Take the generic phrases of a hymn in the society, compassion, vocation, or sending sections of your hymnal (or the hymn that you used at the beginning of the session) and have participants list the generic imperatives in the hymn, like "to

show compassion's face" or "to speak for the broken and oppressed." Then have them write or give concrete examples of what those imperatives look like in daily life. "Compassion's face" might be seen in someone's care for an elderly parent; "speaking for the broken and oppressed" might be seen in a police officer's job, or the voting booth. Don't worry about the rhyme or meter; simply work on naming concrete examples of the commands to love and serve that we so often encounter in worship. Remember, the concrete examples should come from our lives *in the world*, not congregational ministries.

Close with a prayer that lifts up some of the specific daily life ministries that have bubbled up during this session.

Session 2 – Going deeper

Devotions:

Open with scripture and prayer. Use Matthew 25:31–40 (the parable of the sheep and the goats) so that participants will make the connection with the opening line of video #2. If you have time, read the Walgreen's story (first 3 paragraphs, p. 21 of *The Scattering*) as a way of opening up the meaning of the parable. Inquire about the reasons why this woman responded the way she did and how it reflects the point of the parable. If possible, it would be appropriate to read or sing one of the many hymns that speak to ministry in daily life. Close the devotions with prayer.

Watch Video #2

After the video, distribute the handout for the second video ("Pastor-centered, People-centered, etc"). Before engaging in discussion, make sure participants see that this is a two-dimensional spectrum, from top to bottom *and* from side to side. Use the third paragraph on p. 97 of *The Scattering* as a guide for your introduction.

Give participants time to discuss the questions provided. If your group has eight or more participants, consider working through these questions in small groups and then reporting back when everyone finishes. At some point you may want to talk through the discussion of the sweet spot on pp. 99–100 of *The Scattering*.

If you have time to pursue the conversation further, turn to the four topics presented on pp. 101–3 of *The Scattering*. Discuss one or more of those topics, or do the "Try this at home" exercise on p. 103.

An alternate option for extending the conversation (which will lead to a closing prayer) would be to discuss this prayer request: "Make your church a prophetic voice for the voiceless, a bold witness of love to the neighbor, and a force for hope in all the world." Ask participants to identify who/what "the church" is in this prayer, and how or when the voice/witness/love takes place. (More than likely they will only be able to identify that which we do in the gathered church.) Rephrase the prayer this way: "Make us all prophetic voices, bold witnesses and a force for hope in our homes and neighborhoods, in our work and our community involvement." What difference does it make to pray the prayer this way? How might you alter the language used in worship to be more concretely connected to our daily lives? Close with a prayer that does just that.

Session 3 – Practical implementation

Devotions

Open with scripture and prayer. The most helpful passage for this session is Mark 8:34–36. Based on the lesson plan decide how much time you want to spend discussing the reading; you can discuss it now, or you may just want to get the reading "on record" and then discuss it later. It would be helpful to foreshadow the video's usage of this passage; ask participants what this passage means to them (they will likely identify personal applications of the passage). Drop the hint that the author explores the possibility of interpreting this passage in corporate terms: "losing our life" as a

congregation. (Don't try to tackle that point now as you'll get to it later.) If possible, it would be appropriate to read or sing one of the many hymns that speak to ministry in daily life. Close the devotions with a prayer.

Watch Video #3

After the video, distribute the handout for the third video ("Practical implementation"). Give participants time to discuss the questions provided.

If your study is taking place in a church council setting, you might want to discuss the first two questions like you have in the prior two sessions, making sure that participants delve into the cultural and systemic expectations that are at the center of your congregation (use the section "Paying Attention to the System—and the Culture," pp. 119–22 of *The Scattering* as your guide). Now might be the time for some painfully honest conversation about your congregation's self-understanding. What organizational systems and structures in your congregation are focused on holding-members-here rather sending-them-out (pp.119–20)? What cultural factors ("unwritten and unspoken norms and expectations," p. 120) are focused on a hold-them-here mentality? Brainstorm how you might address these cultural and systemic blocks.

An optional question at this point would be to consider the question on p. 119 of *The Scattering*: "As a congregational leader, which would you rather spend your time on: prying out bits and pieces of members' time, energy, and resources to support an activity of the congregation, or talking with people about the many things they are already doing that support God's dream, and then supporting and empowering them to do those things?" Why? What difference does your choice make?

When you finish the first half of the handout, you may want to divide participants into interest groups to discuss the third and fourth questions on the handout (e.g., a group that talks about changes in worship, another that discusses faith formation, etc.). It might be helpful to assign the third and fourth questions to be done before your next meeting, or to hold the questions for your next meeting. Regardless, make sure to report back when everyone finishes. Close with prayer that lifts up our many daily ministries.

For further conversation

For a bit of encouragement, take a look at the list of reasons "Why you don't need to wait to start working for a gathered-scattered church" available at www.thescattering.org > Resources > Helpful books and articles. Consider how you might use this list with the participants to encourage them as they work toward making changes in your congregation.

If you, your group, or members of the group wish to pursue this topic in more detail, additional resources are listed at the end of the third discussion handout (www.TheScattering.org and www.LifeofFaith.info). These resources can enrich your group's work. In addition, when you try experiments or implement actions that are inspired by this discussion or by the book, please share those with other readers, either on the above website or on the Facebook page for *The Scattering*, www.facebook.com/gatheredscatteredchurch.

In addition, as the handout says, Wipf & Stock (the publisher, 541-344-1528) offers a significant discount on orders of 10 or more copies of *The Scattering* for group study. There is an in-depth study guide available at <http://thescattering.org/about/the-book> for groups that want to read the book and discuss it in more depth.