



Session 1 - **LEAN IN**

St. John *NEXT* groups

This first session encourages people to actively pray and seek God's guidance for their lives.



Video Intro - a brief one-minute welcome and overview from Pastor Dion.

Opening Prayer

Lord, thank you for everyone gathered here. We believe that your Spirit has assembled this specific group, and that you have plans to grow us as individuals and as a community. We ask that you would guide us as we seek to “lean in” to your plan for us, for our church, and for your kingdom. Amen. *(You may also simply pray as led.)*

Leader: We believe that you are not here by accident; God has placed you here at STJ at this time for a purpose. You may think you're here because it's the closest church to you, or you enjoy the worship music, or a friend invited you. But the truth is, you are here by God's design. He has appointed you to be His ambassadors in a hurting world. Tonight, we want to explore how God might have specific guidance for our lives.

Q: Share a story of how being a part of the community of St. John has challenged, impacted, or blessed your life in the last year. For example, what has been a spiritually significant moment for you? *(Leader, be prepared to share first, to help get people's thoughts flowing. Depending on how many people are in your group, it might be helpful to break into smaller groups of 3-4 first, and then come back together into the larger group for sharing.)*

Q: How actively involved do you believe God was in your path to St. John, and the experiences that you've had since then?

Leader: These are not coincidences. We believe that God is moving in a powerful way at St. John. As we reflect on the ways God has moved in and through St. John in the past, we invite Him to speak to us about His plans for the future. Let's look at a little-known story about King David, when he “leaned in” and consulted with God about the future.

BIBLE STORY: 2 Samuel 5:17-25 (David asking God for guidance on his strategic choices in battle.) *(Ask someone to read the passage aloud.)*

Q: What role did David give God in his strategic decisions?

Q: Which kinds of decisions did David submit to God? What kind of answers was David looking for from God?

Q: How about us? What kind of role do we tend to give God in our strategic decisions? How specific an answer do we tend to expect from God?

Q: Do we have the same access to God as David, his chosen king, did? Do we have less access? More? Why do you think so?

Leader: In David's time, God only sent His Holy Spirit to guide His followers rarely, and for limited times and places. The king had to have access to God's prophets to ask questions and "lean in" to God's design for his life. But things have changed since then.

BIBLE STORY: John 16:7-15. (Jesus promises the Holy Spirit.) *(Ask someone to read the passage aloud.)*

Q: What significant change did Jesus promise for us regarding the presence of the Holy Spirit?

Q: How might this change how we seek God's leading, compared to how David had to do it?

Q: If a co-worker or friend were to ask you what your faith goals were for the next year, what kind of answer would you give? How can we actively seek God's answer to that question for our lives?

Leader: We're here tonight not simply to learn God's word, but to apply it to our lives—to "lean in" to his plan for us. For the next week, I'd like to encourage us all to spend regular time in prayer. We all have access to God's wisdom through the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Let us commit to be like David, and ask for his plans for us so that we may follow those plans.

Closing Prayer

Lord, we know you have plans for us within this church body and in our homes and workplaces. Lord, help us each to spend time this next week praying for how you want to use us for the next two years at St. John. Help us not to simply go through the motions, but truly seek your peace and discernment for our faith growth in the next year. Amen.