



Session 2 - **STEP UP** St. John *NEXT* groups

This second session celebrates how people already serve God's kingdom, and encourages them to consider areas where God might be leading them to Step Up.



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

Opening Prayer

Lord, thank you for guiding us this far. Time and again, you have proven yourself good, steadfast and faithful to your people. We are excited to be a part of your unfolding plan for St. John. We trust you to challenge us, stretch us, and enable us to step up in new and powerful ways, all to your glory. Amen. *(You may also pray as led.)*

Leader: Hopefully, you were able to find the time this last week to pray and ask God for specific ways he was leading you to move forward in your journey. We're going to discuss those in session three. For tonight, we're going to explore what it might look like for us as individuals to "step up" towards whatever goals God might have for us. First, let's consider the goals that Pastor Dion laid out for St. John Church.

Q: Why do you think these three goals are the priorities that St. John leadership has identified? What makes these areas so impactful for God's kingdom?

Q: In your own life, how have you been able to contribute to these ministry areas? Or, alternately, how have you or someone you know benefitted from these ministries at St. John

Q: What ways have you generally found to personally love, guide, or serve the people around you? What fruit have you seen from these opportunities?

Leader: God has called the ministry of St. John to prioritize these three areas—pursuing people like never before, mobilizing the next generation of world changers, and taking our campus to the next level—because these are the ways God is going to use us to spread his love to our community. Many of us are already doing wonderful things to serve people in love, but we always want to be careful of becoming complacent. Let's reflect on an interesting example from the Old Testament.

BIBLE STORY: 1 Kings 18:1-16 (Faithful Obadiah was challenged to do even more.) *(Ask someone to read aloud the Bible story.)*

Q: How does the Bible portray Obadiah's faithfulness? In what ways did he serve God? What risks might he have faced for his actions?

Q: What was Obadiah's initial reaction to being asked to do a new thing for God?

Q: How many of us feel like we have margin, extra time and energy to spare for a new thing? What things in our lives make it hard to stretch ourselves or make additional commitments?

Leader: We're not the only ones who feel pushed to the limit. Let's look at the end of that story we read before. Elijah went on to win a great, supernatural victory in the Lord's name. But the wicked ruler at the time swore to execute him for it. Elijah feels stretched to the limit and complains to God.

BIBLE STORY: 1 Kings 19:3-5, 11-18 (Elijah complains to God about his weariness for ministry.) *(Ask someone to read aloud the Bible story.)*

Q: Even though Elijah had just experienced a major faith success, he followed it by immediately giving up. Why might he have responded that way?

Q: When Elijah complained to the Lord, what was God's response? *(Leader: in case you need help with this question, God points out that the situation is not as bleak as Elijah supposes, and sends him to recruit helpers, because God's ministry is not done!)*

Q: When was a time that you felt stretched past your limit? How did that experience impact your reliance on God?

Q: What is the benefit in our own lives if we stretch ourselves for the sake of doing God's work?

Q: What does it look like to leave room for faith in serving with your time, talents, and treasures? If you could pick only one of these areas to focus on in prayer for the next week, which would it be?

Leader: Each and every one of us is trying to follow God in certain ways. But there is always a stretch distance between where we're comfortable, and the larger vision that God has for us. It can get uncomfortable, but this "gap of discomfort" is where faith growth—and kingdom growth—happens!

Closing Prayer

Lord, we ask you that you would keep us just uncomfortable enough to accomplish great things in your name. Open our eyes to the areas where we can be stretched to make an impact in the lives of those around us and for your kingdom. In the week ahead, we ask that you would reveal to each of us how you plan to stretch us in the next season, as we prepare to "break out" in faith. Amen