

# Session 1: Facilitator Guide

# COME! ALIVE!

GETTING PREPARED TO

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## Role of the facilitator:

- Create a safe and caring atmosphere
- Be open, authentic, and humble so others will follow your lead
- To not take yourself too seriously and laugh at yourself, as needed
- Guide participants to resources when needed
- Encourage everyone to participate and keep the session on track

## Objectives for Session One:

- Become more aware of God's presence and plans for your life
- Establish a daily rhythm that draws you closer to God and honors Him
- Create new everyday habits for healthy eating and activity
- Encourage each other as Christian believers

## Items needed for this session:

- Facilitator Guide
- Participant Guide
- Bible
- Pitcher of water and cup/glass for each participant
- Light music to play for participants at start, during centering, and after discussions (optional)
- Name tags and marker
- Timer for the movement section



- Large bowl of water
- Paper/plastic cup for each participant to take home
- White board or easel with paper and markers

In this facilitator guide, **what you say to the group is in Bold** and instructions for you are in regular font. You can read it word-for-word or paraphrase as you are comfortable. You will find it's easier to facilitate the sessions if you have reviewed the session in advance. Please do not feel as though you need to be an expert. If a question comes up and you don't know the answer, "I don't know" is a 100% acceptable response. Pose the question to the group. If the group doesn't know the answer, please use the resources on our website or contact the Living Abundantly Ministries Team. We love questions!

### Session Notes

Starting each session on time and staying on time is important. When participants come late, accept their arrival with grace.

#### In this session:

- When creating the covenant, make sure that everyone has a chance to provide input and volunteer for a task that they feel called to do. It is OK if not all tasks are filled.
- Have a place in mind for the participants to walk during the movement section.
- In the Spiritual Practice, make sure that participants take time to go off by themselves and think about their responses for the activity.
- All times listed for the sections are suggested guidelines, keeping in mind the complete session time is 90 minutes.

### Welcome

Be at the door and genuinely greet each person as he or she enters. Shake each individual's hand and invite the person to make a name tag, get a cup of water, and find a seat.

(After everyone has been seated, and you are ready to begin:)

**Welcome to Come Alive! I am so glad that you are here. Today is the start of the Come Alive! journey we will be taking over the next eight sessions. Let's begin our time together with centering and prayer, and then we will take a few minutes to get to know each other.**

### Centering and Prayer (5 minutes)

**Make sure you are seated comfortably with both feet on the floor. Now close your eyes and slowly roll your shoulders forward 2 times and slowly roll them backward 2 times.** (pause) **Now breathe deeply 3 times. Slowly breathe in and slowly breathe out, that's one.** (pause) **Breathe in and out, that's two.** (pause) **Breathe in and breathe out, that's three.** (pause) **Now continue to breathe slowly and deeply. As you do, visualize your favorite place in nature.** (pause) **It could be a field, near a pond, a bridge over water, a beach, a forest.** (pause) **Feel the sun and its warmth** (pause); **feel the breeze on your face.** (pause for about 10 seconds) **As you are enjoying your favorite place, various distractions may surface. Thoughts will pop**

**into your mind. As they do, acknowledge them and allow them to float away. Keep breathing slowly and deeply and keep focusing on your favorite place.** (pause for about 30 seconds)

**God, we invite your presence. Open our hearts and minds to Your wisdom and will as we seek to honor You with our lives, both spiritually and physically. Amen.**

**Now slowly open your eyes and be present here and now with the group.**

**How did this activity feel?** (pause for responses) **Was it good to take a minute to relax and clear your mind?** (allow time for answers)

**I would like to go around the room and ask each of you to tell us your name and share what brought you here today. Who would like to start?** (if no one starts, share about yourself) **Give each person about 30-45 seconds to share.**

**Thanks for sharing. Most of all, I want to thank you for taking the time to be here with us today.**

**In the Session 1 Warm-Up, we read about how God has a plan for each of us, that He loves us and wants us to be more like Him, and how small groups like ours create powerful Christian community to support healthy lifestyle changes.**

**We also learned about Come Alive!'s three Bible-based principles: Seek God First, Love and Be Loved, and Honor God with My Body. Over the next 8 sessions, we'll learn about different ways to apply these principles into the rhythm of our daily lives. Session 1 is an introduction and session 8 will be a celebration. The other sessions each focus on a particular time within the rhythm of our day. For example, in session 2, we will try out new spiritual & physical practices that fit the rhythm of our morning.**

**God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are the true leaders for this program. They will be with us each step of the way to lovingly guide us on this journey together. I'm excited to get started.**

## **Housekeeping** (2 minutes)

Take a second to tell where the bathrooms are and to share anything else you feel might be important about your meeting space.

**Feel free to dress casually and comfortably when we meet.**

## **Group Covenant** (15 minutes)

**When I say the word "covenant" what comes to mind?** (Let participants share their ideas. Their answers may include words such as promise, agreement, contract, etc.)

**A covenant is an agreement. We are going to create a covenant for our group, an agreement on how our group will work during our next eight sessions together.**

**This covenant will help us:**

- Establish clear expectations for the group
- Keep the group focused and productive
- Hold members accountable to each other
- Divide tasks among group members

**Let's take a look at the Group Covenant in our Participant Guide. As I read it out loud, feel free to share any questions or concerns. As we make decisions on our covenant, fill in the blanks in your book.**

## Group Covenant

**Our group's purpose is to come together in a Christian community in order to experience and share the Come Alive! program.**

**Our group will meet on \_\_\_\_\_ (day of the week) for 8 sessions  
from \_\_\_\_\_ until \_\_\_\_\_ (meeting times).**

**We will meet at: \_\_\_\_\_ (meeting location).**

**We will handle child care by . . . \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Volunteers for these roles can be filled in now or within the first two weeks as people further understand each role and have had a chance to pray about it.**

**Music Coordinator: 1-2 people who record music each session as needed.**

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**Setup: 1-2 people who prepare the room, make water available, and arrange the "Savor the Favor" table. \_\_\_\_\_**

**Cleanup: 1-2 people who return the room to its original condition.**

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**Prayer Coordinator: 1-2 people who compile and share joys and prayer requests. You may choose to have a prayer request book available for prayer concerns and joys. These can be lifted up at the end of each session in our closing prayer circle and/or e-mailed to the group.**

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**Communications Coordinator: 1-2 people who coordinate group communications via phone calls, e-mails, creating a Facebook page, etc.**

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**Question Follow-Up:** This person will contact Living Abundantly Ministries with questions that were not resolved within the group time or in some other way. \_\_\_\_\_

**Movement Coordinator: 1-2 people who lead movement each session.**

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**Walk Coordinator:** 1-2 people who coordinate a group walk after each session and/or between sessions. \_\_\_\_\_

**We will have water to drink during each session.**

**I agree to the following values for the group:**

**Confidentiality:** Anything of a personal nature that is shared is never repeated outside of the meeting.

**Priority:** As long as I am in the group, I will give group meetings priority.

**Prayer:** I will support and pray for group members as we journey together through the Come Alive! program.

**Respect:** I will help create a safe environment for discussion, curiosity, emotions, and thoughtful questions. Although I may not agree with every action or opinion, I will not be judgmental but, instead, provide feedback in a sensitive, positive manner.

**Other Agendas:** I will not use our small group meetings to promote any health-related products or services.

**Time:** I will help ensure that group meetings begin and end on time.

**When I absent or late, I will:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Does anyone have any questions about our covenant?** (be open for discussion)

**Can everyone agree to the covenant as we have filled it in?**

## **New Perspectives** (20 minutes)

**Please break up into groups of 3 or 4.** (After everyone is situated, continue.) **We are going to discuss the Come Alive! principles.**



## **SEEK GOD FIRST**

### **DESIRING TO PLEASE GOD WITH ALL MY HEART**

**Can someone please read Jeremiah 29:12-13 out loud for us?**

(Find a Bible if needed.)

**In your group, share with each other what resonated with you about this verse and the Seek God First principle from the Session 1 Warm-Up. What were you thinking as you read it, and how can you apply this in your life?**

(Allow 4 minutes for the groups to discuss.)

**Would anyone like to share what was discussed in their group?** (Wait for responses and affirm those who share.)



## LOVE AND BE LOVED

### ACCEPTING GOD'S LOVE AND LETTING IT FLOW IN ME AND THROUGH ME

**A main passage for this principle is Colossians 3:12-17. Can someone read it out loud for us?** (The passage will be read out loud.)

**Share in your group what resonated with you about this verse and the Love and Be Loved principle from the Session 1 Warm-Up. When you read it, what were your thoughts; how can you apply this in your life?** (Allow 4 minutes for the groups to discuss.)

**Who would like to share what was discussed in their group?** (Wait for responses and affirm those who share.)

**Our last principle, Principle 3, is**



## HONOR GOD WITH MY BODY

### NURTURING AND CARING FOR THE GIFT OF MY BODY

**First Corinthians 6:19-20 is a key verse for this principle.**

**Who would like to read this verse?** (Have someone read the passage aloud.)

**In your group, share what resonated with you about this verse and the Honor God with My Body principle? What were your thoughts from the Session 1 Warm-Up, and how can you apply this in your life?** (Allow 4 minutes for the groups to discuss.)

**Who would like to share what was discussed in their group?** (Wait for responses and affirm those who share.)

## Come Alive! Assessment

**Now, in our groups, I want us to discuss the online Personal Assessment. The assessment is a valuable starting point that helps us understand where we are today and measure our accomplishments throughout**

**this program. Take some time to share with each other a few things that you learned about yourself when you did the assessment.** (Allow 3 or 4 minutes for the groups to discuss.)

**Would anyone like to share what was discussed in their group?** (Wait for responses and affirm those who share.)

**Thank you for sharing.**

Your Personal Come Alive! **Assessment**

What did you learn about yourself from the Personal Assessment?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Measuring the Benefits (7 minutes)

**“Turn to the “Weighing the Benefits” section on page 14. Take a few minutes to complete the worksheet. When everyone is done, share your answers within your group.** (Give the groups 3 or 4 minutes for this activity.)

### A Note to Facilitators: **The “Why” behind the “What”**

This exercise is known as the Decision Balance. It serves a very important purpose for participants. When making a decision to change anything, weighing the pros and cons (or benefits/problems) is helpful. It is useful to identify the “why” (motivation) behind the “what” (behavior).

As a facilitator, keep this exercise in mind as you go through the program. This exercise is not only helpful in making decisions, but also in sticking with decisions and their repeated practice to create a new personal rhythm in your day. To make lifelong changes, three things are needed:

1. A small, attainable change or action
2. Authentic motivation (from the heart, not external sources of reward)
3. A trigger to remind us to take action

In the beginning, we can only speculate about the pros and cons of any course of action, but several weeks in, we begin to experience the pros and the cons. Adopting a new physical and spiritual practice can be hard at first. That is when we need to remind ourselves of the “why” behind the “what.” As the facilitator, you can help participants do this by referring them back to this exercise as needed.

**Let’s discuss as a large group now.**

**Brainstorm: What are the possible problems related to having your spiritual and physical health stay exactly the way they are today and why?**

**As you shared, did anyone find new benefits to add to your list?** (Wait for responses and affirm those who share.)

### Spiritual: Weighing the **Benefits**

How will I benefit if I change the rhythm of my day to improve my spiritual health?	What benefits will I have if I stay the same?
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

### Physical: Weighing the **Benefits**

How will I benefit if I change the rhythm of my day to improve my physical health?	What benefits will I have if I stay the same?
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

**Which benefit was most important to you, and why does that benefit motivate you?**



## **Movement** (15 minutes)

Our next section is movement. To receive the desired health benefits associated with exercising, work up to doing activities that raise your heart rate for a total of 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. You can break up the 30 minutes into smaller increments. You can slowly work your way up to that level.

### **Heart Rate**

Raising one's heart rate through movement has many advantages. Here are three:

1. Reduces inflammation—one of the most important things you can do for your health. (You'll learn all about inflammation in the Session 2 Warm-Up.)
2. Lifts a person's mood and promotes better sleep.
3. Promotes healthy aging.

Currently, you may not exercise much or you may have a regular exercise routine. This program is designed for everyone. If you haven't exercised in a while, take it slow. Be sure to check with your doctor to see what they recommend. Additional exercise guidance can be found online at [www.LivingAbundantlyMinistries.org](http://www.LivingAbundantlyMinistries.org).

In each session, we'll try just a few minutes of each activity to give you an example of what you can add to your daily routine. Have fun with it!

Every movement session allows you to decide on the level of challenge. We'll start with the most basic way to do the activity (stay there for as long as you want). Then, when you are ready, you can make the activity more challenging.

### **Mindful Walking**

In this mindful activity, you simply bring your full attention to the simple act of walking.

With this technique, you become consciously aware of and absorbed in the movement of your body as you walk.

Concentrate on the feel of the ground under your feet or your breathing as you move. Feel your muscles as you lift your heel off of the ground.

How is your posture as you walk? Are your head, neck, shoulders, and stomach centered over your hips? Observe what is going on around you in the world. Observe everything that you think and experience, staying in the present moment as you do so. After a bit of practice, you can increase your pace. Walk briskly and feel your heart rate increase. Continue to be present in the experience.

The great thing about this activity is that you can practice it anytime you walk.

Mindfully engage yourself as you walk—on your coffee break, on your way to the subway, in short trips from one room to another, anytime that you walk.



Designate a place for the participants to take a walk, either down the hall or outside or in a circle around the room. Set a length of time, depending on the current time you have available. Five to ten minutes is good. Make sure that you call everyone back at the end of the set time.

**How is everyone feeling?**

**When during your day could you do something like this?** (Allow group members to share their feelings.)

**Turn in your Participant Guide to the Movement section on page 16 and write in the space provided the time during each day when you can do this simple exercise or something similar.**

**Take time each day this week and find some fun ways to move, stretch, and get your heart pumping. At our next session, be ready to share what you did.**

## **Spiritual Practice** (25 minutes)



### **Emptying and Filling: Preparing Our Hearts**

**Imagine yourself holding a large, overstuffed backpack filled with obstacles that are holding you back from the life God wants you to lead. As we prepare for this journey, each of us may need to lighten our load and get rid of things that weigh us down, hold us back, or are no longer helpful. Our Spiritual Practice today will assist you in pouring out some of the obstacles that get in your way so that you are open for God to fill you with His love and wisdom.**

### **Pouring Out What Gets in the Way**

Put the large bowl filled with water on a table or on the floor in the middle of the room.

**Turn to the Spiritual Practice section of session 1 in the Participant Guide. Spread out in the room so each person has some private space. We are about to do a spiritual practice that is very private. What you write is between you and God. Be assured that no one will see anything that you write down.**

**This page has cups for you to write down what gets in the way of putting God first in your life. On each section of paper, write one thing that gets in the way of living life to the fullest and coming alive in Christ. You may have a few or many items to write down. Think of specific areas of your life—home, work, habits, relationships, spiritual, physical, emotional, life stage, or a pressing concern.**

**The next question is, “How is this thing serving a purpose for you?” For each item there is usually some reason why this item (or thing that may have become an idol) is in your life. It serves a purpose or satisfies you temporarily in some way. It may have little or no long-term value, and yet it keeps you from having a close spiritual walk with Christ.**

**Finally, answer the question, “How is this stumbling block affecting your relationship with Christ?” Try to be as honest as possible. No one will see your answers. The only “right” answers are the ones you know to be true. Let the Holy Spirit guide you. Take your time. (Allow about 7 minutes.)**

**Next, tear out each of the pieces of paper and hold them in your hands. Study them one by one and ask yourself: "Are you ready to give each of these over to God?"** Call time after about one minute.

**Everyone join me in a circle around the water. Take each piece of paper that you are holding and fold it in half, then in half again. Rip them into small pieces.**

**We are going to take turns, and I am going to ask that each person say:**

**"Lord, I pour out these things that get in the way of living life to the fullest with you."**

**As you say this, "pour" your papers from your hands into the bowl of water. I will go first.**

(Note: If you are short on time, have everyone say the words together and take turns pouring out the strips of paper.)

After everyone has put their papers in the bowl:

**Repeat after me: "Lord, we let go of each of these things that keep us from being close to you. Thank you for taking them. Amen."**

**Now you can return to your private place in the room.**



### **Pouring In More of God**

**Turn to the page that says "Pouring In." Keeping in mind the obstacles that we just "poured out," we will now take a few minutes to write on each cup the gifts that God wants to give us, to fill us up with, if we can open our hearts to accept His deepest desires for us.**

**This may be a few or many items. Think of any area of your life—home, work, relationships, spiritual, physical, emotional. In which areas would you like to experience more of God? More of His love, His wisdom, His patience, His humility, His kindness, His forgiveness, His joy or His guidance?**

**If you fully opened your heart to God, what might happen?**

**Write it down. Let the Holy Spirit guide you. Take your time. You can always add more items later.** (Wait about three minutes.)

**Next, tear out each of the pieces of paper. Hold them in your hands. Take a moment to imagine how your life will be changed by being filled with each gift from God.** (Wait another minute.)

**Now, fold them in half. Let's come together in a circle.**

(After the circle has been formed, give each person a cup for them to keep.)

**I invite each of you to pour God's love and gifts that you have just written down into your cup.** (Have each person place his or her pieces of paper into his or her cup.)

**Please repeat after me together:**

**"Lord, we praise you, and we thank you for your gifts.** (pause for them to repeat the phrase) **Help us to remember them each day, (pause) and transform our hearts as we put them to use.** (pause) **Amen."**



Take your cup home and keep it in a special place where you will see it. Take time throughout the week to read your list and to listen to the Holy Spirit for gifts to add. You may want to put the pieces of paper somewhere where you will see them every morning.

Going forward, every time you feel God's love blessing you, take a second and write it down.

Wow, we have covered a LOT this session!

We have:

- Formed a Christ-centered community that will meet together for eight sessions to worship God
- Created a covenant to guide us in our time together
- Shared in community as we have sought to grow ourselves
- Learned new and different ways to honor God with our bodies
- Taken a mindful walk
- Completed our assessment to understand where we are in our journey
- Experienced a contemplative spiritual practice that will help prepare our hearts for the coming sessions

## Moving Forward (10 minutes)



**Congratulations on a job well done!**

Turn to the blue change button in your Participant Guide (page 18). How would you like to improve the rhythm of your day? What action would you like to focus on within each of the three Come Alive principles? Here are some examples:



**Seek God First:** this might be reading over your notes from our spiritual activity today or reading a few Bible verses or a short devotional in the morning.



**Love and Be Loved:** an action may be to work on a specific way to love and accept your wonderful self—making time for deep breathing, relaxing, meeting with a friend whom you enjoy, or pampering yourself in some way.



**Honor God with My Body:** an action might be to walk daily, drink more water, or eat one more whole food each day.

In each session, we will take time in the New Perspectives section to review the actions we committed to from the prior session.

Our next session will cover the rhythm of the start of the day. So get ready for lots of tasty and healthy breakfast ideas to start your morning. Make sure to:

1. Read the Warm-Up for session 2 in your guide.
2. Next session, bring your Participant Guide, your calendar, and a whole food that you enjoy for breakfast to share with the group. Does anyone remember the definition for whole foods? (pause, acknowledge group answers) Our definition is foods, toppings, and ingredients that have been processed or refined as little as possible and are free from additives or other artificial substances.

## Closing

The time has arrived for this session to end. Let's all stand in a circle and hold hands.

I invite you to share something that touched you today. When you are finished, squeeze the hand of the person to your right. If you do not want to share, just squeeze the hand of the person to your right. I'll start, and when we're done (Name of Prayer Coordinator) will close us in prayer. (Wait for participants to share.)

If anyone wants to join (name of Walk Coordinator) for a brisk walk right after the session, we'll be starting in just a few minutes.

### NOTES

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