

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

FOR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON

ALIGNED: FLOURISHING IN A WORLD OF CHOICE

The best way to get *Aligned* and *Flourish in a World of Choice* is to join or lead a small group to explore the book and your discoveries from the *Activities for Alignment* together.

GOOD NEWS: Being a small group facilitator is simple.

You *don't* need to teach! Your role is to create space for sharing. Picture the group like a bunch of travelers gathering at the end of the day to reflect on what they saw and enjoyed.

You *don't* need to plan! Just follow the ready-made guides for each one-hour session.

You just need to be a good host. Invite participants, set the schedule, and make sure everyone knows what to prepare for the next meeting.

EACH ONE-HOUR SESSION INCLUDES:

- Connecting (10 minutes)
- Sharing insights from the chapter (10 minutes)
- Sharing discoveries from *Activities for Alignment* (30 minutes)
- Reviewing their *Life Alignment Map* (5 minutes)
- Orientation for the next session (5 minutes)

BETWEEN SESSIONS, PARTICIPANTS WILL:

- Listen to or read the next chapter of *Aligned: Flourishing in a World of Choice*
- Complete the related *Activities for Alignment*
- Update their *Life Alignment Map*

WEEKLY OUTLINE

Before You Meet

1. **Send Out Invitation**

Share the time, location, or link for the session, and include a reminder of the chapter and activities that will be covered.

2. **Remind Participants of Topics**

Give a brief preview of the session's focus to help participants prepare.

Connecting (10 minutes)

Start each session with a short check-in to foster connection and create community among the group members. **Best practice:** Create the environment and expectation that each person will answer briefly. This is vital because once someone participates in a group setting, there is a greater chance they will speak again.

- **Check-In**

Briefly hear from each person how they are doing. This activity allows participants to name whatever is on their mind that might distract them from full engagement with the group.

- **Icebreaker**

Have each person respond to a fun, simple question or prompt to help the group feel at ease and get to know each other better.

Sharing Insights from *Aligned: Flourishing in a World of Choice* (10 minutes)

- **Invite Sharing**

Each person should briefly share one takeaway they noted during their

reading—something they wrote down or underlined. For the sake of time, they don't need to explain it; just reading their note is enough. This approach encourages prepared sharing from slow processors and keeps verbal processors concise.

- **Facilitating Fairly**

Go around the circle to ensure everyone has a turn. If someone didn't read the chapter or doesn't want to share, they can simply say "pass."

- **Optional Discussion**

In future weeks, if time allows, participants may share why their takeaway matters to them. Starting with this structured activity and limited time keeps the session flowing toward the group activities rather than getting bogged down in one opinion.

- **Optional question**

Some chapters include a question about a key point in the chapter. If you chose to discuss it, be careful to leave plenty of time to debrief the activities and their Life Alignment Map.

Sharing Discoveries from *Activities for Alignment* (30 minutes)

Unless the group is very small, you probably won't have time for each person to share about each one of the activities. Instead, in most cases, the instructions indicate that several people will share highlights from their experiences with the week's activities. In order to maximize participation, ask people to be brief.

Reviewing their *Life Alignment Map* (5 minutes)

The Life Alignment Map is designed as a quick reference for aligning choices with the goal of flourishing. This activity provides a big-picture perspective and since the participants will have

distilled their insight into a few words or pictures, it is a good time to have each person read what they transferred to their Map.

Orientation for the Next Session (5 minutes)

Wrap up by previewing what's next.

- **Review Homework**

Briefly explain the upcoming chapter and activities.

- **Encourage Preparation**

Remind participants to note any insights they want to bring to the next session.

OPTIONAL WELCOME MEETING

Connecting (10 minutes)

Introductions

Invite each participant to share:

- Their name
- Something unique about themselves that even close friends might not know

The leader should go first to set the tone, being both brief and open to encourage others.

Sharing Insights and Setting Intentions (10 minutes)

1. Facilitator's Introduction

Share why you are passionate about this group and tell the members how grateful you are for their involvement.

2. Participant Intentions

Ask participants to complete the sentence: "In the next [8] weeks, I would like to..." This helps everyone think about their goals for the project.

3. Weekly Flow Overview

Explain what each session will cover:

- A time of personal connection
- One takeaway from each person on the chapter of *Aligned: Flourishing in a World of Choice*
- Key insights from the week's Activities for Alignment

- Reviewing and updating the Life Alignment Map

4. Life Alignment Map

Pass out a blank Life Alignment Map, explaining its purpose as an “at-a-glance” tool for tracking alignment with personal values and choices.

Sharing Discoveries from *Activities for Alignment* (30 minutes)

- Together, read the sections about questions we have in different stages of life from Chapter 1 “The Myth of Grown-up” from “The truth is all through our lives we wonder about our identity and our purpose...” to “Whatever our questions, or lack of them, what we want is to feel like we’re flourishing.”
- Ask participants to make a list of questions they are currently asking or choices that concern them from the reading or otherwise.

Group Sharing

- Invite a few people to share an important choice they are considering.
 - Invite others to share an important question they’ve written down.
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Life Alignment Map Introduction (5 minutes)

- **Purpose**
Explain that the Life Alignment Map will be a place to jot down key choices and questions throughout the sessions.
- **Initial Use**
Have participants write the choices and questions that are most important or weighty to them on “My Questions” on their Life Alignment Map.

Orientation for Next Session (5 minutes)

1. **Reading Assignment**

Ask participants to read the Introduction and Chapter 1 of *Aligned: Flourishing in a World of Choice*.

2. **Activities for Alignment**

Explain the purpose of the “Who Am I” questions: to help them identify themes, patterns, desires, and fears. Share a brief example from your own life to guide them.

3. **Prototype a Decision**

Explain that the "Try it Out" activities require planning and forethought, but this is where real change can begin—when they try something different in their day-to-day lives.

Chapter 1: *Flourish!*

Connecting (10 minutes)

- Ask each person to introduce themselves by name and share where they grew up, along with how that place or experience of growing up there has influenced who they are today.

Sharing insights from the chapter (10 minutes)

- Invite each person to read the one takeaway they recorded from the reading. This should be brief and focused on something they want to remember.

Sharing Discoveries from Activities for Alignment (30 minutes)

- **Opening Note**
Since this is our first time discussing the activities, explain: In an ideal setting, everyone would have time to share everything they wrote and discovered. Although our time is limited, we still want to support each other in this process. We'll generally hear brief summaries from a few people about what they learned. Please keep sharing concise so there's time for others, but feel free to share whenever you've had a personal insight.
- **Tool for Alignment: "Who Am I?"**
Ask participants: Did the questions help you identify any themes, patterns, desires, or fears in your life?
Invite anyone who would like to share an insight to do so.
- **Try it Out - "Prototype Your Choice"**
Remind the group that change happens when we do something differently. The "Try it Out" activities offer a space to experiment with real changes in daily life.
If anyone has already tried this, invite them to briefly share their experience.

Reviewing their Life Alignment Map (5 minutes)

- Ask participants to take out their Life Alignment Maps. Explain that the process of transferring information from their workbook to the map offers a moment to reflect on their answers. This isn't just automatic—they can reconsider and make any changes as they go.
- Ask if anyone gained new insights while filling out their map. If so, invite them to briefly share their experience. If no one shares, provide a brief example from your own experience to illustrate how this process can lead to deeper reflection.

Orientation for the Next Session (5 minutes)

- **Reading Assignment**

Chapter 2: *Aligned with What?* Ask them to pay special attention to the concept of *telos* (ultimate purpose), the difference between pursuing goals and achieving *telos*, and what it means for Jesus to be our *telos*.

- **Activities for Alignment**

Explain that while Chapter 1's activities provided a snapshot of who they are right now, Chapter 2's activities are more forward-looking, encouraging them to imagine who they are becoming. Let participants know that they should dream and hope, and then take a small action toward becoming more like the person they want to be. Encourage them to observe how this change impacts themselves, others, and the world around them.

Chapter 2: Aligned with What?

Connecting (10 minutes)

1. Check-In

Each person shares, in one word, how they're feeling.

2. Icebreaker

Ask each participant: Who is a person (living or dead, real or fictional) who inspires you, and why?

Sharing insights from the chapter (10 minutes)

- Invite each person to read the takeaway they recorded from the reading. This should be brief and focused on something they want to remember.
- If there is time, briefly discuss these questions about *telos*
 - Have you heard the word *telos* before? In what context?
 - What do you think is the difference between aligning life with personal goals and growing toward the *telos* of becoming like Jesus?
 - How might this perspective influence how we view our lives—our work, relationships, and experiences?

Sharing discoveries from *Activities for Alignment* (30 minutes)

- Open the time for several people to share an insight or something that stood out to them from the activities.
- Suggested prompts:

- What are some of the characteristics you identified as qualities you'd like to develop in your life?
- What could you do—or what did you already try—to start developing these qualities?

Reviewing their *Life Alignment Map* (5 minutes)

- Ask a few participants to share what they added to the "Inspirations and Aspirations" section of their Life Alignment Map. Encourage them to describe whether they included images, names, or qualities and to talk about the process of choosing the six things they most want to become.

Orientation for the Next Session (5 minutes)

Reading

Chapter 3, A Model of Flourishing. This is a short chapter which completes the foundational framework of the book.

Focus for Next Week

Tell participants that this week is a good time to catch up on any unfinished activities or sections of their Life Alignment Map since by next week they should have completed the center section of their Life Alignment Map including:

- **Who Am I?** (a mix of words or drawings that reflect facets of their identity—life themes, patterns, desires, and fears)
- **My Questions**
- **Inspirations and Aspirations**
- **My Ecosystem**

In this activity they will list the people (family, friends, colleagues), systems (e.g.,

transportation), institutions (e.g., church, school), and things (e.g., home, books) that have the most impact on their well-being and ability to contribute to others. This exercise encourages a holistic view, helping them prioritize the most important elements in their lives.

Chapter 3: A Model of Flourishing

Connecting (10 minutes)

Check-In

Each person shares, in one word, how they're doing.

Icebreaker

Prompt: Think of something you saw this week that was flourishing.

- Give participants a moment to reflect.
- Ask them to share their response with one other person.
- Then, invite several people to share their answers with the group.

Sharing Insights from the Chapter (10 minutes)

- Ask each person to read the takeaway they recorded from the reading. This should be brief and focused on a key point they want to remember.
- If time allows, discuss: *Why does it matter that we find the same four activities in DNA and in Genesis 1?*

Sharing Discoveries from Activities for Alignment (30 minutes)

- Open the time for several people to share insights or something that stood out to them from the activities: identifying their ecosystem and assessing their flourishing through the DNA Model of Flourishing.

Debriefing “My Impression of My Flourishing”:

- One of the questions asked participants to identify which type of activity they do most frequently, which they enjoy most, and which they tend to avoid.
- Read each activity type aloud and ask people to raise their hands for the activity type that fits them.
- If time permits, ask follow-up questions and invite one or two people to share briefly. Make sure the group hears from a variety of individuals:
 - **Which do you do most frequently?** Generate, Cultivate, Guide, Celebrate
 - **What specific activity do you do?**
 - **Which do you enjoy the most?** Generate, Cultivate, Guide, Celebrate
 - **Why?**
 - **Which do you avoid?** Generate, Cultivate, Guide, Celebrate
 - **Why?**

Reviewing their Life Alignment Map (5 minutes)

- Invite each person to share one element from their ecosystem—people, systems, institutions, or things—that is essential to their flourishing or contribution in the world. Encourage them to mention unique items to provide a broad perspective of the group's ecosystems.
- Set an example by sharing one item from your map, e.g., "My relationship with my spouse is essential to my flourishing."
- For the sake of time, participants don't need to explain their choices—just mention a word or drawing they included on their map.

Orientation for the Next Session (5 minutes)

- **Reading**

Chapter 4: *Say Yes to Generate*. The next four chapters will dive into each element of the DNA Model of Flourishing. This is a longer chapter, so allow extra time to read. Focus on understanding the “equation for abundant fruitfulness” and the different kinds of outcomes from the fruit we bear and the seeds we sow.

- **Preparation for the Gifts and Abilities Card Sort Activity**

- Show the card sort pages as an example. Explain that this activity requires preparation: if participants don't have the workbook, they'll need to print and cut out the cards available at AnnetteGulick.com.
- Mention that some may find the process of preparing the cards enjoyable in itself.
- Point out where to find instructions and highlight the step-by-step diagrams provided.

Chapter 4: Say Yes to Generate

Connecting (10 minutes)

1. Reflection

Ask participants to think of someone they're grateful for who has invested in their lives.

2. Sharing

Go around the circle, and have each person briefly name this person and describe how their investment had a positive impact.

Sharing Insights from the Chapter (10 minutes)

- Invite each person to share one takeaway they recorded from the reading, focusing on a point they want to remember.
- If time allows, discuss: What is the difference between bearing "fruit" and planting "seeds" as explained in the chapter, and why does this distinction matter?

Sharing Discoveries from Activities for Alignment (30 minutes)

- Open the floor for several people to share insights or something that stood out to them from the activities.
- **Debriefing "Align My Generating"**
 - Encourage participants to share any insights about how they're currently using their gifts and abilities effectively.
 - Ask what they'd like to change, improve, or do differently in the future.
- **Debriefing "Try it Out: Cultivate Flourishing"**

- Ask if anyone matched gifts and abilities they're motivated to use with people or groups from their ecosystem. If so, invite them to describe the *experience*.

Reviewing their Life Alignment Map (5 minutes)

- Ask each person to share one gift or ability they transferred to their Life Alignment Map and the category they placed it in (e.g., Fruitful, Cultivate, Limit, Outsource).

Orientation for the Next Session (5 minutes)

- **Reading**

Chapter 5: *Say Yes to Cultivate*. Encourage participants to pay special attention to the concept of “antiparallel” and its implications, as well as the idea of work as worship.

- **Preparation**

Show a completed Life Wheel colored in to give participants a visual example.

- Explain that the Life Wheel helps them think through different areas of life and that they'll need to label each section on their Life Alignment Map.

Chapter 5: Say Yes to Cultivate

Connecting (10 minutes)

1. **Check-in:** Ask each person to share, in one word, how they are doing.
2. **Icebreaker:** "If you had a free day with no commitments or responsibilities, what would you most enjoy doing?"

Sharing Insights from the Chapter (10 minutes)

- Invite each person to share one takeaway they recorded from the reading.

Sharing Discoveries from Activities for Alignment (30 minutes)

- Open the floor for several people to share any insights or notable takeaways from the activities.
- **Debriefing the Life Wheel**
 - Ask each person to share something that stood out to them during the Life Wheel activity.
- **Debriefing "Ignore No More"/"Cultivate Your Life"**
 - If participants completed these activities, invite them to share their experiences.
 - Discuss steps they could take to apply what they've learned.

Reviewing the Life Alignment Map (5 minutes)

Ask each participant to share what they recorded as one or two areas of life that they tend to focus on and one or two areas they often neglect.

Orientation for the Next Session (5 minutes)

Reading: Chapter 6: *Say Yes to Guide Towards Flourishing*.

Preparation

- Explain the upcoming Tool for Alignment, “The Core Values of Flourishing,” emphasizing the importance of brainstorming.
- Encourage participants to reflect on how they’ve experienced each of the eight Core Values of Flourishing before adding symbols or words to their Life Alignment Map.
- The final step involves comparing these values with their existing fears and desires in order to identify where their heart aligns with God’s values and where they seek growth.

Chapter 6: Say Yes to Guide Towards Flourishing

Connecting (10 minutes)

1. Each share: In one word, How are you doing?
2. Icebreaker: Tell one of the core values of flourishing that you have experienced in your life - either its presence or its absence- in a noteworthy way?

Sharing insights from the chapter (10 minutes)

- Invite each person to read the one takeaway they recorded from the reading. This should be brief and focused on something they want to remember.

Sharing discoveries from Activities for Alignment (30 minutes)

Open the floor for several people to share any insights or notable takeaways from the activities.

Debriefing “Align my Internal Guides”

- What insight did you have about your internal guides -- your fears and your desires-- as a result of placing them side by side with God's characteristics?

Debriefing “Steer towards Flourishing”

- Did you choose a characteristic you want more present in your decision making?
- If not, let's do it now... Give time to choose one.
 - Why did you choose that one?
 - What image or object can remind you of that?

Reviewing their Life Alignment Map (5 minutes)

Go through each of the Core Values of Flourishing, and invite one or two participants to share the word, image, or name they transferred to their Life Alignment Map for each value:

- Grace and Compassion
- Slow to Anger
- Covenant Love
- Faithfulness/Truth
- Covenant Love to Thousands
- Forgiveness
- Justice
- Consequences

Orientation for the Next Session (5 minutes)

Reading

- Chapter 7 - *Say Yes to Celebrate*: This is the final chapter on the four elements!

Preparation

- **Tool for Alignment:** The activity, “My Assets,” is an exciting opportunity to recognize all that we have to be grateful for and to offer. The list provided is intentionally broad—feel free to add to it and personalize it to fit your unique resources.
- **Try it Out: Celebrate Together:** This activity is designed to build a habit of not only sharing what you have but also deepening relationships through it. Remember, sometimes the greatest gift you can offer is your genuine interest and attentive listening. Be open to seeing if God places on your heart any additional ways to bless this person.

Chapter 7: Say Yes to Celebrate

Connecting (10 minutes)

- Each share: In one word, how are you doing?
- What is something you are grateful for that has happened since we last met?

Sharing Insights from the Chapter (10 minutes)

- Invite each person to read the one takeaway they recorded from the reading. This should be brief and focused on something they want to remember.

Sharing discoveries from Activities for Alignment (30 minutes)

Debriefing "My Assets"

- What stood out to you during this activity?
- One purpose of this exercise is to broaden our appreciation of what we have to contribute. Were there any assets that surprised you?
- What did you learn about your life and ecosystem through this activity?

Debriefing "Align My Celebrating"

- What are you currently doing well in terms of shaping your heart and fostering flourishing through gratitude and generosity?
- What would you like to improve, change, or approach differently in the future?

Debriefing "Celebrate Together"

- Did anyone complete the activity of encouraging someone who is intentionally fostering flourishing in the world? If so, please share your experience.

Reviewing their Life Alignment Map (5 minutes)

- At this point, their Life Alignment Map should be complete except for one section: Action Steps. Have them review everything they've filled in so far. What correlations or connections do they see across the different areas?

Orientation for the next session (5 minutes)

Reading: Chapter 8 - Ahh, Now I See

- This chapter is a summary and review, and it's quite short, so plan to spend more time on the **Activities**.

Preparation:

- The final Tool for Alignment involves deciding on Action Steps—what to do more of and less of to cultivate flourishing in your life and the world around you. To prepare, review your notes and insights from each chapter, especially from the evaluations in Align My Generating (Chapter 4), My Internal Guides (Chapter 6), and My Celebrating (Chapter 7).
- You'll also create a representation of your flourishing, which could take any form: a recipe, an illustration, a song, a manifesto, or whatever your creativity inspires. This is a creative, right-brain activity—allow yourself ample time to enjoy it.

Chapter 8: Ahh, Now I See

Connecting (5 minutes)

- Invite each person to share how they're feeling as this series comes to a close.

Sharing insights from the chapter (5 minutes)

- Have each participant read what they recorded as what they want to remember from the chapter.

Sharing Discoveries from Activities for Alignment (30 minutes)

1. Ask each person to share their "Expression of My Flourishing."
2. Once everyone has shared, open the floor for reflections on the following questions:
 - In what ways does your expression represent a mature, complete version of who you aspire to become?
 - Did you share your expression with someone? How did they respond?
 - What are your thoughts as you compare this with your earlier description of flourishing from Chapter 3?

Reviewing their Life Alignment Map (5 minutes)

- Ask participants to share a couple of things from the "do more of/do less of" section.
- Encourage them to mention any challenges they anticipate and identify someone who can support them in these goals.

Take Away (10 minutes)

1. Invite each person to summarize in one sentence what they're taking away from this small group study.
2. Prepare a meaningful conclusion, such as reading a Bible passage, offering a blessing, or saying a prayer.