Tearing Down the Walls
Small Group Discussion Guide*

Churches across the Austin area will join together to tear down walls that separate us from one another. Churches representing more than 10,000 of your neighbors have already committed to the Walls Series.

More than a Sunday morning message series, Walls is a journey for those who are ready to explore and live the life God intended. No longer will spiritual barriers keep us from trusting God and the promises He has made. We long to see the church of Austin love God, each other and our surrounding neighbors.

*These small group questions are adapted from the book Not Like Me: A Field Guide for Influencing a Diverse World by Eric Bryant. The Walls Small Group material can be used with or without Not Like Me.

Let’s tear down our walls together.

Overview:

Invisible Walls (Sept. 11th) - Not Like Me: Introduction & chapter 1

Naming Our Walls (Sept. 18th) - Not Like Me: chapter 2 & Conclusion

The Walls Between Us (Sept. 25th) - Not Like Me: chapters 3, 6, & 7

Walls Between Church and Community (Oct. 2nd) - Not Like Me: chapters 4 & 9

Breaking Down Walls (Oct. 9th) - Not Like Me: chapters 5, 8, & 10
WALLS Small Group Roles
In order for this group to really work each person should take on a role in the group to share responsibilities. Take a few minutes to read each of the following roles and decide who will own each of them for the group in the coming weeks.

1. **Bring a Snack** – each week someone brings packaged cookies, crackers, etc. and a pitcher of water for the group (you don’t have to go over the top here, this is not a baking contest).

2. **Clean Up Crew** – after the meeting tonight and the next several weeks these people help the host clean up by putting chairs back in place, trash in the can, and light dishwashing.

3. **Social Coordinator** – this person will plan/organize a time for the group to meet for a meal together. It might be at someone’s home or at a restaurant. If it is in a home have everyone bring a part of the meal and share it with others. If you go out to a restaurant be sensitive to financial constraints and keep it inexpensive. We hope every Walls Group will have one meal together during the next 4-weeks of this group. This helps build community together.

4. **Communicator** - create a phone and email list. Pass around a sheet of paper right now to collect contact information and then distribute it to the whole group next week (email it or paper copies). After the group list is created make sure everyone gets a weekly email or phone call about the next group meeting or event.

GROUP ROLES
Who can bring a **Snack** one of the next 4 weeks?

Week 2: _______________________________________________________________

Week 3: _______________________________________________________________

Week 4: _______________________________________________________________

Week 5: _______________________________________________________________

**Clean Up Crew** after each group:

Week 2: _______________________________________________________________

Week 3: _______________________________________________________________

Week 4: _______________________________________________________________

Week 5: _______________________________________________________________

**Social Coordinator** for one group social event:

Name: _______________________________________________________________

**Communicator** for keeping everyone in the know:

Name: _______________________________________________________________
Week 1: Invisible Walls

At times we struggle to reach our potential because of walls (unseen and spiritual barriers) that hold us back.

1. What is one of your favorite childhood memories?
2. Can you describe a time in your life when you had high expectations about an event, experience, or a person that ended up leaving you disappointed? How did you respond to the disappointment?

Read Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

1. How does the world teach us to respond to painful experiences and disappointment?
2. Have you ever seen someone create a wall as a way to protect himself or herself after having a painful experience?
3. Have you ever done this? If so, what happened?
4. If we are supposed to examine every thought (and wall) that we create by the truth that God reveals, how can we do that?
5. How do God’s ways in handling difficult situations differ from the ways the world teaches us?

Assignment:
As we go through this Walls series together, we are asking each person to make this a season of spiritual reflection and preparation. We have created a “Spiritual Exercise” to guide you in the process. Each week there is a brief scripture reading and time of response to God. This is a critical part of the Walls experience. Please join us!

If you don’t have a copy you can download it at www.gatewaychurch.com/walls.

Bonus Questions:
- What insights did you gain from the Gateway Inspire service and what action steps can you take?
- What insights did you gain from Not Like Me (Introduction & chapter 1), and what action steps can you take?
**Week 2: Naming Our Walls**

*We can break through the walls that trap us when we identify them and proactively strive to overcome them with the help of God and others.*

1. Who was your best friend growing up in your neighborhood or at your school? What made him or her such a good friend?
2. What keeps people from experiencing more loving and authentic relationships?

*Read John 8:31-32*

1. What are some of the most common invisible walls that we create?
2. How have you seen an invisible wall trap someone? If so, what happened?
3. What are the walls you have built up in your life?
4. When have you seen the truth set someone free?
5. How can we discover the truth in the areas where we are trapped? What is the role of God’s word in discovering truth and freedom?

*Read 1 John 1:8-9*

6. What can we do to deconstruct our walls?
7. “To confess” means “to agree with God” about what is keeping you from what He intends for you. What do you need confess to God? How can others in your group pray for you so that the truth will set you free?

**Assignment:**
Continue the “**Spiritual Exercise**” which you received last week. You can still download a copy at www.gatewaychurch.com/walls.
This week, be sure to confess (agree with God) on the areas that you have kept you from God’s best for you. Ask him to show you the next step to take.

Make your plans to attend the **Walls Network Rally** in your area on Sunday, Oct 2, 5pm!

**Bonus:** For a free assessment to help you determine your wall(s), go to [http://www.faithbreakthroughs.com](http://www.faithbreakthroughs.com). Click on “Take the Walls Evaluation” link which is to the right of the video.

**Bonus Questions:**
- What insights did you gain from the Gateway Inspire service and what action steps can you take?
- What insights did you gain from *Not Like Me* (chapter 2 & Conclusion: Apathetics Anonymous), and what action steps can you take?
**Week 3: The Walls Between Us**

*Some of the most difficult walls to breakthrough (and the most critical ones) are the ones created between ourselves and other people.*

1. Have you ever felt out-of-place or overlooked?
2. If so, what has helped you feel welcomed or included?

*Read Galatians 3:26-29*

1. What do you think Paul means in this passage?
2. If Jesus desires to remove the barriers between us, what can we do differently to live this way?

*Read Acts 16:13-15*

4. The term “oikos” in the Scriptures is translated as “household” which includes not just a person’s family but also includes one’s neighbors, co-workers, and friends. It is your entire sphere of influence. How can you create more authentic relationships with your “oikos”?
5. Do you have any neighbors, coworkers, or family that are disconnected from God or disconnected from community? *(In your small group and throughout the next week, spend time praying for those who were mentioned as being disconnected).*
6. Of those in your “oikos” who are disconnected from God or community, who can you reach out to and serve this week? How do you plan to do so?

**Assignment:**

Continue the **Spiritual Exercise.** It can be found at www.gatewaychurch.com/walls. This week ask God to help you identify individuals or groups in your sphere of influence with whom you differ (faith, ethnicity, socio-economic background, gender, or so on). Are there any walls between you? What is one simple step that you will take this week toward breaking down that wall?

Make plans to attend the **Walls Network Rally** in your area next Sunday, Oct 2, 5pm.

**Bonus:** For a free assessment to determine areas of potential prejudice, go to **http://notlikeme.org/small-groups/** for the link to Project Implicit.

**Bonus Questions:**

- What insights did you gain from the Gateway Inspire service and what action steps can you take?
- What insights did you gain from *Not Like Me* (chapters 3, 6, & 7), and what action steps can you take?
Week 4: Walls Between Church & Community

As people who follow Jesus, we are called to love, serve, and influence the world around us, but at times we can create walls between us and the world when we are judgmental or unintentional about how we live our lives.

1. What causes, hobbies, or activities in your life brought you together with others you may not have known or who may be different from you?
2. When you are struggling, where do you go for help or healing? What has helped you make progress in your life?

Read John 17:20-23

1. What was the one thing in the Scriptures that Jesus prayed would be true of you and me?
2. What are the results we would experience if we lived out what He prayed for us?
3. What can we do live more unified in our families, with our friends & running partners, with our small group and network, within our local church, and with the universal Church?
4. A loving community is both inclusive and willing to have the honest conversations. In a “come as you are” culture, how can we help people “not stay that way”? When is the appropriate time to have the honest conversations?
5. How can we more actively serve and love others with whom we disagree without compromising our convictions?
6. The universal Church is healthy when she is made up of healthy local churches. How can we partner with other churches that may have different strengths, or a different calling, or a different demographic make-up to serve our city?
7. Last week, how did you reach out to serve someone you know who is disconnected? How did it go? Who do you plan to serve this week and how will you serve them?

Assignment:
Continue the “Spiritual Exercise” found at www.gatewaychurch.com/walls.
This week, choose someone from your sphere of influence who is disconnected from God and disconnected from a local church. Pray each day for this person and look for a specific way you can love and serve him or her. Next week report back who you served and how you served him or her.

Bonus Questions:
• What insights did you gain from the Gateway Inspire service and what action steps can you take?
• What insights did you gain from Not Like Me (chapters 4 & 9), and what action steps can you take?
Week 5: Breaking Down Walls

Jesus gave His life to tear down the walls—the walls between us and God and the walls separating us from each other.

1. Tell about one of your spiritual gifts, strengths, personality traits or love languages? How does it contrast with the spiritual gifts, strengths, personality traits or love languages of those closest to you (at home, work, school, or church?)
2. In knowing the uniqueness of those around you, how does that help you connect with them? How does knowing this help you work through and resolve conflict?
3. How do you approach conflict in your life? Do you create it or run from it?

Read Matthew 6:14-15
1. Why does it seem forgiving others and overcoming bitterness towards others is so important to our spiritual health?
2. What are some of the consequences when we choose not to forgive?

Read Matthew 5:23-24 and Matthew 18:15-20
3. Do you have something against someone or does anyone have something against you? If so, what is your plan for resolving these conflicts?
4. Do you have any “enemies”? If so, what have you done to bring peace or what could you do?
5. Should we forgive and completely forget, or are there times when we should choose to forgive and learn from what happened?
6. What are some examples of times when you worked through conflict and restarted a relationship?
7. How can you catalyze new relationships with those around you who may be disconnected from God and/or community?
8. How do you plan to live a more intentional life of loving and serving others as a result of this series? What are your main action steps?

Assignment:
Discuss the next steps for you and for your group.
Choose to live a life without barriers between yourself and God and without barriers between yourself and others. Discuss how the group members can help each other.

Bonus: For the Gallup’s StrengthsFinder assessment, go to [http://notlikeme.org/small-groups/](http://notlikeme.org/small-groups/) for an explanation and links to different options.

Bonus Questions:
- What insights did you gain from the Gateway Inspire service and what action steps can you take?
- What insights did you gain from Not Like Me (chapters 5, 8, & 10), and what action steps can you take?