APPENDIX

STARTING YOUR WALKING TOGETHER COHORT

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

You can do this.

You don't need a seminary degree, a teaching gift, or a leadership title. You need a willingness to gather a few people, open the book, and walk the journey together. If you can host a dinner, you can lead a cohort. If you can ask a question and listen to the answer, you have everything this requires.

What follows is a simple, practical roadmap for launching and sustaining a Walking Together cohort. Nothing here is complicated. The hardest part is the first invitation—and even that is easier than you think.

THE THREE-PERSON RULE

Most cohorts begin the same way: not with twelve people or a perfectly polished plan, but with just three. Three people who are willing to walk honestly together are enough to begin.

HOW MANY?

Three to twelve. That's the range. But here's what five decades of building teams and groups has taught me: three to five is where the deepest formation happens. At that size, everyone speaks, everyone is heard, and no one can hide. If your group grows beyond five, the dynamic shifts—not badly, but differently. Discussion becomes more structured, and quieter voices need more intentional space. Both sizes work. But if you're starting your first cohort, aim for three to five people you trust enough to be honest with.

WHO TO INVITE?

Start with the faces that came to mind while you were reading. You know who they are—the friend who's been restless for something deeper, the colleague who asks real questions when everyone else keeps it surface, the neighbor whose faith is quiet but steady. You're not looking for the spiritually impressive. You're looking for the spiritually hungry.

A few principles that matter:

- **Diversity is fine.** Your cohort doesn't need to come from one church, one age group, or one background. Some of the most powerful groups I've seen crossed every line—a retired pastor, a young entrepreneur, a schoolteacher, a CEO. Diversity isn't a problem to manage. It's the point.
- **Willingness over readiness.** Don't wait for people whose schedules are perfectly clear. Invite people who are willing to rearrange something to be there. That willingness is the first act of breaking isolation.
- **Don't overthink it.** The enemy would love for you to spend three weeks building the perfect roster and never actually start. Invite three people this week. If two say yes, you have a cohort.

THE INVITATION

Keep it simple and personal. A text, a phone call, a conversation over coffee. Here's language you can adapt:

"I've been reading a book called Walking Together that's hitting me in ways I didn't expect. It's a forty-day journey about breaking isolation and building the kind of community that actually lasts. The author designed it to be walked with a small group, and I'd love to walk through it with you. It's five short daily readings on your own, and then we'd meet once a week for about an hour. Would you be open to trying it with me?"

That's it. No sales pitch. No pressure. You're not asking them to sign up for a program. You're asking them to walk with you.

Some will say yes immediately. Some will want to think about it. Some will say no. Let them. This isn't about filling seats. It's about finding the people God is drawing into this journey alongside you.

SETTING THE RHYTHM

Before your first gathering, ask everyone to read the Introduction. But also, get agreement on three things: When, Where, and How Long?

1. **When:** Pick a consistent time. Weekends work naturally with the book's rhythm, but if Tuesday evening works for your group, use it. Consistency matters more than the calendar slot.
2. **Where:** A living room, a back patio, or a quiet corner of a coffee shop. The space should be small enough that the group feels gathered rather than scattered. Do not let logistics become an obstacle.
3. **How Long:** One hour is the ideal framework. It is enough time to go deep without draining the room. Respecting the sixty-minute mark removes the fear that the group will "swallow" their entire schedule. Some weeks, your group will want to keep going—that's fine, let the Spirit lead. People who know they can leave in sixty minutes are more likely to show up in the first place.

YOUR FIRST GATHERING

Before participants begin Week 1, hold a separate orientation gathering. This meeting sets the tone for the journey. Its goals are to connect, discuss the Introduction, establish expectations, and prepare everyone to begin Day 1. The eight weekly Cohort Gatherings begin after participants complete Week1.

A SIMPLE FIRST-GATHERING AGENDA (60 MINUTES)

Welcome and prayer (5 minutes). Open with a brief prayer. Nothing elaborate. Ask God to be present in the room and in the weeks ahead. If you're not comfortable praying aloud, read the opening line from Day 1 and let it serve as your invocation.

Introductions (10 minutes). Even if everyone knows each other, take a few minutes to answer one question: *"What made you say yes to this?"* The answers will surprise you. They'll also surface the hunger that brought each person to the table. Listen carefully. What people say in this moment often reveals what God is already doing in them.

Overview of the Journey (10 minutes): Walk the group through the core architecture: forty days, eight weeks, five daily readings per week, and one weekend gathering. Explain the three movements—*Connection, Community, Calling*—in a single sentence each. Your goal isn't to teach the content yet, but to give them a map of where they are going.

Set the Ground Rules (10 minutes): Establish three rules early. They are more than enough:

1. First, **what's said here stays here.** Confidentiality is the foundation of trust. Without it, no one will go beneath the surface.
2. Second, **show up.** Not perfectly—life happens. But this only works if the group can count on each other. If you have to miss a week, let someone know.
3. Third, **make room.** If you're a talker, practice listening. If you're quiet, take the risk of speaking. The goal is for every voice in the room to be heard before anyone speaks twice.

Begin the journey (20 minutes). Discuss the Introduction and the three movements of the journey: Connection, Community, and Calling. Ask what brought each person to this cohort and what they hope God will form in them across these forty days. Review the daily rhythm and confirm when everyone will begin Day 1. The Week 1 Cohort Gathering will take place after Day 5 and should receive its own full hour.

Close and confirm (5 minutes). Confirm next week's meeting time and place. Encourage everyone to begin (or continue) the daily readings. Close with a brief prayer or a simple benediction: *"Lord, we're here. Walk with us."*

FACILITATING WELL

The facilitator is not a teacher. The facilitator is the person who keeps the conversation moving, makes sure everyone has space, and watches the clock. That's it. The book does the teaching. The Spirit does the forming. Your job is to steward the room.

One person should facilitate the first gathering. After that, the role can rotate weekly if the group prefers, or one person can carry it throughout. There's no wrong answer. What matters is that someone owns the rhythm for each meeting.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- **Ask the questions, then wait:** Silence after a question isn't a failure. It's where people are thinking. Give the room at least ten seconds before you jump in. The best responses often come after the pause.
- **Redirect gently:** If one person is dominating the conversation, it's usually not malice—it's enthusiasm or nervousness. A simple redirect works: *"That's good. Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet."* Said warmly, this is a gift to the

whole room, including the person who needed the nudge.

- **Draw out the quiet ones:** Some people process internally and won't speak unless invited. A direct but gentle question helps: *"What's been sitting with you this week?"* Give them permission to pass if they're not ready. But keep inviting. Some of the most transformative words I've heard in ministry came from the person everyone assumed had nothing to say.
- **Don't fix:** When someone shares something painful or messy, the temptation is to offer a solution, a verse, or a tidy encouragement. Resist it. Presence is the ministry. *"Thank you for telling us that"* is almost always better than *"Here's what you should do."*
- **Watch the clock with grace:** Starting and ending on time is an act of love. It tells your group: I respect your life outside this room. If the conversation is clearly Spirit-led and the room wants to continue, ask permission: *"We're at the hour. Does anyone need to leave, or should we keep going?"* Let people choose without guilt.
- **When it gets hard:** It will. Around Week 3 or 4, most groups hit a wall. Attendance gets inconsistent. Someone brings conflict into the room. The initial enthusiasm fades. This is not a sign that the cohort is failing. It is the cohort working. Formation requires friction. Here's how to handle the most common challenges.
- **Someone Misses a Week**: It will happen. Don't make it a crisis. A brief text—*"We missed you tonight. Hope you're doing well."*—communicates care without pressure. If someone misses two or three weeks in a row, reach out personally. Not to guilt them back, but to ask if something's going on. Sometimes the person drifting away is the one who needs the community most. Sometimes life genuinely intervenes. Either way, the reaching out matters more than the returning.

- **Someone Dominates the Discussion**: Establish early the principle that every voice should be heard before anyone speaks twice. If one person consistently fills the space, talk to them privately—not as correction, but as invitation: *“I can tell this journey is hitting you deeply, and I value what you’re bringing. I also want to make sure the quieter folks have room. Would you help me draw them out?”* You’ve just turned the problem into a partnership.
- **The Conversation Stays Surface-Level**: This usually means trust hasn’t been built yet. Don’t force depth. Model it. When the facilitator shares honestly—not dramatically, but genuinely—the room takes notice. Vulnerability is contagious, but it has to start somewhere. Be the first one to go beneath the surface, and give the group time to follow.
- **When Disagreements Arise**: If two members disagree or tension surfaces, don’t shut it down and don’t let it spiral. Acknowledge it: *"There’s clearly some tension here, and that’s okay. This is what real community looks like.”* If it’s too heated for the group setting, take it offline—offer to meet with both parties separately. The goal is to keep the room safe without pretending that the community is painless. It isn’t. The book says this plainly. The cohort is where you live it.
- **You Feel Unqualified:** Good. That means you’re paying attention. The most dangerous facilitator is the one who thinks they have all the answers. Your job is not to be the expert. Your job is to open the book, ask the questions, and trust that the Spirit is doing work you can’t see. I’ve led teams on five continents across five decades, in military service, government, and ministry, and I still walk into every gathering knowing that the best thing I can do is get out of God’s way.
- **Be aler**t: Be alert to the wisdom the Spirit places in others. If a group member shows deep insight, don't be intimidated: invite them in. You don’t have to carry the mantle alone. A secure facilitator doesn't protect their authority; they step back to witness the Truth coming alive, regardless of who is speaking it.

WHAT COMES AFTER THE FORTY DAYS

The commissioning in Week 8 is a beginning, not a graduation. The question your cohort will face on Day 40 is simple: *What do we do now?*

You have three paths forward, and they're not mutually exclusive.

Keep walking together. The cohort you've built over forty days is rare. Don't let it dissolve out of neglect. Many groups choose to continue meeting—shifting from the daily reading structure to a rhythm of prayer, accountability, and shared mission. The trust you've built is the foundation. What you build on it is between your group and the Lord.

Multiply. The most powerful thing a cohort can do is reproduce. Each member launches a new group, carrying the book into their own circle—a different workplace, a different neighborhood, a different church. One cohort becomes five. Five becomes twenty. This is how movements grow: not by addi-tion, but by multiplication. You don't need permission to start another cohort. You already know how. You just lived it.

Go deeper. Walking Together is the first volume in a series. The next book takes the principles you've experienced over these forty days and goes deeper—into the theology of biblical flourishing, the strategic dynamics of movement leadership, and the Kingdom vision that gives community its purpose beyond itself. If Walking Together built the foundation, the next volume builds the house. Watch for it.

Did this work? The question leaders often ask is "How do we know this worked?" Look around the room. The people sitting with you at Week 8 who weren't sitting with anyone at Week 1—that's how you know. The rest is the Spirit's business, and it unfolds over years, not days.

Here's the truth underneath all of this: you don't need to be extraordinary to start a cohort. You need to be willing. Willing to invite, willing to show up, willing to let the journey do its work in you and in the people sitting across from you.

The formation you need is waiting in community. And the community you need is waiting for someone to gather it.

That someone might be you.



Scan the QR code for the digital version of Starting Your Walking Together Cohort