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Introduction

Being a follower of Jesus Christ is a lifelong journey. From the early church to the Desert Fathers, our history is rich with disciplines and practices that help us lead fulfilling lives in Him. But how do we become more like Jesus through these time-tested practices? The answer lies in the disciplined habits that nurture spiritual growth over time.

Consider the difference between an athlete and someone who doesn’t exercise: the key is habit. Spiritual growth demands consistent practice. The real question isn’t “Are you ready?” but “Are you willing?” Moreover, spiritual growth cannot occur in isolation; it must be supported and tested by community.

This ten-week experience will challenge you to step beyond your comfort zone with intentional focus. You’ll deepen your understanding of God through prayer and devotion, become more aware of your struggles, and engage in service and celebration to express what God is doing in your heart – all the while connecting with like-minded individuals who also seek to grow in their faith.

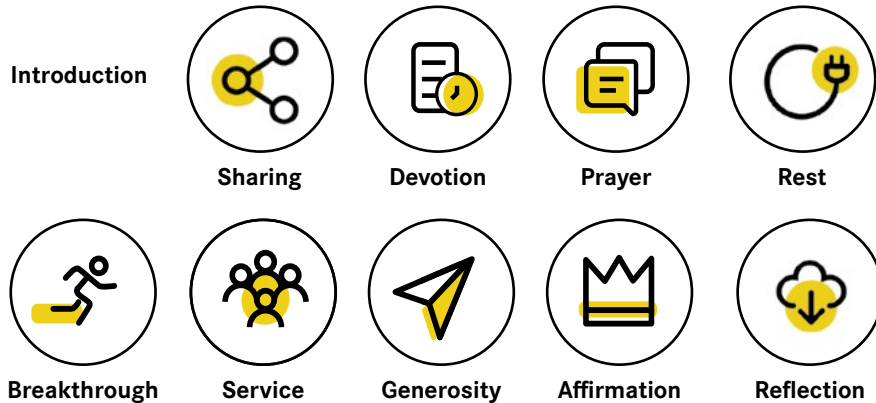
Regardless of how long you’ve been following Jesus, it is essential to remember that the Christian life is not meant to be lived alone. Lean on your group for support and accountability, and offer your strengths to help them. Our goal is to create the best possible environment for deep friendships and spiritual growth.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Hebrews 12:1

How will this work?

This study is divided into ten weeks, each week will focus on a different rhythm.

The ten weeks are:



Each practice has three devotions **which need to be completed prior to your group meeting**. You'll read Scripture and reflect/answer questions. During the group meetings, you'll delve deeper by sharing your insights, praying together, and taking action (James 2:17).

Who do you want to be during this study?

Consider embodying these five personal qualities during this study:

Humble Allow God and others to minister and convict you

Teachable Allow others to give you insight

Intentional Step-up, do your part, further your group

Curious Ask questions, seek further from God and one another

Accountable Invite support and encouragement

Why? Because "Team work makes the dream work"! You may need to stretch your social skills and communication preferences. It may mean an unnatural word of encouragement, or using instant messaging. Bend and stretch to create the best possible environment for authentic friendships and spiritual growth. Be committed to complete all devotionals and be present at all group meetings.

Group covenant

We strive to create the best possible environment for authentic friendships and spiritual growth.

To create an environment of spiritual consistency, trust, and accountability, please read and commit to the group covenant.

Group goals

- To grow in relationship with God (Luke 10:27)
- To grow in love, support, and care for one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- To create accountability through confession of sin, received without judgment (James 5:16)
- To lovingly rebuke, forgive, and restore in love (James 5:15)
- To respond to the Gospel externally through the outpouring of spiritual gifting (1 Corinthians 12)
- To promote consistency and minimise division, be under the spiritual authority of Island ECC (Acts 2:42)

Personal goals

- Be committed – Attend regularly and on time. Inform if you cannot come. At least 80% attendance over the next 10 weeks.
- Be present – Holistic presence means giving your full attention.
- Be authentic – Be honest and transparent. It brings everyone closer.
- Be confidential – What's shared in the group stays in the group.
Exceptions: (1) If permission is sought and granted to share a story beyond the group; (2) If someone is believed to be a threat to him/herself or to another.

Name, Date and Signed



Week Two

RHYTHM OF SHARING

Did you know...

Two-thirds of the Bible is presented as a narrative. To truly know someone, you must understand their story: it reveals what drives them, what frustrates them, and their unique character traits. Similarly, God has chosen narratives as a primary means of disclosing Himself to us. In the same way, by sharing our own stories we can deepen our connections with one another.

Spiritual growth occurs in various ways, but a fundamental avenue is through community. We need people to challenge us, encourage us, and hold us accountable. The greater the familiarity and trust within your community, the more impactful each spiritual activity will be in fostering growth. This week, you will be guided to reflect on your life, heritage, and testimony, with the goal of preparing you to share your story with others.



Day 1

Identifying your heritage

We are born into families, communities and cultures that play a significant role in shaping our perspectives. In order to share adequately about who we are, we must first take stock of these external influences. Spend some time reflecting on how these influences have contributed or detracted from your faith journey.

Reflection

Our character is deeply formed by our family heritage. For some, that experience was very positive and they live with a deep sense of gratitude. For others, that experience was painful and they continue to struggle with those wounds. Whether good or bad, our families gave us values that we live by.

- Identify some of the significant aspects of your family background.
What were the dominant values?

Another significant influencer on our character comes from our culture. Many of us fail to pay critical attention to how our culture shapes us and how others are not necessarily shaped in the same way.

- Identify some of the key aspects of your cultural background.
What were the dominant values?

While our heritage is a mixed bag of blessing and brokenness, it is important to know that God desires to use it for His glory and for our good. Our heritage also plays a significant role in shaping our spiritual lives.

- What aspects of your family and cultural backgrounds have influenced your spiritual life the most?

Day 2

Identifying significant events

Every great story is filled with significant events. Similarly, God has crafted your unique narrative, weaving in significant moments that have shaped who you are today. Take a moment to reflect on these experiences and the impact they've had on your life.

Reflection

The next two questions will focus on the significant events in your life, divided into two categories: **high points** and **hard times**. **High points** refer to the most fulfilling seasons or experiences you've had, while **hard times** encompass the challenging and painful moments you've faced.

- **High point:** What events or experiences have had the most positive impact in your life?
- **Hard times:** What incidents in your life are hard to talk about? Why?



Day 3

Identifying unforgettable heroes

Throughout your life, you will be greatly inspired and challenged by people around you. Your paths cross – some for a lifetime; some for brief moments; some in books or movies. The person you've become can be the result of your interactions with and experiences of them.

Reflection

Heroes are those who leave a lasting positive impact on your life through their words and actions. They might be your parents, teachers, friends, or even individuals you've never met. Their influence can resonate deeply, inspiring you in ways you may not even realise.

- Who has influenced you for good? What did they do?

Your next group meeting

You'll be sharing two significant events or people in your life. By the end of the group meeting, you'll also establish accountability structures for the first two weeks of your habitual daily devotion.





Week Three

RHYTHM OF DEVOTION

Did you know...

The concept of The Daily Office dates back to the Old Testament, where Scriptures were read, Psalms were sung, and prayers were offered at fixed hours throughout the day. During the Roman Empire, bells would ring at 6AM, 9AM, 12 noon, 3PM, and 6PM, prompting Christians to pray in response. Early church fathers like Tertullian (155-220 A.D.) and Origen (185-253 A.D.) wrote extensively about the benefits of The Daily Office. The Desert Fathers, most notably Antony (251-356 A.D.), left their bustling city lives to embrace solitude in the desert or join monastic communities, dedicating themselves to intentional, distraction-free time with God. These daily, purposeful practices of devotion were taken seriously. What about you?



Day 1

Finding the time

Scripture Reading: Daniel 6:10

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

Introduction

The Persian king issued a decree that anyone who prayed to their God would be thrown into the lion's den. Daniel heard the decree, and continued to pray as he had done before. This one verse teaches us two things: 1) the incredible resilience of Daniel to refuse an imperial edict, and 2) that he had a daily office of praying three times a day.

The very first difficulty of developing a rhythm of devotion, is finding the time of day to do so. Some do it in the morning, while others do it at night. There is no right or wrong way to do it; we just need to do it. The following questions will help you discern for yourself what time of day works best for you.

Reflect

- How much time every day do you reserve for God? How does it compare to your other activities (TV, social media, working out etc.)?

In the book "Atomic Habits" by James Clear, he emphasises making habits easy and manageable. A key way to do that is to begin small. For example, if you want to read more, start by reading one page a day.

- If you're not currently in the habit of spending time with God, what is a realistic amount of time you can commit to consistently? Remember to start small. Write it down below.
- Considering the time you noted for the previous question, what specific time of day can you commit to consistently? Reflect on your daily schedule and aim to identify a dedicated time slot that you can maintain each day. Write it down below.

Day 2

Embracing silence and solitude

Scripture Reading: Luke 5:16

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Introduction

One of the defining aspects of Jesus' ministry was his tendency to retreat to quiet places for solitude with God. Embracing silence and solitude allows us to step away from the distractions of the world and fully engage in God's presence.

Your daily time of devotion should be centred around entering into that presence. Too often, we focus on reading our Bibles and working through prayer lists, forgetting to simply enjoy the experience of being with Him. Today, you will go through a guided exercise to experience silence.

Exercise

- Find a quiet place in your home or outside in nature that is distraction-free. Make sure your phone is not around you to distract you.
- Take long, slow breaths. Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. With every breath, you can repeat a simple prayer like: "Come Holy Spirit" or "Thank you Jesus."
Note: your mind will start running wild with thoughts. That's okay, don't get frustrated. Just come back to your breathing and your simple prayer.
- Don't try to make anything happen or control the experience, just *be* with God. When you are done, close your time with a simple prayer of gratitude to God for His presence.

Reflect

- How was that time of silence and solitude? What did you experience from God?



Day 3

Conversing with scripture

Scripture Reading: Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers.

Introduction

In our relationships, we connect through back-and-forth dialogue. However, when it comes to conversing with God in our quiet times, it often feels one-sided. We express our thoughts and questions, only to be met with silence.

Tim Keller's teaching on this topic is enlightening. He suggests that we view reading the Bible as God's way of speaking to us, while our prayers serve as our response. Our prayers should arise from immersion in Scripture, especially if our goal is to connect with God.

Many of us tend to compartmentalize our quiet times into two separate activities: studying the Bible academically and praying independently. To truly engage in a meaningful conversation with God, we must create space for meditation, allowing Scripture and prayer to intertwine as two sides of a dialogue. Today, you will get a chance to experience this conversation.

Exercise

- **Read the passage:** Slowly read through Psalm 1, reflecting on each verse.
 1. Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers
 2. but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.
 3. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers.
 4. Not so with the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.
 5. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
 6. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

- **Meditate:** Consider what each verse reveals about God's character and your relationship with Him.
- **Pray:** Respond in prayer, sharing your thoughts, feelings, and any questions that arise from your meditation.

Reflect

- How did engaging with Scripture as a conversation with God change your feelings or insights about your relationship with Him?

Your next group meeting

In this past week, you established a consistent time to be with God. You also practiced silence and meditation through Scripture. When you gather with your group next, you will be sharing key insights and experiences from your time with God. As well as identifying ways you can keep each other accountable to keep this quiet time with God.





Week Four

RHYTHM OF PRAYER

Did you know...

Dr. Helen Roseveare, a missionary to Zaire, told the following story. “A mother at our mission station died after giving birth to a premature baby. We tried to improvise an incubator to keep the infant alive, but the only hot water bottle we had was beyond repair. So we asked the children to pray for the baby and for her sister. One of the girls responded. ‘Dear God, please send us a hot water bottle today. Tomorrow will be too late because by then the baby will be dead. And dear Lord, send a doll for my sister so she won’t feel so lonely.’ That afternoon, a large package arrived from England. The children watched eagerly as we opened it. Much to their surprise, under some clothing was a hot water bottle! Immediately, the girl who had prayed so earnestly started to dig deeper, exclaiming, ‘If God sent that, I’m sure He also sent a doll!’ And she was right! The heavenly Father knew in advance of that child’s sincere requests, and five months earlier He had led a ladies’ group to include both of those specific articles.”



Day 1

What is prayer and what does it reveal about us?

Scripture Reading: John 14:5-11

Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you really know Me, you will know My Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him.” Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know Me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me? The words I say to you I do not speak on My own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in Me, who is doing His work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; or at least believe in the evidence of the works themselves.”

Introduction

At the core of prayer lies a profound longing to connect with God. This is evident in the heartfelt pleas of Thomas and Philip, who genuinely desired to be with Jesus. However, for many of us, our motivations for prayer can vary. We may approach God seeking answers to our requests or adhere to the tradition of praying before meals. While it’s not wrong to come to God in these moments, relying solely on these instances reveals much about our relationship with Him.

Reflect

- Which words describe Thomas’ and Philip’s attitude/yearning? Which words could describe *your* attitude/yearning?
- What are the situations that motivate you most to seek God in prayer?
- Does your prayer life reflect your heart’s desire to know the Father? If not, what does it reflect?

Day 2

The mechanics of prayer – why and how

Scripture Reading: Matthew 6:9-13

This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

Introduction

The Lord’s Prayer is a widely cherished prayer among all denominations of Christianity, transcending cultural and theological boundaries. In many churches, this powerful prayer is recited at the beginning or end of services, serving as a communal expression of faith. However, its significance extends beyond simply being a beautiful prayer to recite.

The Lord’s Prayer also serves as an invaluable template for our personal prayers. It guides us in addressing God with reverence, acknowledging His holiness, and expressing our dependence on Him for daily needs. By following its structure, we can incorporate praise, confession, and supplication into our own conversations with God. In this way, the Lord’s Prayer not only unites believers in worship but also enriches our individual prayer lives, helping us grow deeper in our relationship with the Divine.

Reflect

- The major theme in the first half of the prayer (Matt 6:9-10) is adoration, whereas the second half (Matt 6:11-13) focuses on petitioning God. What is the significance of this sequence?
- How does Matthew 6:9-13 affect how and what you pray for?
- What new insight do you learn from The Lord’s Prayer? Does it change you or the way you pray?



Day 3

The dilemma of unanswered prayers

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Introduction

Paul's three prayers for deliverance went unanswered. He believed that removing the thorn would lead to greater success in his ministry. Yet God's response was clear – and, to many, seemingly illogical.

Like Paul, you may face prayers that remain unanswered, even when they seem entirely justifiable. These prayers could have showcased God's glory, yet silence follows. What comes next? How do you respond in such moments? What does this mean for your faith?

Reflect

- What do you feel about God when your prayers are unanswered?
- What was significant about Paul's response? How could his response and posture of faith serve as a model for you?
- What prayer request of yours remains unanswered? How do you feel about them?

Your next group meeting

You'll be spending extended time in prayer during your group meeting. Come with a free heart, ready to engage with God through prayer.

Before you finish, how are your daily devotional habits coming along? Remember, habits take time to form, so press on!





Week Five

RHYTHM OF REST

Did you know...

In our fast-paced world, working every day of the week has become the norm. In fact, it is the notion of taking a whole day off of work that usually draws puzzled responses, even within the church! We don't like to stop, and the world agrees. As a result, we push ourselves to the brink, leading to burnout and mental exhaustion. This approach to life is unsustainable, yet many cling to the hope that retirement will make it all worthwhile. Consequently, we become weary.

While being tired is an unavoidable aspect of life, most of us live at such a dangerous level of tiredness that we no longer sense God's presence or hear His voice. How tragic it would be to begin recognising God's voice only after we retire! Rest is not intended to be a luxury of retirement; it is meant to be embraced and enjoyed weekly. This week, we turn our attention to developing a habit of Sabbath!



Day 1

Sabbath defined

Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:2-3

By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all His work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done.

Introduction

The word “Sabbath” comes from the Hebrew word “*shabbat*” which literally means “to stop”. In the creation narrative, God fashioned the world in six days and set aside the seventh for rest. Following this divine example, He commanded His people to observe the Sabbath, enshrining it as one of the Ten Commandments. This underscores the importance of rest as a vital rhythm intended by God. Embracing the practice of Sabbath allows us to deepen our awareness of His presence and guidance in our lives. Let’s begin by taking inventory of our current practice of Sabbath.

Reflect

- What emotions or thoughts come to mind when you think about taking a Sabbath?
- What are the obstacles that keep you from fully taking a day to rest?

Practice

While we can learn about the Sabbath extensively, nothing compares to putting it into practice. This week, take a moment to decide which approach you will try. Here are three basic options for Sabbath observance:

1. **Sabbath on Sunday:** This aligns well with the Christian day of worship.
 2. **Traditional Sabbath:** Observe from sundown on Friday night to the same time on Saturday.
 3. **Midweek Sabbath:** This is ideal for those with a non-traditional schedule.
- Circle the option that you will try. Next, write down how many hours you will do. If you can do a full day, that’s great. But if you can only do a few hours, that’s okay too!

Day 2

Delighting in sabbath

Scripture Reading: Mark 2:27-28

Then [Jesus] said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

Introduction

In this passage, we find Jesus walking through a grainfield with His disciples, who are picking heads of grain – on the Sabbath, no less! During His time, there were numerous restrictions regarding what could be done on the Sabbath, and picking grain was considered work. This led the Pharisees to challenge Jesus about His disciples’ actions. In response, Jesus emphasised a profound truth: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”

From this exchange, we can draw two essential lessons. First, it’s vital to recognise that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. If He was not offended by His disciples’ behaviour, then why should the Pharisees be?

The second lesson is that the Sabbath is a gift designed for our benefit. It is intended to be a time of joy and delight, not merely a solemn obligation. Often, we approach the Sabbath with a sense of seriousness, which can make it feel burdensome. No wonder it’s hard for us to consistently take Sabbath! However, if we shift our mindset and look forward to this sacred time, we can truly embrace its restorative purpose in our lives.

Reflect

- Does joy come naturally to you, or is it more of a struggle? What factors influence your experience of joy in daily life?
- In what ways would the rest of your week need to change to set apart the Sabbath as a special day of delight?

Practice

Make a list of activities that bring you joy. After you have made a list of activities, select one or two that you will plan on doing during your Sabbath.

- List your activities here, try to be creative:



Day 3

Worshipping in our rest

Scripture Reading: Exodus 20:8-9

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God.

Introduction

For many Christians, the Sabbath often resembles a typical day off, lacking distinctiveness in their spiritual practice. While they may enjoy a day of rest, it's not uncommon for them to go through it without once reflecting on God or contemplating His truths. However, God commands us to remember the Sabbath and to keep it holy. The term "holy" signifies being set apart and dedicated to God's purposes.

While the Sabbath is indeed a wonderful opportunity to sleep in, indulge in favourite foods, and engage in joyful activities, it encompasses so much more. Above all, the Sabbath is meant to be a day devoted to worshipping God. It is a time to reconnect with our faith, reflect on His goodness, and honour Him in our hearts and actions.

Reflect

- In what ways is it easy for your practice of Sabbath to become more of a day off than a day of worship?
- What activities bring you joy but may also lead you away from God or foster a sense of idolatry? How can you discern between joyful pursuits that honour Him and those that distract you from your faith?

Practice

So far, we have identified the day we plan to observe the Sabbath, determined the number of hours we will dedicate to it, and chosen activities that bring us joy and anticipation for this special time. Now, let's focus on selecting an activity that deepens our enjoyment of God. This can be challenging, so we've provided a rubric to guide your reflection:

1. **Stop:** Does this activity involve a genuine cessation from my usual routines?
2. **Rest:** Does this activity truly refill and recharge my soul? Keep in mind that some activities, like binge-watching TV all day, may feel relaxing but can ultimately be more draining than restorative.
3. **Delight:** Does this activity fill me with happiness and gratitude for my connection with God?
4. **Worship:** Does this activity inspire a greater sense of awe and wonder at His nature?

Use this rubric to help you discern which activities will enrich your Sabbath experience and draw you closer to God. This week, plan on incorporating this activity into your Sabbath.

Your next group meeting

Your group will be coming together for a time of rest and social activity instead of the usual Care Group meeting. This is an important week to participate, as rest and enjoyment are vital aspects of spiritual community. Be sure to complete any work or responsibilities beforehand so you can fully engage in the gathering without distractions. Embrace this opportunity to unwind and connect with one another!





Week Six

RHYTHM OF BREAKTHROUGH

Did you know...

Charles Spurgeon once wrote, “The trumpet still plays the notes of war. You cannot sit down and put the victory wreath on your head. You do not have a crown. You still must wear the helmet and carry the sword. You must watch, pray, and fight. Expect your last battle to be the most difficult, for the enemy’s fiercest charge is reserved for the end of the day”.

Spurgeon’s imagery resonates because we are engaged in a very real battle. This isn’t a conflict against flesh and blood, but against the powerful spiritual forces of darkness (Ephesians 6:12). While we stand secure in the ultimate victory Christ has won, we are not immune to spiritual attack in this present life.

This is precisely why an authentic Christian community is vital. It is within the safety and trust of fellow believers that the strongholds of sin can be identified, confronted, and torn down. Together, we find the strength to resist temptation and stand firm.

This week, we begin that essential work. Through the reflection questions, you will identify specific “strongholds” of sin in your own life – areas where the enemy seems to gain ground. Identifying these is the first step toward finding freedom, and you will soon share them with your trusted community for support, prayer, and accountability. Let’s begin.



Day 1

There is a war

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 6:12

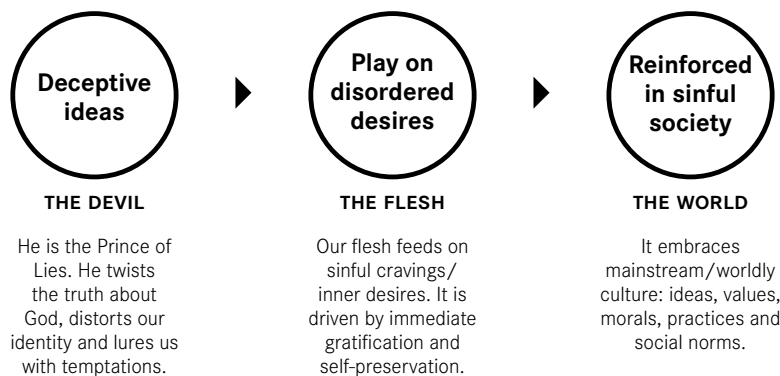
For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Introduction

From the early days of the church, it was generally agreed upon that there were three “enemies of the soul”. They are: the world, the flesh and the devil. John Mark Comer, a prominent pastor and author, has a working theory. It is that the devil uses deceptive ideas, to play on our desires, which are normalised in a sinful society. These three work together to wage an extremely powerful battle against our souls.

For example, the devil might whisper a lie like, “You’ll never be good enough”. This lie is then amplified by our own desire for acceptance and popularity. Finally, it is reinforced by a world that insists the only path to love is through performance and/or compromising our values.

This week, our goal is to use this framework to identify the ideas that hold us captive – our strongholds.



Reflect

- On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being “very skeptical” and 10 being “very certain”, what score reflects your level of certainty about the existence of these enemies in your life today?
- Which of these three enemies troubles you the most right now? When and where do you struggle to follow Jesus, love others, and maintain faith in God?
- Have you ever experienced a spiritual attack in your life? How did you handle that situation and what did you learn from it?



Day 2

There is an enemy

Scripture Reading: John 8:44

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Introduction

For Jesus, the devil is a stark reality. He is a thief, hell-bent on destruction, actively seeking humanity's ruin. Crucially, his primary weapon is deception. Jesus Himself declared that lying is the devil's native tongue. This perspective often challenges our common understanding of spiritual warfare. We tend to envision dramatic demonic assaults, exorcisms, or catastrophic natural events. Far less obvious is the insidious spiritual attack waged through the lies we internalise. Yet, before we grow complacent about this unseen battle, we must humbly acknowledge a sobering truth: these accepted lies possess the power to inflict devastating damage upon our lives.

Reflect

- Have you encountered the idea that Satan's primary weapon is deception? How does this perspective reshape your understanding of spiritual warfare?
- In what ways have the enemy's lies from your childhood or upbringing followed you into adulthood? What specific lies about yourself do you find challenging to overcome?
- What are the long-term effects of believing these lies? How can these beliefs influence your relationships and hinder your spiritual growth?

Day 3

There is a responsibility

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:1-3

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

Introduction

There's a saying that goes like this: "The devil doesn't need overtime; he's already winning with part-time effort". Why? Because the core issue isn't just external temptation – it's the indwelling "Flesh" within us all. This biblical term describes our inner predisposition toward *disordered desires*.

Think of "disordered" in two ways:

1. Misplaced Priorities: Desiring work over family, or success over integrity.
2. Disproportionate Obsessions: When a good thing, like fitness, consumes your identity or time.

This is precisely where the devil's schemes find fertile ground. His lies resonate with us *because* they target these disordered inclinations within us. On top of that, the surrounding world acts as an echo chamber, normalising these distortions and silencing our conscience. It dulls the conviction of sin and encourages us to live as we please.

This is the deadly trifecta: the Flesh's tendency, the devil's deceit, and the world's approval. Together, they construct formidable spiritual strongholds in our lives.



Reflect

- In what areas of your life do you notice misplaced priorities?
How do they affect your relationships and overall well-being?
- Are there any good things in your life that have become disproportionate obsessions?
How do these obsessions impact your identity and time?
- What specific spiritual strongholds do you believe exist in your life?

DESPAIR

Hopelessness, self-pity,
isolation, addictions,
self-harm

JEALOUSY

Spitefulness,
gossip/slander,
betrayal, critical/
judgmental spirit

SEXUAL IMMORALITY

Lust, seductiveness,
fornication, adultery,
pornography

FALSE TEACHING & RELIGIONS

Occult, Ouija board,
invoking evil or dead
spirits, fortune-telling,
astrology, cults

INSECURITY

Inferiority, inadequacy,
timidity, withdrawal,
pleasing people/not
God, lack of trust/worry,
wrong relationships

REJECTION

Seeking acceptance,
feeling unworthy,
withdrawal, addictions,
compulsions

DECEIT

Lying, delusions,
rationalising, wrong
doctrine, misuse of
Scripture

FEAR

Phobias, compulsions,
perfectionism, fear of
failure

PRIDE

Controlling, boasting,
belittling, taking credit,
selfishness, vanity

BITTERNESS

Resentment, hate,
unforgiveness, anger,
violence, revenge

CONTROL

Manipulation, distrust,
worry, seeking
recognition

IDOLATRY

Selfishness, greed,
apathy, pride,
stubbornness, vanity,
materialism

Exercise: Destroying strongholds

Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal behaviours/patterns that are deeply rooted and difficult to eliminate in your life. Review the list and place a circle around the strongholds that affect you. Confess to God, and ask Him to break the stronghold to give you freedom.

Your next group meeting

You'll share about your strongholds, pray for and receive prayer for their demolishing. Consider stepping out in courage to share vulnerably. Only when darkness is exposed to the light, will its power over you diminish (John 1:5, 8:12).





Week Seven

RHYTHM OF SERVICE

Did you know...

The year was 1934. Albert McMakin was a young farmhand. Excited about his faith, he shared it by inviting his friend to an evangelistic meeting. After failed attempts to persuade his friend to come, his friend finally agreed on the condition that he could drive Albert's truck to the event. Staying in the truck, his friend listened to the preacher's words from afar but soon became interested. Jesus touched his friend's heart that night. That friend's name was Billy Graham. The continued service of Albert to his friend proved far greater than he could ever imagine. With God, our service to Him can be just as abounding.



Day 1

Lip service or real service?

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:23-24

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Introduction

Lip service is usually the reluctant fulfilling of an obligation, e.g. honouring a family tradition. Prolonged lip service, *especially* for Christ, is bad for us mentally, and for our faith as it becomes legalistic and works-based. Christ desires our real, heart service that comes from the overflow of His love and not from our storehouses of hesitation and dread.

Reflect

- How do these verses change the way you work and serve others?
- In what ways might your religious service be more about appearance than true devotion?
- How can you take steps to express your love for God through service?

Day 2

Service as a directive, not an exception

Scripture Reading: James 2:14-17

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

Introduction

Service is a vital aspect of our spiritual growth as followers of Jesus. It's not merely an option; it's a clear directive. Many foundational services in our city – spanning infrastructure, health, and education – were established by dedicated Christians in its early development.

Take, for instance, Ho Kai, a Christian businessman who collaborated with Au Tak to create Kai Tak. This land would eventually be transformed into Kai Tak Airport. Ho Kai's sister, Ho Miu Ling, played a pivotal role as one of the founders of Nethersole Hospital. Additionally, Henrietta Hall Shuck, the first female American missionary to Hong Kong, established a school for girls in the early 1800s, a legacy that lives on through Henrietta Secondary School in North Point, named in her honour.

These stories reflect the enduring impact of faith and service. As you step into service, you join a rich legacy of those who have come before you, all serving the same God. Get ready to mobilise!

Reflect

- Recall a time of service where you proactively stepped up. What did you do? How did you feel?
- What is your inner motivation when you serve?
- What specific actions can you take on a weekly or monthly basis to support and uplift marginalised individuals in your community?



Day 3

Matching your service to expand the Kingdom

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 4:10-11

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Introduction

One reason you may feel frustration and dissonance in your service is the mismatch between opportunities and your spiritual gifts. When your gifts align with your service, you will find yourself serving with greater passion, creativity, and energy – benefiting everyone involved.

Consider this litmus test: Do you feel drained or energized after your service? Your answer reveals more than you might think!

Practice

Did you know that your spiritual gifts can evolve from season to season? Engaging in new areas of service might awaken a dormant gift within you. For instance, you may discover a gift for administration in one season and then uncover a talent for teaching biblical topics in the next.

This highlights the importance of continual exploration and awareness of your strongest gifts. By doing so, you can serve more effectively and contribute to the expansion of God's Kingdom.

Complete the Island ECC Spiritual Gifts Inventory.
Please visit: islandecc.hk/spiritual-gifts-assessment

Note: Optimised for desktop web browsers

Reflect

- What are your spiritual gifts? How are you using them?

Your next group meeting

You'll be sharing your Spiritual Gift Inventory results. Have it completed before your next group meeting.





Week Eight

RHYTHM OF GENEROSITY

Did you know...

A few years ago, Island ECC organized a mission trip to Bacolod, Philippines, where they visited a family of nine living in a makeshift shack. This family struggled to make ends meet, earning a meager income by raising pigs and washing clothes for others. The father had suffered a stroke, leaving him physically impaired and unable to work. Without electricity, they relied on oil lamps for light at night.

Tragically, a month later, their home was destroyed in a fire caused by an oil lamp accident. With no funds to rebuild, they sought refuge in their local church. Upon learning of their situation, the Island ECC mission team quickly mobilized and raised enough money to rebuild their home, complete with electricity and a year's worth of supplies. They also funded the family's enrolment in a "business-in-a-box" initiative to help them secure a sustainable income.

Thanks to God's providence and perfect timing, this family was able to experience His generosity through the support of the church.



Day 1

The “ship” of giving

Scripture Reading: Mark 10:17-23

As Jesus started on His way, a man ran up to Him and fell on his knees before Him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Why do you call Me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good – except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honour your father and mother.’” “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me.” At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

Introduction

Generosity goes beyond monetary contributions; it begins with your heart. At its core, two “ships” govern your relationship with your resources: stewardship and ownership. Stewardship involves managing what you have with responsibility, while ownership implies that you fully control and determine how your resources are used.

These two “ships” influence how tightly you cling to your possessions and the expectations you place on them. With this in mind, let’s examine your heart towards your “stuff”. Are you managing it, or is it managing you?

Reflect

- What is something (not someone) you highly cherish? Why?
- Was the young man a steward or owner of his wealth? Where are you similar/dissimilar?
- What do you seek from material abundance?

Day 2

The act of giving

Scripture Reading: Mark 12:41-44

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling His disciples to Him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on.”

Introduction

You’ll be presented with opportunities to give to others, or to Kingdom-led initiatives. Giving isn’t limited to financial contributions; it encompasses your time, effort, emotions, and talents. While it’s important to be discerning about where you direct your generosity, ultimately, it requires trust in God. Will you trust Him to provide for what you’ve given away? Will you allow Him to replenish what you may feel you’ve lost?

Reflect

- How does the story of the widow’s offering challenge your understanding of generosity?
- In what ways can you embrace sacrificial giving in your own life, trusting that God values the heart behind the gift more than the amount given?
- In what areas of your life do you feel hesitant to give, whether it’s time, resources, or talents? How might God be calling you to step out in faith and give more freely?



Day 3

The secrecy of giving

Scripture Reading: Matthew 6:1-4

Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Introduction

The significance of your giving goes beyond the act itself; it's equally important to consider your approach. Some individuals seek recognition through plaques in front of a struggling community, while others focus solely on the tax benefits of their contributions. Jesus makes it crystal clear to us by providing us a heart-check during our giving. Let's explore more.

Reflect

- How important is recognition to you? How do you feel recognized?
- How does giving in secret impact your stance on recognition?
- In what ways does the promise of God's reward in heaven shape your motivation for giving? If you find it demotivating, what do you think contributes to that feeling?

Your next group meeting

Bring a story of when you've given. What happened? Who received it? How did you feel?





Week Nine

RHYTHM OF AFFIRMATION

Did you know...

The Passover has been observed and celebrated by Jews for over 3,000 years since the Ancient Israelites left Egyptian captivity. This annual celebration occurs at the Passover dinner, called the *Seder*. The *Seder* consists of a procession book called the *Haggadah*, which guides the flow of the dinner and the Seder plate with different foods symbolising each part of the Passover story. The participants will eat *Matzah*, unleavened bread resembling the “hurried and unleavened” bread the Israelites took on their exodus, and *Afikoman*, *Matzah* which is eaten at the end of the Passover meal. They will also drink *wine* to represent the divine redemption of the Exodus story when God brought out, delivered, and redeemed His people.



Day 1

Let's sing of His goodness

Scripture Reading: Psalm 95:1-7a

Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and extol Him with music and song. For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods. In His hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to Him. The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land. Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care.

Scripture reading: 1 Peter 1:3

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...

Introduction

There are many worship songs written to rally Christ followers to rejoice in the goodness of God. Very often the lyrics speak of giving thanks to “his gift of love” and affirming our faith “in the Son of God who loved us and gave us life”. Recognising Christ’s goodness and faithfulness, despite our highs and lows, will deepen our grasp of God’s character and His heart for us. Do you have a go-to worship song to remind you of God’s goodness?

Reflect

- How would you describe who God is to you?
- What are some Bible verses which will help you affirm and reflect God’s character and goodness?
- Sometimes we only see God’s blessings in hindsight. What were some of those things or situations in your life?

Day 2

Who God says you are

Scripture Reading: 1 John 3:1-3

See what amazing love the Father has given us! Because of it, we are called children of God. And that’s what we really are! The world doesn’t know us because it didn’t know Him. Dear friends, now we are children of God. He still hasn’t let us know what we will be. But we know that when Christ appears, we will be like Him. That’s because we will see Him as He really is. Christ is pure. All who hope to be like Him make themselves pure.

Introduction

“You are the apple of His eye”. Indeed, you are his pride and joy, created from His immense love. Our everyday walk with God is an amazing discovery journey, where He transforms you more and more into His likeness. He truly delights in you. Will you begin your everyday celebrating yourself as God does?

Reflect

- If you were to look at yourself through God’s eyes, who does God say you are?
- “I AM” affirmations help you see yourself as God does. Write down 5 “I AM” affirmations and the scripture references for each. Meditate on them to affirm the person you have become in Christ. *Example:*
“I am treasured”
 Deuteronomy 14:2 – *You have been set apart as holy to the Lord your God, and He has chosen you from all the nations of the earth to be His own special treasure.*
- God’s affirmation of you = celebration of your identity. How would you celebrate yourself from today onwards?



Day 3

The power of celebrating others

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Introduction

Psychological research indicates that encouragement can boost motivation, enhance resilience, strengthen friendships, and alleviate feelings of anxiety and depression. The words we share hold significant power, both positively and negatively. Therefore, fostering encouragement should be a fundamental part of any spiritual community, and your active participation is essential. As you prepare for your upcoming group meeting focused on celebrating one another, take some time to reflect on how you can uplift each member of your group.

Practice

You have now journeyed for nine weeks with the same group of people. You've listened to them share; you've served together; you've prayed for each other; and you've even conquered strongholds with one another. Now is the time to think about those experiences to draw upon how you can appreciate and affirm one another.

Step 1: List their names

Take a sheet of paper and draw a vertical line down the centre. On the left side, write the names of each person, leaving ample space between each name. On the right side you will write your affirmation for them.

Step 2: Reflect on your experiences

Before you write anything, take a moment to reflect on your shared experiences with each person. Consider any funny or impactful memories, or specific interactions for which you are grateful.

Step 3: Write your affirmation

For each person, choose a word or phrase that captures your affirmation. Connect it to a meaningful memory that showcases their qualities. For example: "When I think of you, the word 'courageous' comes to mind because I remember how you stepped out of your comfort zone to serve children". Now write this affirmation on the right side of the sheet.

Your next group meeting

You'll be celebrating with each other in a group setting. Bring your list of affirmations to the meeting and pray for each person leading up to the meeting.





Week Ten

RHYTHM OF REFLECTION

Did you know...

Reflection is essential for meaningful and lasting change. Numerous psychological studies over the past few decades underscore the importance of reflection in driving improvement. This can take various forms, such as metacognition (thinking about one's own thinking), emotional processing, reflective goal setting, and other reflective practices. The same principle applies to spiritual growth, especially in the context of shared experiences within a community.

Often, we struggle to grow – not necessarily due to insufficient prayer or Bible study, but because we don't allow ourselves the time and space to reflect on what God is doing in our lives. Over the past nine weeks, you've encountered many significant experiences. Now it's crucial to take the time to process and reflect on them.



Day 1

Reflecting on gratitude

Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Introduction

Have you ever noticed how the news often seems inundated with negativity? For every one uplifting story featured, there are ten that highlight distressing events. This phenomenon occurs because bad news captures our attention; it sells. Therefore cultivating a mindset of gratitude is one of the most counter-cultural and counterintuitive practices we can adopt.

Embracing gratitude not only enhances our mental and physical health, but it also fosters deeper connections with others. It encourages a healthier self-image and, perhaps most importantly, helps us recognise the presence of God's influence in our lives. It is only from a place of gratitude that we can truly worship in spirit and truth.

Reflect

- List five things you are thankful for during this season of Care Group Connect.
- Choose one item from your list above and reflect on why it holds special significance for you. What makes you feel grateful for this particular thing?
- Without repeating anything you've mentioned, list five new things you appreciate about Care Group Connect. Try to be creative and nuanced in expressing your gratitude.

Day 2

Reflecting on growth

Scripture Reading: James 1:2-4

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Introduction

Having reflected on gratitude, let us now shift our focus to the challenges we've encountered. Scripture teaches us that the difficulties we face serve as fertile ground for perseverance. When we allow perseverance to work in our lives, it ultimately leads to our full maturity. In essence, God uses these hardships to cultivate our growth.

However, if we lack the perspective to see beyond our trials, we may miss the valuable lessons He seeks to impart. This underscores the importance of discerning the lessons hidden within our challenges. By doing so, we can embrace the growth that comes from adversity.

Reflect

- What was a particularly hard trial that you had to endure during Care Group Connect? What did perseverance look like for you?
- What lessons do you think God is trying to teach you through those specific trials? In what ways is He growing you?
- How can you apply the lessons learned from your past trials to future challenges? In what specific ways can you prepare yourself to embrace perseverance as you face new obstacles?



Day 3

Reflecting on calling

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:12-14

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Introduction

While the Christian faith is a personal faith, it is by no means a private faith. In other words, the Christian walk was never meant to be walked alone. In fact, something that often gets lost in translation when the Bible was translated into English is that many verses that contain the word “you” are actually in the plural form, better translated as “you all”. There are over 4,720 verses where the plural “you” is simply translated as a singular “you” in English. All that is to say, how we live in community is important to God.

Whenever we talk about calling, we tend to think very individualistically. We think about our passions, pursuits, and purposes. But something we learn from the passage in Colossians 3 is that a crucial aspect of our purpose is to live deeply with our community: to bear with one another and to forgive grievances, to put on the virtue of love, and to live in unity. On this final day of reflection, take some time to think about how you can live deeply with the people you have gotten to know in the past 10 weeks.

Reflect

- What unique qualities do you bring into the community?
- A key aspect of a truly “shared” community is that we all take ownership of it. It’s not just a group we belong to; it’s something we actively participate in. How do you see yourself embracing this sense of ownership within the community?

Final Exercise

- Take a few minutes to pray for the entire community. Pray for God’s guidance and direction to help everyone embrace their call of being in community with one another.



Notes

Closing word

Thank you for walking with your group through Continuum. We firmly believe that consistency in the nine practices will lead to fulfilment in Christ, and ultimately, a stronger bond within your group for much deeper, nourishing relationships.

But it isn't just a solo effort, it's a group effort. It isn't just your leader's responsibility, it's yours too.

We urge you to incorporate continual life sharing in your meetings, establish a daily devotion programme for which you can hold each other accountable, pray deeply together, rest joyfully as a community, confess genuinely the struggles of your hearts, serve faithfully the needs of the city, give generously for the sake of worship, and celebrate frequently the things God is doing, and reflect continually on how you are growing.

By embracing these practices, you will cultivate a vibrant and supportive community that reflects God's love and grace. As you share life together, you'll strengthen your bonds and encourage one another in faith. Let these experiences of the past ten weeks inspire you to grow closer to each other and to God, fostering a deeper sense of purpose and joy in your journey together.

Leader Guide for Group Meetings

Thank you, leaders, for doing what you do. Never doubt the importance of your leadership and the impact it makes.

This leader guide is just for you and is intentionally placed at the back. Why? Because having a dedicated space to run your meeting without everybody knowing your next move is helpful.

The group meeting questions are suggestions only; please feel free to create your own. Please continue to do pre-meal, worship, closing prayer and dessert.

Group Meeting

Week One: Introduction

Warm-up (20 minutes)

- Share your name and why you joined Care Group Connect.
- What is the bravest thing you've ever done?

Create a communication group (5 minutes)

- Get everyone into a WhatsApp group, make sure to do it before everyone leaves.
- Review the policy on WhatsApp (no spamming, politics, personal marketing, debates etc.)

Closing (5 minutes)

Lead a general prayer thanking God for the community.

Group Meeting

Week Two: Rhythm of Sharing

Warm-up (10 minutes)

- If you could choose to be a character in any story – whether from a movie or book – who would you select and why?

Group covenant (10 minutes)

- Read out and explain the group covenant (front of booklet) – applicable to both leaders and members. Sign together as one unified Care Group. Make sure to highlight the aspects of confidentiality and commitment.

Life story sharing (70 minutes)

Your main activity for the group meeting is to have everyone share. Please instruct everyone in the group to be attentive. You may even invite everyone to shut off their phones so they can give undivided attention. Have each person in your group respond to the following question in five minutes.

- What are two significant events or people in your life that have shaped you into who you are today?

As leaders, it is imperative that you share first. The nature and tone with which you share will be mimicked by the rest of the group. Push yourself to be as vulnerable as you can as a leader. Also demonstrate active listening as other members share, you'll want to give each person some encouragement after they share.

Closing (5 minutes)

Lead a general prayer thanking God for how He writes our stories.

Group Meeting

Week Three: Rhythm of Devotion

Warm-up (10 minutes)

- What is something you once hated, which you now enjoy regularly? What happened?
- Have one member share a five-minute testimony of their faith journey.

Main study (40 minutes)

Scripture reading: Psalm 1

¹ *Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers*

² *but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.*

³ *That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers.*

⁴ *Not so with the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.*

⁵ *Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*

⁶ *For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.*

- In what ways do you see the contrast between the righteous and the wicked in your own life or community?
- Do you find joy in the law of the LORD? If so, what cultivates that delight? If not, what barriers are hindering your connection with His Word?
- What are some practical ways to meditate on God's Word day and night in your busy lives?

Share your action plan (30 minutes)

- Members to share their experience of daily devotion, and what they plan on doing during the rest of the season of Connect (i.e., dedicate 5 minutes each morning at 9AM to be with God).
- Optional:
 - Write down each member's action plan.
 - Create accountability groups (2-3 per group) for two weeks – a catalyst for habit.

Closing (5 minutes)

Close with a prayer to strengthen the resolve to commit to the daily office.

Planning Ahead

- Start planning the social on Week 5. Consider who you can involve in the planning of this event. This is a good opportunity to see who naturally rises to the occasion. For other things to keep in mind as you plan ahead, consult the guide in the Appendix.
- Present a preview of potential service opportunities between Week 6 and 7. Tell the group you'll vote on which project to serve in the following week.

Group Meeting

Week Four: Rhythm of Prayer

Warm-up (15 minutes)

- Have one member share a five-minute testimony of their faith journey.
- When everyone arrives, give them instructions for the prayer experience and say a quick prayer to prepare everyone's hearts.

Extended prayer time (60 minutes)

Your group will participate in an unstructured time of prayer. There will be different prayer stations set up around the worship hall, and they can freely roam as they desire.

Each station will prompt your members to engage God in different ways. Some stations will prompt them through music, while others will prompt them through art or some experiential activity. Do not put a time limit on how long they can be at each station; simply give them a gathering time to meet back up as a group.

Debrief and closing (20 minutes)

- What did God say to you today?
- Invite a few members of your group to conclude your time with prayers of adoration. Encourage them to focus on a specific attribute of God as they offer their praises.

Planning Ahead

- Confirm your social activity for Week 5.
- You will have the group select the service opportunity between Weeks 6 and 7. Aim to get at least 70% of the group to the service opportunity.

Group Meeting

Week Five: Rhythm of Rest

This upcoming week, instead of the usual Care Group experience, you'll be hosting a social event. This is a fantastic opportunity to empower other group members to take the lead in planning. Aim for an activity that encourages face-to-face interaction, fostering connection among everyone. As a leader, use this time to engage with members in a more relaxed setting, making an effort to connect with those you may not know as well. Embrace the chance to deepen relationships and strengthen your community!

Here is a list of ideas:

- **Dinner**
- **Party Room**
- **Karaoke**
- **Bowling**
- **Board Game**
- **Junk boat**
- **Drinks**
- **Arts and Crafts**

Before the evening concludes, encourage your members to complete all the homework for next week's "Rhythm of Breakthrough". Doing so will significantly enrich their experience and preparation.

Planning Ahead

- Liaise with the service organisation to set up the serving opportunity.
- Begin observing and looking for potential leaders. A key rubric to consider is F.A.T. Are they faithful (committed relationship to God)? Are they available (they have time to show up to Care Group; this is most evident in their attendance rate)? Are they teachable (they are receptive to change)?

Group Meeting

Week Six: Rhythm of Breakthrough

This page will be referenced by leaders and members. All are to have completed Rhythm of Breakthrough Day 3 – “There is a Responsibility” prior to this meeting.

This group meeting will initially begin as a large group. Midway, it will separate into male and female only groups of 3-4 members for greater privacy.

Warm-up (5 minutes)

- Have one member share a five-minute testimony of their faith journey.

Destroying strongholds (75 minutes total)

Divide into male and female only groups. After settling into your groups, you can begin.

Note: There is a list of questions/prompts you can use to guide the group discussion.

Please refer to Page 86 of the Appendix – Week Six: Rhythm of Breakthrough, Part 2.

With your list of sins in hand, and the power of Christ established, you’ll need courage to openly share. Everyone must come to an agreement that this is a safe and confidential space. Do not begin until everyone agrees.

1 John 1:9 says “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Each person will complete this process:

1. Share and confess (10 minutes each)

Taking turns, share your list of sins/strongholds and their impacts. If you’re tempted to share half-way, trust in God, and share the whole way. Don’t allow the fear of rejection and shame to steal from you any longer. Bring to light all darkness. You can do it!

2. Respond and encourage (5 minutes)

After the person has shared, allow some space for the rest of the members to respond and encourage. Please remind members that this is not a time for advice, but rather a time to encourage with affirmation or scriptural truth.

After each person has shared, as a group you will respond in prayer.

1. Group declaration (5 min)

Read aloud this prayer together as a group.

Dear Heavenly Father, We come to you humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ. We recognise the power You have given us by the blood of Jesus Christ to demolish all spiritual strongholds in my life.

*We confess that we have given a foothold to sin. We **repent** and **renounce** these strongholds in the name of Jesus Christ.*

We declare that we are no longer bound by these strongholds, and cancel all claims, untruths and lies from the devil that we have believed in. We claim the truth that we are the righteousness of God by the authority of the name of Jesus Christ.

*Through your power, we **reclaim** all the ground we had surrendered to the enemy. Please restore our trust in Your Holy Spirit, and renew our obedience and life to Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.*

2. Intercessory prayer (5 min)

Have each person pray a quick 1- or 2-sentence prayer for the person on their right based on what was shared.

Debrief (15 minutes)

Come back together as a large group. Open the space to allow people to share about their experience.

Assign prayer partners (5 min)

Split the group into pairs and encourage them to pray for their partner throughout the week. Challenge them to check in via text message in the middle of the week. Aim to pair them by gender, but if there’s an imbalance, groups of three are also acceptable.

Planning Ahead

- Continue to observe and look out to potential leaders.
- During the upcoming week, please remind members to complete their spiritual gifts inventory and bring it to Connect.

Group Meeting

Week Seven: Rhythm of Service

Warm-up (15 minutes)

- Have one or two members share a five-minute testimony of their faith journey.

Main study (15 minutes)

Scripture reading: Romans 12:6-8

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

- What is crucial about recognising each other's gifts?
- How does this fit into the bigger picture of the Kingdom? (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

Share your spiritual gifts (30-45 minutes)

- From the Spiritual Gifts Inventory (or similar), have each member share their top three gifts and any surprises/insights from the assessment.
- Leaders, note these down.

Using your God-given gifts (30 minutes)

We encourage you to be extremely intentional to create opportunities for your members to serve. This will mean on-the-spot planning and garnering commitment. Be tenacious in discussing the three areas and to lock service opportunities down.

Area 1: Personal service

- Open question: How much of your service aligns with your gifting? What changes are needed?
- Action: Push for that member to explore new service opportunities.

Area 2: Group service – serving your church/group with your gifts

- It is healthy to serve one another. Organise group responsibilities according to each person's profile. This will generate greater involvement and ownership of your group.
- Responsibilities include "Social coordinator", "Logistics coordinator", "Church contact".
- Action: Assign group service roles effective from an agreed date onwards.

Area 3: Kingdom service – serving beyond the immediate community

- Start exploring opportunities to serve beyond the group. Here are a few ideas to consider:
 - Island ECC
 - Hope of the City
 - Inner City Ministries
 - Youth with a Mission
- Action: Commit to a service date; the goal is 70% participation from the group.

Closing and prayer (5 minutes)

Each week, strive to engage more individuals in corporate prayer. You can conclude with a prayer time where everyone takes turn praying. If you are short on time, select 3-4 individuals to pray.

Planning Ahead:

- Prepare for your service day, make sure you plan a time to debrief the serving experience. Sometimes you can do it onsite, other times you'll have to find a restaurant or a quiet setting to go to in order to debrief.
- By now you should reach out to potential leaders about stepping up. This is best done in an in-person one-on-one conversation.

Group Meeting

Week Eight: Rhythm of Generosity

Warm-up (15 minutes)

- Have one or two members share a five-minute testimony of their faith journey. If there are many members in the group who have yet to give a testimony, this would be the week to do so.

Share your giving story (30 minutes)

- Have members share a story of when they've given. What happened? Who benefitted? How did they feel?

Main study (30 minutes)

Scripture reading: Deuteronomy 26:1-2

When you have entered the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the LORD your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for His Name.

**Note: The concept of firstfruits originated from this and other passages. Israelites were to take their first harvest and give it to God. It doesn't matter whether subsequent harvests were plentiful or not, they were to give their very first harvest to God.*

- Why does God emphasise the concept of first fruits? What does this say about His character and His relationship to us?
- How does the concept of first fruits change the way you think about giving?

Scripture reading: Luke 12:42-44

The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions".

- How does seeing ourselves as stewards instead of owners change our view on resources like time and money? What impact does this have on our decisions and priorities?

- In what ways have you struggled to steward the resources/talents in your life? Why?

Make a pledge to give (15 minutes)

Leaders, we encourage you to be intentional to create an opportunity for financial giving. We're not talking about time, talent, emotion, or effort. Why? Oftentimes, financial giving will stretch us in ways where time and talent do not. It requires a "tangible" sacrifice. God will convict us where it hurts our wallets. We exercise generosity to break idolatry.

Leaders, take charge of this discussion. The giving pledge will be broken into two parts; with Part 1 discussed in this group meeting and Part 2 in the next meeting. This has been split to make it less threatening – to allow people to process and to appreciate this as an opportunity, and not an order.

Generosity Part 1: What is a cause you want to invest in?

- Ask: What are you passionate about?
- Gather agreement on social causes/ministry types your group will donate to. One of these can be the ministry you served at in the previous week.
- Tell your group you will present 2-3 organisations and collect a love offering at the next meeting.

Debrief and closing (5 minutes)

Inform the members that you will be collecting a love offering to celebrate together at the next meeting. Encourage everyone to bring a snack for the celebration party! Conclude with a prayer.

Planning Ahead

- Prepare a method of taking a collection. The most common method has been for a leader to take online payment (PayMe, FPS) and then to make a lump-sum contribution to the organisation.
- Remind people about the graduation ceremony and take a poll for attendance.
- Get potential leaders to confirm their intention to lead, and then have them fill out the leader's application.

Group Meeting

Week Nine: Rhythm of Affirmation

In this meeting, you're going to do two things. Collect the love offering for the chosen organisation, and celebrate your group with worship, sharing, intentional celebration, and food – have a party! **Remember to remind them throughout the week to bring their snacks!**

Generosity Part 2: Leader to present a list of organisations, and collect love offering (10 minutes)

- Present the list of 2-3 organisations you want your group to consider supporting.
- Decide on the organisations and place a collection box/envelope to the side.
- Members can place their offering anytime during the meeting.
- Leader to pass on the offering to the organisation.

The “hotseat of affirmation” (90 minutes)

This celebration will involve affirming one another as individuals from God. You'll be using the hotseat method where one person “sits in the middle” and everyone shares a celebration of that person. Be sure to affirm that this is a safe place and there is no fear of humiliation, rejection, or embarrassment. This activity might go longer than the allotted time, let it. This is a powerful activity when given the requisite time. Also, start snacking!

What will this look like?

- Explain that everyone will experience the “hotseat of affirmation”.
- Select one person to kickstart the hotseat. All they are to do is to sit and receive love.
- Remind the person in the hotseat not to reject or deflect the affirmations, but to receive them.
- All those not in the hotseat will share their word or phrase of affirmation that they prepared throughout the week. For example, “When I think of you, the word ‘courageous’ comes to mind because...”.
- Once everyone has shared, a leader will pray a blessing over that person.
- Rotate until everyone has been celebrated.
- Be sure to enjoy snacks during the process!

Closing (10 minutes)

Invite both existing and newly appointed leaders to offer prayers of thanksgiving for the community.

Planning Ahead

- Get final confirmation of who will attend the CG Connect Graduation. Inform the Care Group team.
- Schedule a time during the week to have your new leaders meet, and plan for the upcoming town hall in Week 10.

Group Meeting

Week Ten: Rhythm of Reflection

CONGRATULATIONS! You've successfully guided your group through the Continuum Curriculum.

Our prayer has always been for groups to evolve into permanent Care Groups. Below, you'll find key steps to ensure a successful launch. Some groups may decide to take a different path. If this applies to your group, we still encourage spending time together to go through the questions in Step 1 and Closing.

Step 1: Reflecting on the heart (40 minutes)

Call for a round table discussion. Encourage members to share insights about their experiences. The goal is also for everyone to be heard, seen and have life-giving takeaways at the end of the gathering. Pray over what was shared, as led by the Spirit.

Consider asking thought-provoking questions such as:

- What past experiences in faith communities were challenging for you?
- What aspects of faith communities have you valued most?

For groups continuing their journey together, this important Step 1 is also an opportunity to reaffirm your commitment to one another and to outline plans for the upcoming months.

Step 2: Projecting the future (20 minutes) ~ Ideally new leaders will facilitate from this point onwards.

Before beginning this section, you will want to introduce the newly appointed leaders to the group. Share the reasons for their appointment and your trust in their ability to lead the group into the future. Then let the new leaders talk about the vision for the community. Use these prompts to get the wheels turning:

- Revisit the covenant made on Week 1.
 - Ask: What do you want the group to be about moving forward?
 - Tweak it as the group sees fit.
- List and agree on the Group Goals.
- Personal Goals – How will you be committed to the community?

Step 3: Rededicating the covenant (5 minutes)

Hurray on drafting the new group covenant and goals. Take a few minutes to read them aloud together.

Note: Set a reminder to revisit the group covenant in a year's time.

Step 4: Creating a plan (25 minutes)

Setting clear expectations will lead to the community's healthy growth.

1. Meeting date, time and venue

- a. **Date:** Which day and how often will the group meet?
- b. **Time:** Keep the same time or a new time?
- c. **Venue:** Meet at church or at someone's home.

When establishing a meeting place:

While the church is an option, meeting in a member's home can foster a more inviting atmosphere for sharing and Bible study. While not every group may have this option, finding ways to meet in home can often be a catalyst for connection.

2. Group communication

If the current communication channel works, continue to use it. Remind members of the honouring ways of using the channel (dos and don'ts).

3. Name the group

Group members may want more time to consider and agree on a name for the group. That's OK too.

Step 5: Brainstorming the study/topic (15 minutes)

Would your group like to do a study or discuss a topic? A good place to begin is by reflecting on the various “group rhythms” experienced over the past 10 weeks. Start by selecting a six to eight-week Bible study (you can find helpful resources at caregroupleaders.com).

Once your schedule is set, invite members to take turns facilitating each week. We recommend rotation to prevent burnout and ensure everyone has the opportunity to contribute their unique insights and leadership styles. This is one of the great ways to raise and train future leaders.

Closing (15 minutes)

To close, invite anyone who wishes to pray for the Care Group. Then the newly appointed leaders will wrap up the gathering with a prayer for the future of the community.

Notes

Appendix

Sample ice-breaker questions

Simple

- What is your “elevator pitch” of yourself?
- What did you want to be growing up?
- What is your biggest pet peeve?
- What was your best/worst surprise?
- Share the story behind the earliest photo in your camera roll.

A little deeper

- Who do you admire and why?
- Who has been a spiritual hero in your life?
- What is something important a mentor/older person taught you?
- What is a billboard message you would want the world to see?
- Describe yourself as you believe people see you as.

Very deep

- What is a hard-learned lesson from your life?
- What have you been praying for the longest?
- What is an answered prayer?
- Finish this sentence. “In order for a small group to feel safe, I need...”.
- Describe a time you showed deep Christlike love/compassion to someone else.

Additional group leading resources

Email us at caregroup@islandecc.hk for a copy of “A Handy Guide to Leading and Running a Care Group”.

Notes

Week Six: Rhythm of Breakthrough

Exercise: Destroying Strongholds – Part 2

Here are some questions/prompts leaders can use to guide care group members to reveal areas of their life where sin has a foothold.

1. Do you have any addiction (e.g., drugs, alcohol, smoking, eating, sex etc.)?
2. What unhealthy habits or thought patterns have a stronghold on you?
3. What is a constant battleground in your life (e.g., specific fears, anger, depression, anxiety or guilt)?
4. Are there specific lies you believe about yourself or God that impact your life or relationship with others?
5. Have you been deeply wronged by anyone and not fully forgiven them in your heart (thoughts, feelings, emotions)?
6. Do you struggle with chronic self-pity, low self-esteem or obsess over past mistakes?
7. What specific traumatic experiences have negatively impacted your life and continue to cause distress?
8. Do you feel excessive guilt or unworthiness that prevents you from feeling loved by God or others?

Sexual

1. Is there anything sexually that you are ashamed of?
2. Do you struggle with any sexual related thoughts, desires or bondages?
3. Do you struggle with masturbation?
4. Have you been watching pornography?

Planning Ahead

Use this page to note key dates, reminders and plans for a successful Care Group Connect journey.

Week One

Week Two

Week Three

- Start planning Week 5 social. Where? When? Who can help?
- Present service opportunities

Week Four

- Confirm social details
- Take a poll: Where you're serving? When?

Week Five

- Liaise with serving organisation
- Look out for potential leaders within group

Week Six

- Any potential leaders?

Week Seven

- Remind group to do Spiritual Gift Inventory
- Prep/debrief serving experience
- Reach out to potential leaders

Week Eight

- Prep envelope for collection
- Reminder: graduation and take attendance poll
- Fill out leader's application form

Week Nine

- Confirm CG Connect Graduation attendees
- New leaders meet to plan future of the group

Week Ten

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Galatians 6:9-10

con • tin • u • um

something that keeps on going, leading to change over time

