

**LIVE BOLDLY.
LOVE DEEPLY.**



MERCY ROAD CHURCH
NORTHEAST

HUDDLE GUIDE

MERCYROADNE.COM/HUDDLES

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TOPIC ONE

1 ABOUT HUDDLE

INSTRUCTIONS

About Huddle normally takes one to two sessions. In the first session, your Huddle leader will provide an overview and encourage the group to ask questions or raise any concerns. During the first session, it is important to take time to start getting to know each other. It is important to create space to get to know each other and start sharing information. As you share information, the group will start making connections and building trust. Here are a few questions to get you started. You can choose one and have each person answer it or better yet, ask each person to choose a number between 1 and 10 for the question they get to answer.

1. *What does your average weekend look like?*
2. *Who knows you best?*
3. *What is one thing that instantly makes your day better?*
4. *What is the strangest food combination you enjoy?*
5. *Where did you grow up?*
6. *Where do you live?*
7. *Describe yourself in three words.*
8. *What is your favorite summer/winter activity?*
9. *Where's your happy place?*
10. *On bad days, do you prefer others to cheer you up by staying with you or leave you alone?*

If you don't like any of these, there are lots of options online. Just google it.

As you prepare for your second Huddle, have each group member read Topic 1: About Huddle (Huddle 1.1 - 1.3) and answer the questions (Huddle 1.4) before the next meeting. As you read, highlight what stands out and circle anything that raises a question.

When you meet with your Huddle discuss what you read, your reflections about Diving Deeper, and walk through the questions in Together (Huddle 1.5).

In preparation of your next Huddle, your Huddle leader will introduce the UP * IN * OUT triangle and ask the group to read Topic 2: UP IN OUT before the next Huddle.



SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES





INTRODUCTION

Huddles are all about following Jesus and inviting others to join you in coming to know Jesus in even deeper ways.

Following Jesus is more than hearing a message and singing worship songs. Following Jesus is about how we live out our faith and journey with others through intentional relationships.

Jesus invited ordinary men and women to follow Him while walking alongside one another. He gathered His followers, asking them to come close, listen to His teaching, watch how He interacted with others, and follow His example. Jesus' life and ministry radically transformed their understanding of religion, from rules and regulations to loving God and loving others. It's our job to accept Jesus' invitation to join Him in bringing hope and healing to the broken places of our world. Our faith journey was never intended to be done solo. We are called to walk alongside each other, encouraging growth and transformation to be more and more like Jesus.

Huddles are designed for transformation and replication through:

- ④ **learning and practicing the ways of Jesus,**
- ④ **sharing what is being learned with others, and**
- ④ **after completing Huddle, starting a Huddle and inviting others to join you.**

Imagine if you were intentional about deepening your relationship with God by learning to discern and respond to God's voice in every aspect of your life. Your faith would grow.

Once you've finished this Huddle, imagine how many people could be impacted when you invite 4 to 6 people to be part of your Huddle. It is amazing to think about how many people's lives could be impacted if each Huddle member started a Huddle and invited others into this kind of intentional spiritual relationship.

When we invest in others and commit to following Jesus together, there is no doubt we will experience life change. Through living the ways of Jesus, we will see the Kingdom of God breaking into our world.



Authentic worship means being present to the living God who penetrates the whole of human life. The proclamation of God's word and our response to God's Spirit touches everything that is involved in being human: mind and body, thinking and feeling, work and family, friends and government, buildings, and flowers."

Eugene H. Peterson

The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways That Jesus Is the Way

**LET'S GET
STARTED NOW.**



**LIVE BOLDLY.
LOVE DEEPLY.**



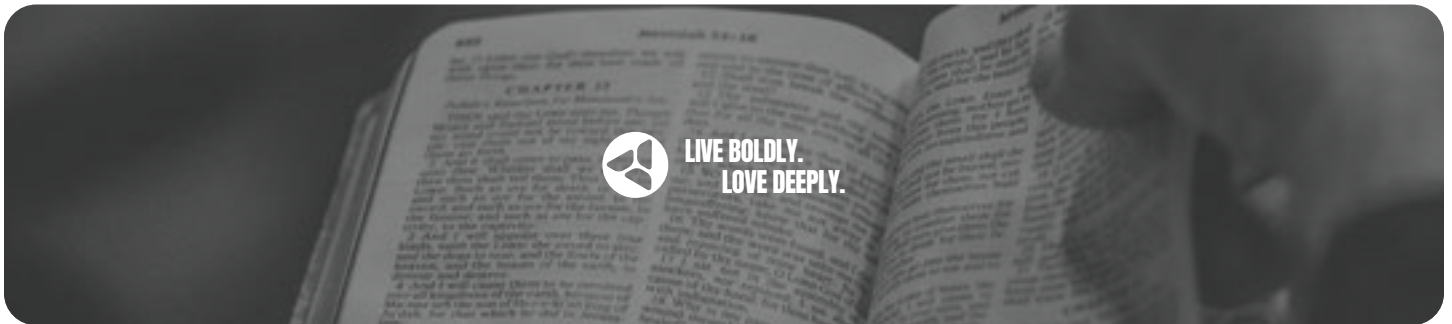
1.2 EXPECTATIONS

Huddles are a one-year discipleship group that promotes spiritual growth through encouragement and accountability. Huddles are a catalyst for growing in character (who we are) and competencies (how we live) that mirror Jesus.

Huddles create a rich environment for personal and spiritual growth through:

- 🕒 **the reading and application of scripture**
- 🕒 **the practice of various spiritual disciplines that strengthen your faith**
- 🕒 **allowing others to journey with you through the highs and lows of life**
- 🕒 **learning how to listen and respond to the Holy Spirit in your life**
- 🕒 **sharing your learning and faith with others**

To get the most out of a Huddle, be open to the places God wants to take you. Make sure to read and take time to process between meetings and commit to applying what you are discovering.



1.3 HOW HUDDLE WORKS

WHY HUDDLE?

Pursuing a life that emulates Jesus and inviting others to follow His example is what Huddles are all about. Huddles create the space for developing deep relationships that will help you grow in character and become more like Jesus. These deep relationships create a discipleship culture that introduces people to Jesus and helps them grow and mature.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he said:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

MATTHEW 28:18-20

THE GOAL is to make disciples who make disciples that become more and more like Jesus. Becoming like Jesus in character means considering how we treat others and honoring God with what we say and do. ***A life marked by Jesus' character will reap the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*** (GALATIANS 5:22-23).



GROWING TOGETHER

Huddles meet weekly or bi-weekly for one year to learn and grow together. Huddles build deep relationships by being honest and vulnerable about life and faith.

A Huddle Leader invites 4 to 6 people to participate in a one-year discipleship group that promotes spiritual growth through encouragement and accountability. This guide includes questions for personal processing and group discussion. A key is being open to the Holy Spirit's transformational power throughout the Huddle experience.

As you get to know each other and build trust, you will create a safe space to be vulnerable and share areas of challenge and growth. It is imperative to commit to confidentiality, honesty, and full participation by prioritizing attendance and not sharing other people's stories or struggles with others. Because of the depth and vulnerability of a Huddle, do not add members once the group begins.

After participating in a Huddle, we hope group members will feel ready to launch their own Huddle. This model allows for continued growth and more people being discipled as Huddles multiply.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

The word "disciple" is rooted in the Greek word *mathētēs*. *Mathētēs* refers to someone who not only learns but also applies what they are learning to their lives. Discipleship was part of the Jewish religious culture of Jesus' day. Jewish religious teachers, referred to as Rabbis, invited students to follow them so they could listen and learn from the Rabbi's teachings and emulate their ways. Jesus modeled this discipleship relationship by inviting men and women to follow Him and then commissioning them to invite others to join them in following Him. In **1 CORINTHIANS 11:1**, we see this example as Paul, a follower of Jesus, said, *"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."* (NIV)

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



Mathētēs refers to someone who not only learns but also applies what they are learning to their lives.

LISTENING AND RESPONDING TO GOD

A big part of Huddle is learning to listen to God and respond to what you hear. We encourage you to ask yourself and your Huddle group members two questions often:

- ❶ **What is God saying to you?**
- ❷ **What are you going to do about it?**



SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



Throughout the Huddle, you will practice various spiritual disciplines and grow in your understanding of discipleship concepts through the use of life shapes. These life shapes were created by Mike Breen and are described in more detail in his book, “Building a Discipling Culture.” Breen’s memorable life shapes help anchor the discipleship concepts so you can understand them and easily communicate these concepts to other people.

Working through this guide and utilizing the life shapes will enhance your understanding of discipleship, increase your ability to remember the concepts and encourage you to practice the ways of Jesus.

HUDDLE LEADERS USE THE APPRENTICE MODEL

Huddle leaders come alongside the group to increase understanding and encourage growth by using the apprentice model of development. For each topic, Huddle leaders begin by teaching the life shape and spiritual practices with the goal of the Huddle members growing in their understanding enough to present the concepts to the group.

Being part of a Huddle and using the apprentice model provides intentional training, support, and accountability.

The phases of the apprentice model are described below:

DESCRIPTION OF PHASES	HUDDLE LEADER	HUDDLE MEMBERS
PHASE 1 TEACHING	<i>I Do</i> Teaches Content and Concepts	<i>You Watch</i> Listens and Learns
PHASE 2 MODELING	<i>I Do</i> Ensures Understanding and Shares Personal Application	<i>You Help</i> Discusses and Applies Learning to their Life
PHASE 3 COACHING	<i>I Help</i> Listens and Coaches as the Huddle Members Teach Content	<i>You Do</i> Practices Teaching the Content and Concepts to the Group
PHASE 4 ENCOURAGING	<i>I Watch</i> Encourages, Cheers and Check-In Periodically	<i>You Do</i> Builds Confidence and Is Able to Share with Others

The Huddle leader begins by **TEACHING** and **MODELING** the discipleship concepts. Then as the group feels comfortable, the leader shifts to **COACHING** and **ENCOURAGING** Huddle members to share what they are learning with others.

Remember, the goal for each Huddle member is to learn and grow so they can start their Huddles.

In each phase, it is crucial to process and provide feedback. Inviting Huddle members to take turns teaching the core content to the group and their friends and families is essential. Encouraging Huddle members to facilitate meetings as a review will grow their capacity and confidence in leading a future Huddle.

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



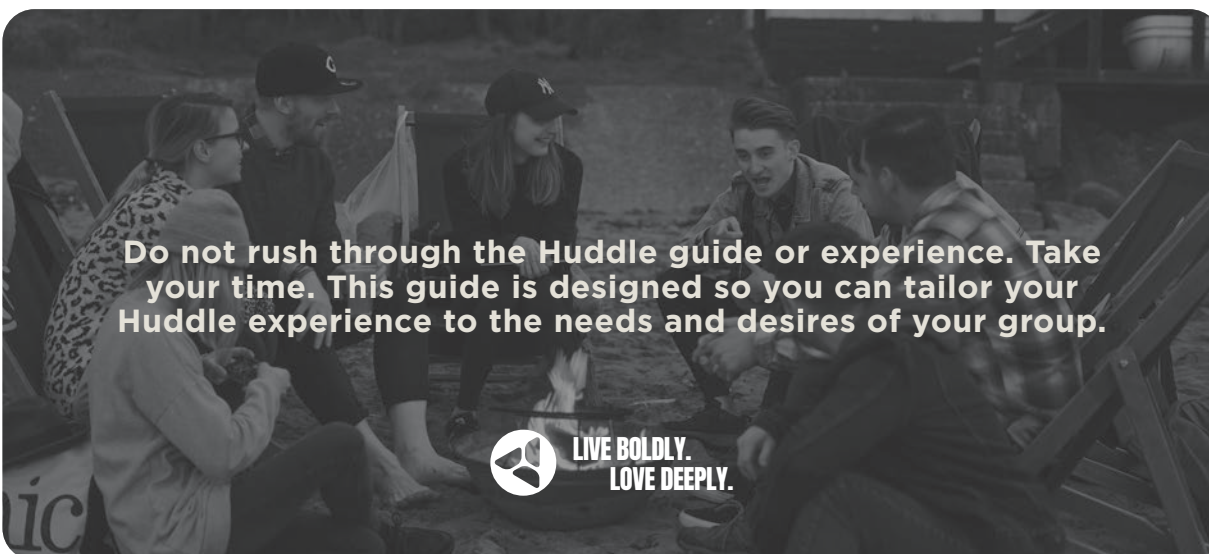
USING THE HUDDLE GUIDE

Huddles help groups process together while learning to practice the ways of Jesus. Huddle leaders don't just invite others into a huddle; they invite them into their lives to journey together.

Each topic of the Huddle guide varies by length. How long you remain in each topic will be determined by how frequently you meet and how much your group chooses to cover in each meeting. Please spend as much time as you feel necessary for each topic. There is no need to rush.

Each of the topics follow the same flow.

- ➊ **Introduction: An Overview of the Topic**
- ➋ **Diving Deeper: Personal Processing Prompts**
- ➌ **Together: Questions to Discuss in Your Huddle**
- ➍ **Next Steps: Identify and Commit to Take Your Next Steps**



Before meeting with your Huddle, take time to consider your relationship with Jesus. Prayerfully respond to the following questions.

Jesus invites us to come close and know Him. He doesn't shy away from our doubts and questions. Jesus steps toward us and invites us to lean in close. Not only can we come to know Jesus through reading the Bible, but we can also experience His presence in our lives through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Let's look at John's account after Jesus' death and resurrection.

🕒 **READ JOHN CHAPTER 20. Underline words or phrases that stand out to you.**

🕒 The Sabbath is over, yesterday's terrible events have passed, and Mary is up early, heading to the tomb.

READ JOHN 20:1-18. What do you imagine Mary, Peter, and the disciples are thinking and feeling? How do you think you would have responded?

Seeing Jesus

Mary was the first to find the empty tomb and see the risen Jesus. No one in the first century would have given either of these honors to a woman. Things simply did not work that way.

These women were likely headed to the tomb to finish anointing the body of Jesus. Mary remains at the tomb. She is weeping and brave beyond measure. Everyone knew the last thing they should do would be to get caught at Jesus' tomb. After all, He had been put to death by Rome at the demands of the Jewish authorities. *(See John 20:1-18)*

🕒 Thomas is sometimes referred to as doubting Thomas because he says he will not believe in the resurrection of Jesus without seeing and touching the wounds in Jesus' hands and side. This skepticism might not be surprising because of two other mentions of Thomas by John (John 11:12-16 and John 14:1-5). **READ JOHN 20:24-29. How is Jesus' response to Thomas remarkable? What does this passage of Scripture reveal about Jesus' heart?**

🕒 **What questions do you have for Jesus?**

🕒 **What do you hope for as you start this Huddle?**



Your Huddle leader will guide your group in a discussion regarding what you have been discovering and any questions you may have using these questions.

- 🕒 **What stood out to you in this topic that you'd like to discuss?**

- 🕒 **Who has had a significant impact on your faith? How did they influence you to grow?**

- 🕒 **What has been your experience with discipleship?**

- 🕒 **What are you most excited about when considering the expectations of participating in a Huddle?**

- 🕒 **What are your concerns?**

- 🕒 **End your time together writing a prayer of the hopes and dreams they have for this Huddle experience. Take some time to think about what you most hope will happen through Huddle? What do you long to be true of your relationship with God? Begin by addressing your hopes and dreams to God.**

**DEAR GOD,
I HOPE...**

For those who are comfortable sharing, have them read what they wrote as prayer. The group does not need to respond, just listen as the person reads agreeing with their prayer. After any sharing, each group member will write their name on an envelope and place their prayer inside and seal it. The Huddle Leader will keep these until the final week of Huddle.

NEXT STEPS

Before moving to the next topic, pause. Review your notes, reflect on your Huddle discussions, and jot down what you have discovered.

- 🕒 **Record your Huddle meetings on your calendar and commit to attending each one with the exception of extenuating circumstances outside of your control.**

- 🕒 **Set time aside each week to work through the reading and questions on your Huddle guide. Make an appointment with yourself.**

TOPIC TWO

2

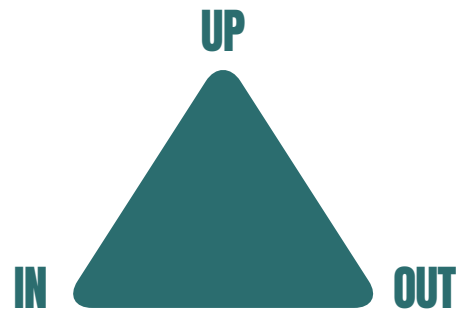
UP IN OUT



INSTRUCTIONS

UP IN OUT normally takes one session. Talk through the reading, Diving Deeper, and the Together questions.

As you prepare for the next topic, your Huddle Leader will introduce Topic 3: Sharing Our Stories and plan to share their story with the group at the next Huddle. This allows the group to see what it looks like to share their story. It is best to use either the Timeline or LifeMap to gather your thoughts as you prepare to share. You might also choose to write your story in narrative form. Remember, you do not have to share every detail; the goal is to sort through and identify significant parts of your story that have shaped who you are.



2.1

INTRODUCTION

Before meeting with your Huddle, read Topic 2: UP IN OUT. Highlight those things that stand out to you and circle anything that raises a question.

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



A life of following Jesus is three-dimensional.

Over the next year, you will have the opportunity to experiment with and practice following Jesus alongside your Huddle. We believe we are to live like Jesus, and therefore, we need to follow the example of Jesus. Jesus exemplified a life marked by UP, IN, and OUT. The first life shape we will explore together is the triangle.

In this topic, we will learn what UP, IN and OUT is, why it's important and practice getting to use it.

UP - ENJOYING GOD/FOCUSED ON GOD

Jesus often withdrew from the crowds to worship the Father. In these intimate times with the Father, Jesus found His identity, grew closer to God, and was empowered to live out His mission. He paused to meet with the Father in worship and prayer. In these times, Jesus found strength and guidance to live out His mission.

**A life of following Jesus
is three-dimensional.**

IN - WITH OTHERS

We believe that God created us to live authentically with others so we can grow and mature. Discipleship happens in these smaller, intentional communities like Huddles. Jesus had many relationships in life, but a few became His companions and community. In this smaller group, Jesus openly shared His life. We, too, can follow Jesus' example of living in community and deep relationships with others.

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



OUT - ON MISSION

As followers of Jesus, we are called to live boldly and love deeply. We believe loving others shows who God is through our actions and words. Jesus shows us what this looks like through His words and actions in the first four books of the New Testament. We will be looking to Jesus as our example throughout the Huddle.

2.2 UP IN OUT



UP TO THE FATHER.

Your Huddle journey includes practices and tools to help you listen to God's voice in your life.

These tools will help you engage two main questions:

- 🕒 **What is God saying to me?**
- 🕒 **What am I going to do about it?**

Throughout the Huddle, we will practice reading scripture and learn to notice and respond to God's nudges in our everyday lives.



IN WITH OTHERS.

UP is incomplete without developing deep relationships with other followers of Jesus and being part of a spiritual community. We do this by creating safe spaces for sharing our stories with one another. As we build trust and deeper relationships, we can encourage and challenge each other to greater intimacy with God. We see God's creativity and intention as we come to know ourselves and others more.



OUT ON MISSION.

God's intention is for us to carry the message of Jesus to others through our words and actions. We are called to live boldly and love deeply. Through various tools and experiences, you will discover more about how God has uniquely created you. Together, we will experiment with various tools for sharing our faith with the people in our lives and multiplying the kingdom in the places where we live, work, and play.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



Focusing on UP with Father in alongside others IN close relationship forms and propels us to go OUT and serve others.

If we get this backwards and ignore our UP relationship with God, we will depend on our own power and miss out on opportunities to join God in the places He is already at work. For example, if we are always going OUT to serve others without first being UP with God alone, we will be ineffective and even burn out.

2.3 DIVING DEEPER

Take some time on your own to consider your relationship with Jesus. Prayerfully respond to the following questions.

Mercy Road Northeast believes the blood of Jesus Christ, shed on the cross, provides the only way to salvation through the forgiveness of sin. Salvation occurs when people place their faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus as sufficient payment for their sin and redeeming creation. Salvation is a gift from God and cannot be earned through our efforts. Through Christ, the believer becomes a new creation whose mind and will are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit from loving sin to loving the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind, and loving all people as we love ourselves. (Mercy Road Church Statement of Belief)

Disciples of Jesus surrender their lives to God and live fully, trusting the Holy Spirit will transform them. It all begins when a person surrenders their life to Jesus. Disciples repent by turning away from a selfish, self-centered way of living and accepting God's offer to forgive their sins and heal their broken nature through faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. Disciples desire to live in God-honoring ways as they surrender every aspect of their life and emulate the ways of Jesus.



Jesus said this: *“If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father and will judge all people according to their deeds.”* MATTHEW 16:24-26

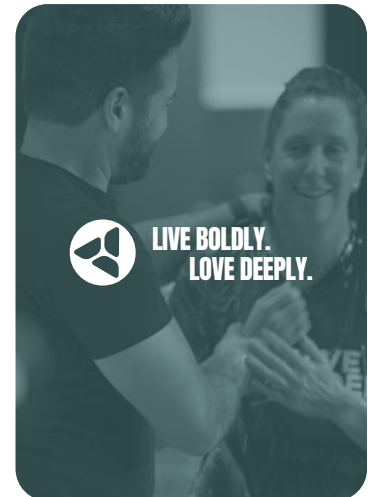
- 🕒 **Following Jesus isn’t a one-time thing but a way of life. Have you made the initial decision to surrender your life to Jesus and accept the gift of salvation?**
- 🕒 **What’s happening in your life currently that requires you to surrender and trust God in deeper ways?**

- 🕒 **READ ROMANS 8:1-17. What do these scriptures show us about the Holy Spirit’s role in helping us live a life of surrender and trust?**

HAVE YOU BEEN BAPTIZED?

Baptism is a public declaration of your commitment to surrender your life to Jesus. It symbolizes the death of the old and the beginning of a new life. Baptism identifies us with Christ and with the community of believers. The act of baptism with water immersion is a demonstration of our faith in Jesus and representative of His sacrifice cleansing us from our sins.

Baptism is both an act of obedience and public declaration. Because it is our response to what Jesus has done for us, it is not a prerequisite to salvation. It symbolizes the work that has already taken place in us.



2.4 TOGETHER

Your Huddle leader will guide your group in a discussion regarding what you have been discovering and any questions you may have using these questions.

- 🕒 **What stood out to you in this topic that you’d like to discuss?**

- 🕒 **How has your experience in the church helped you grow in each of the three areas UP, IN, and OUT? What has been effective? What was lacking?**



- 🕒 **Jesus modeled UP, IN, and OUT in LUKE 6:12-19. Read this passage out loud as a group and take notes on each UP, IN, and OUT component. What do you notice about Jesus' example? Discuss.**

UP (LUKE 6:12-19)

IN (LUKE 6:13-16)

OUT (LUKE 6:17-19)

- 🕒 **What comes more naturally to you: UP, IN, or OUT? Where do you feel the most need to grow? Brainstorm ideas for growing in each area.**

PRACTICE APPLYING THE LEARNING

Have group members practice teaching the triangle shape and sharing their learning from this topic before moving on. This will take one additional Huddle meeting.

- 🕒 **Have at least one group member teach the group by explaining the discipleship concept and its application with the Huddle.**
- 🕒 **Make sure to encourage Huddle members to share what they are learning and how they apply it to their life with friends or family members.**

2.5 NEXT STEPS

Before moving to the next topic, pause. Review your notes, reflect on your Huddle discussions, and jot down what you have discovered.

- 🕒 **From this topic, what is one thing you feel God is saying to you?**
- 🕒 **What will you do about what you sense God saying? What is one action or step you can take to integrate UP, IN and OUT into your life? Be specific.**
- 🕒 **Who have you shared what you are learning with this weeK? Make sure to talk about how it is impacting your life and faith.**

NOTES



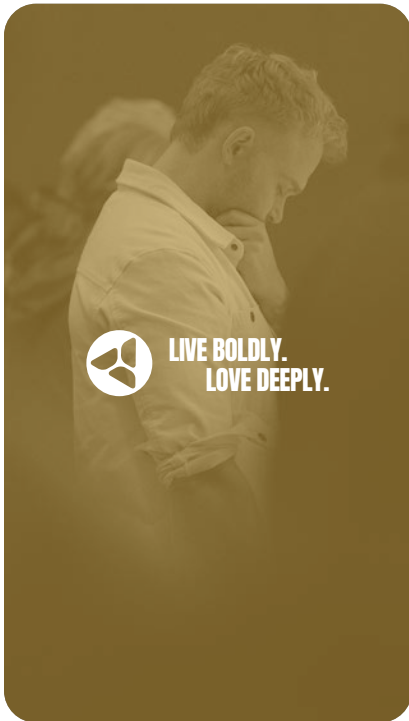
LIVE BOLDLY.
LOVE DEEPLY.

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

TOPIC THREE

3

SHARING OUR STORIES



INSTRUCTIONS

Sharing Our Stories may take two to four sessions depending on the number of group members.

The first session is when your Huddle leader will share their story. Before sharing begins, read and discuss Giving Feedback (3.4). Listening to a person's story is a gift. Receive their story and hold it with care and confidence.

Once the person is finished sharing, invite the group to provide feedback that is encouraging and affirming.

Keep in mind, you do not have to share every detail; the goal is to sort through and identify significant parts of your story that have shaped who you are today.

After everyone has shared their story, discuss the Together questions.

As you prepare to move to the next topic, your Huddle leader will introduce Topic 4: Spiritual Community and invite the group to read the topic before the next Huddle.

3.1

INTRODUCTION

Read Topic 3: Sharing Our Stories. Highlight those things that stand out to you and circle anything that raises a question. This topic may take several weeks to complete. Do not rush; allowing adequate time for each Huddle member to share their story is essential.

It is important to share our stories with each other. Everyone is at a different place in their spiritual journey and carries with them a variety of life experiences. Huddles involve discovering and sharing our stories with our group members. Together, we will uncover more about how God has created us and how He has been at work in our lives.

Taking the time upfront to share stories will build trust and deepen your relationships with each other. Please don't underestimate the gift of someone being willing to share their story with you. It takes courage and trust to be vulnerable. Be attentive as individuals share, and always thank them for being willing to share part of their story with you.

Don't rush. This could easily take multiple weeks. Before your next Huddle, reflect on your life story using either the Life Map or River of Life exercise described in this topic. It is crucial to allow sufficient time for personal reflection.

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



When you gather as a Huddle, have each person share their story with the group. Allow at least 15-20 minutes per person to share without interruption.



Once the person is finished sharing, the group can ask questions and highlight what they noticed while listening.

Listen for what you sense the Holy Spirit is highlighting that would encourage, affirm, or build up the person sharing their story. Have the person who shared their story record the group's words of affirmation and encouragement using the voice memo on their smartphone or a recording app. See Giving Feedback (3.4) for more instructions on providing feedback to each other.

3.2 DIVING DEEPER

On your own, take some time to consider your faith story. Choose between Option 1: Life Mapping and Option 2: River of Life. You will be using these tools to share your faith story with your Huddle.

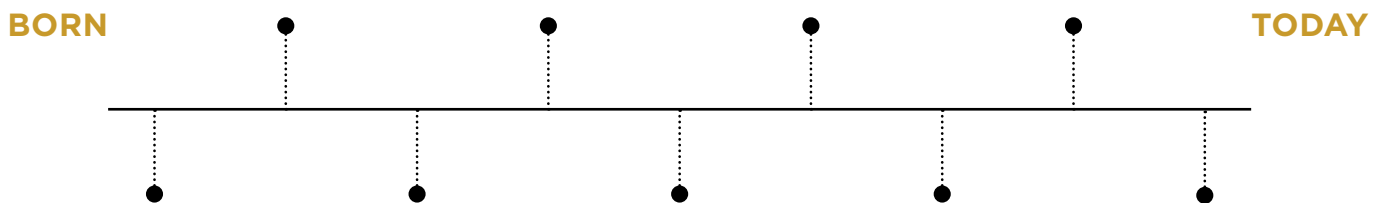
OPTION 1: LIFE MAPPING

One way to frame sharing your faith story is to create a Life Map.

A Life Map invites you to share your faith story using a timeline that points out three to five significant seasons, events, people, or places that have shaped who you are today. Make sure to include both highs and lows.

A high could be a dream, accomplishment, experience, person, or other highlights that positively influenced your faith journey. A low could include losses, disappointments, hurts, harm, or other low points in your life. Make sure to include a few points on your Life Map from different stages of your life.

Grab a piece of blank paper and draw a line.



- 🕒 **Start with the day you were born and trace a few key moments in your life. Include significant moments from childhood, adolescents, and adulthood.**

- 🕒 **Note the HIGHS. (Make notes about events, people, places, vocations, accomplishments, etc.).**
- 🕒 **Add the LOWS by making notes about disappointments, losses, and hurts.**
- 🕒 **After you finish your timeline, reflect on the Diving Deeper (3.3) questions.**

To explore your story in greater detail, visit [OneLifeMaps.com](https://www.onelifemaps.com) and check out their “Listen to My Life Portfolio” and other products and events.

OPTION 2: RIVER OF LIFE

Another way to share your story is using the River of Life Exercise. This exercise uses a river analogy to reflect upon and share our stories.

Think about your life as if it were a river. Begin drawing as you reflect upon these questions:

- 🕒 **If your life were a river, what shape would it take?**
- 🕒 **Where are the bends and turns?**
- 🕒 **What is the speed of the water? Where are the points of stillness or rapid currents?**
- 🕒 **Where are the rocks or boulders?**

Using labels and drawings, label your drawing with dates or your approximate age. Identify key events, including both highs and lows. Name each topic of your life river. Include people, places, and experiences that have shaped you.

After you finish your River of Life exercise, go to Diving Deeper (3.3) and answer the questions.

3.3 DIVING DEEPER

Look at your Life Map or River of Life drawing and prayerfully respond to the following questions.

- 🕒 **What did you list as highs and lows? Why did you choose them?**
- 🕒 **Do you tend to feel closer to God during the high or low points?**

- 👉 **Where do you notice God in your story?**

- 👉 **Where might you sense God wants to bring healing from your past?**

- 👉 **How do you think He can use your mistakes to impact others?**

- 👉 **What do you sense God wants to show you about Himself?**

- 👉 **What do you sense God wants to show you about yourself?**

“We are here not only to transform the world but also to be transformed.”

Parker J. Palmer

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



3.4 GIVING FEEDBACK: THE POWER OF WORDS

Before listening to the first stories, read through this page in your Huddle and discuss the importance of listening without interrupting and providing encouraging feedback.

Words have the power to build up or tear down.

Look up the following scriptures to see what they say about the power of our words and the importance of encouragement. Write down what you find in the space provided. If you are new to reading scripture, read Bible 101 (6.1 - 6.5) to discover the best ways to engage in scripture.

👉 **1 THESSALONIANS 5:11-22**

👉 **HEBREWS 10:19-25**

👉 **PROVERBS 12:18**

Keep these scriptures in mind as you share words of affirmation and encouragement.

Let's focus on listening to encourage, affirm, and build up the person sharing. This might look like noticing how their life experiences have shaped them into who they are today. Have the person who shared their story record the group's words of affirmation and encouragement using the voice memo on their smartphone or a recording app.

3.5 TOGETHER



After everyone has had the opportunity to share their story, use these questions to guide your discussion regarding the experience of sharing your stories with each other. Make sure to talk about what you are discovering and any questions you may have.

⏪ **What stood out to you in the process of sharing your stories with each other?**

⏪ **What was it like for you to reflect on your story? Did anything surprise you?**

⏪ **What was it like to share your story with your Huddle?**

3.6 NEXT STEPS

Before moving to the next topic, pause. Review your notes, reflect on your Huddle discussions, and jot down what you have discovered.

⏪ **What do you want to remember about God and/or yourself from this experience?**

⏪ **What do you feel like God is saying to you? What are you going to do about it?**

⏪ **What part of your story do you need to continue to process?**



For additional information on how the pastoral staff at Mercy Road Northeast could come alongside you in the process, please see our Care Ministries.

EXTRA NOTES



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TOPIC FOUR

4

SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY

INSTRUCTIONS

Spiritual Community normally takes one session. The group should have read the topic before coming to Huddle. Take time to discuss what stood out to the group in the reading and Diving Deeper. Finish the topic by discussing the Together questions.

As you prepare to move to the next topic, your Huddle leader will introduce Topic 5: Hearing God and invite the group to read the topic before the next Huddle.



SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



4.1 INTRODUCTION

Being part of a spiritual community is an essential practice that helps us grow and mature. **Becoming more and more like Jesus doesn't happen in isolation. We need others to journey with us. We need to engage with others with a balance of grace and truth.**

As spiritual communities, we strive to follow Jesus' perfect example of balancing grace and truth in our interactions. Jesus was both invitational (grace-oriented) and challenging (truth-oriented). He drew people in, inviting them toward a relationship marked by being known and loved. He also challenged people to grow and mature. Creating space for grace and truth to co-exist and complement each other encourages growth.

John writes this about Jesus: *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

JOHN 1:14

To become more like Jesus, we need to balance truth and grace. It's not easy because we generally lean to one side.

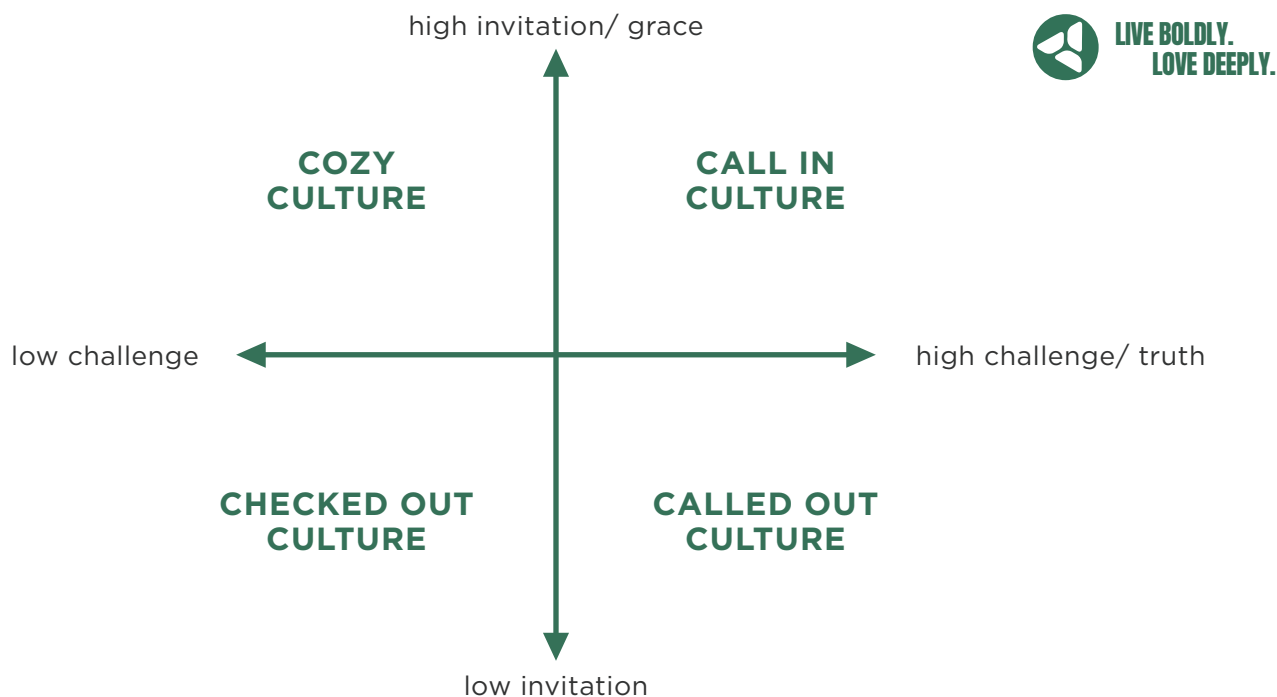
Jesus wanted the disciples to learn from what He said and how He lived. So, Jesus often demonstrated what He meant by His actions and interactions. He offered grace in His invitations and truth as He challenged people to grow.

Jesus invited people to come close and interact with the perfect balance of grace and truth. This week you'll learn how to interact with each other with grace and truth, balancing an invitation to be known and accepted with the challenge to grow and mature.

The cross shape illustrates the different cultures we create by the way we engage with others.

Invitation allows us to nurture one another and mirrors the grace Jesus extended. Challenge transforms our character and reflects the truth of Jesus offered.

A Call In Culture creates the greatest potential for transformation by being both high invitation (extending grace) and high challenge (offering truth). Call In Cultures create space for both grace and truth to coexist and complement each other.



Low Invitation + Low Challenge = Checked Out Culture

The lower-left corner has minimal invitation and challenge. In these environments, the tendency is to stay at a very surface level. People do not know each other, tend not to be interested in going deeper, and usually fade away.

Low Invitation + High Challenge = Called Out Culture

The right-lower corner is high challenge and low invitation. This kind of environment leaves people feeling judged and often results in people distancing themselves from you and seeing God as an impersonal, angry judge.

High Invitation + Low Challenge = Cozy Culture

The top-left corner is high invitation and very low challenge. This environment can feel comfortable and fun but can miss opportunities to grow and mature. Unfortunately, even though these kinds of environments feel like you are developing deeper relationships with each other, we tend not to mature personally and spiritually.

High Invitation + High Challenge = Call In Culture

The top-right corner is a balance of high invitation and high challenge and mirrors how Jesus interacted with people. These kinds of relationships are rich and supportive and create space for incredible growth personally and spiritually. This is known as the CALL-IN culture. This is the kind of culture Jesus modeled and invited us to emulate.

4.2 DIVING DEEPER

Before your Huddle meeting, answer the following questions and write down what you discover.

- 🕒 **Think about your past experience. Where and with whom have you experienced these kinds of cultures? What impact did they have on you and others?**

- 🕒 **Be honest, where do you lean-- more toward grace or truth? Remember, moving toward a balance of grace and truth requires intentionality and perseverance?**

- 🕒 **How do you see Jesus demonstrating a Call In Culture in JOHN 13:1-17?**

- 🕒 **Jesus was both invitational and challenging. He often used parables to draw people in to reveal deeper truths. In the book of Matthew, Jesus uses a farming analogy. READ MATTHEW 13:1-23 and record what you notice about growth?**

- 🕒 **Sometime this week, ask two people who know you well where you fall on the cross shape. Pay attention to any observations they have for you.**

4.3 TOGETHER

Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion regarding what you have been discovering and any questions you may have using these questions.

- 🕒 **Share a time when you experienced a CALL-IN culture or relationship. How was it a high invitation and a high challenge? In what ways did you experience a balance of grace and truth?**
- 🕒 **Do you tend to lean toward invitation or challenge? How can you move toward balancing invitation and challenge in your life and relationships? What do you need to STOP and START doing?**
- 🕒 **How can this Huddle be a Call In Culture? What would our conversations look like? What ways of being together would be necessary to practice?**

4.4 NEXT STEPS

Before moving to the next topic, pause. Review your notes, reflect on your Huddle discussions, and jot down what you have discovered.

- 🕒 **From this topic, what is one thing you feel God is saying to you?**

- 🕒 **What are you going to do about what you sense God is saying? What is one action or step you can take to be open to receiving and creating a CALL IN culture with others? Be specific.**

- 🕒 **Who have you shared what you are learning with this week? Make sure to talk about how it is impacting your life and faith.**

TOPIC FIVE

5

HEARING GOD



INSTRUCTIONS

Hearing God normally takes two sessions. The group should have read the topic before coming to Huddle. Take time to discuss what stood out to the group in the reading and Diving Deeper.

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



In the first session on Hearing God, each group member will have the opportunity to “work the circle” as your Huddle leader walks you through each step as outlined in Working the Circle Together 5.4.

Before the second session, group members are invited to practice hearing God as described in Diving Deeper: Practice Hearing God.

Finish this topic by discussing the Together questions.

As you prepare to move to the next topic, your Huddle leader will introduce Topic 6: BIBLE 101 and invite the group to read the topic before the next Huddle.

5.1

INTRODUCTION

Read Topic 5: Hearing God. Highlight those things that stand out to you and circle anything that raises a question.

This topic is about learning to hear and respond to God’s voice. Learning to hear God’s voice and respond to His words is essential to our spiritual formation and transformation. God is breaking through space and time to speak into our lives and make Himself known.

God can use all kinds of things to get our attention. He uses conversations, relationships, songs, experiences, sermons, poems, nature, art, and Scripture to get our attention and speak to us. No matter how we sense God speaking, it will always be consistent with how he has revealed Himself in the Bible.

As you listen for His voice, discern whether what you hear is consistent with God’s heart and intentions. Don’t worry if this seems daunting now. Discerning God’s voice takes practice. Your Huddle will help you learn and practice hearing and responding to God’s voice.

- 🕒 On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is all the time and 1 is not at all, how confident are you in being able to hear God speaking into your life?

1

10

5.2 HEARING GOD

A key to hearing God's voice is to notice moments that feel like an opportunity to learn, grow, and heal. We call these moments Kairos moments.

There are two ways we can look at time. In the Bible, the Greek word for time is differentiated between:

- 🕒 **Chronos = chronological time (think of dates and clock time - sequential time - hours, days, months, years)**
- 🕒 **Kairos = an event, moment, or crisis when "time stands still" - It is experiencing time in light of significant moments.**



We are aware of chronos by simply looking at the clock or checking our calendars.

There is another way to measure time. Kairos is the practice of noticing the sacred in everyday and ordinary moments. Whether we are aware or not, God is present in each moment of our lives. God invites us to grow closer to Him, experience His presence, and become more like Jesus in these moments. The essential ingredient is learning to pay attention to God's initiation toward us. It starts by being open to hearing what God has to say.

How do you know which moments are worth paying attention to? A good start is to notice your emotional reactions. When experiencing an emotional response to a situation, it is good to pause and ask what is underneath the emotion and why you might feel this way. Sometimes it is one event, but more often, Kairos moments connect to reveal a repetitive theme.

PSALM 139:23-24 is a heart-cry to be known and guided by God.

*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.
Point out anything in me that offends you and leads me along the path of everlasting life.*

The Passion Translation puts it this way:

God, I invite your searching gaze into my heart. Examine me through and through; find out everything that may be hidden within me. Put me to the test and sift through all my anxious cares. See if there is any path of pain I'm walking on, and lead me back to your glorious, everlasting way— the path that brings me back to you.

Two questions can summarize this prayer:

- 🕒 **God, what are you trying to say to me?**
- 🕒 **God, what are you asking me to do about it?**

You recognize a **Kairos moment** by the impact or emotion it causes. It can be positive or negative but never neutral - it makes an impression on you.



When could a Kairos moment happen?

- ⌚ **Conviction or revelation in reading the Bible**
- ⌚ **Scripture that comes to mind**
- ⌚ **Listening to a sermon**
- ⌚ **Worship song that strikes a deep emotion**
- ⌚ **Inner prompting or “gut feeling”**
- ⌚ **A sense of hearing God in a conversation with someone else**
- ⌚ **Repeated circumstances or experiences**
- ⌚ **A negative/ positive reaction or response to a person or situation that seems unwarranted**

A Kairos moment is an opportunity to align ourselves with what God is doing so that we can follow and obey Jesus.

It may be a momentous event that changes our entire life trajectory. Or it may be a series of tiny shifts that point us in a new direction.

Just because we experienced a Kairos moment, maybe even recognized it and discussed it, doesn't mean we learned anything.

- ⌚ **We have a choice about how to react to a Kairos moment.**
- ⌚ **We can keep walking the chronos line and ignore the opportunity for growth.**
- ⌚ **We can stop (get stuck in life or maturity) or go backward (run, backslide, or avoid).**
- ⌚ **We can enter the Learning Circle. This is the best way forward because it's how we live as disciples of Jesus.**

5.3 DIVING DEEPER

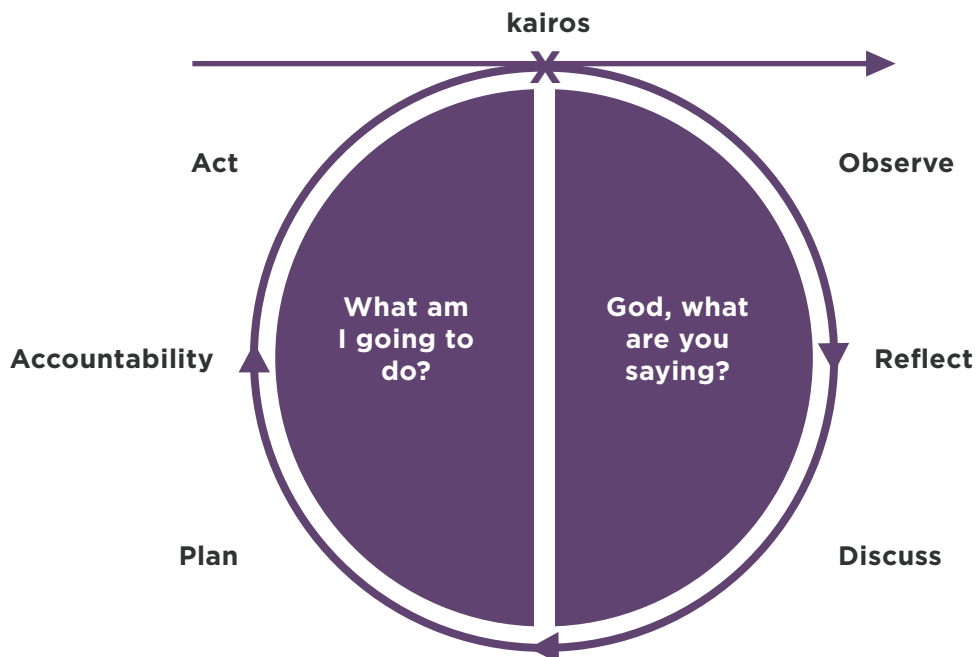
Look up the following verses and write down what you discover.

- ⌚ **Much of the focus of Huddle is to help us learn to hear and respond to the voice of God in our lives. Jesus uses a shepherding metaphor in JOHN 10:1-27 to describe his relationship with his followers. What can we learn from Jesus' use of this metaphor?**

🕒 Isaiah, an Old Testament prophet, wrote these words in ISAIAH 40:10-11: *“Yes, the Sovereign Lord is coming in power. He will rule with a powerful arm. See, he brings his reward with him as he comes. He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young.”* How do these verses expand your understanding of how God shepherds us?

🕒 God is trying to get Samuel’s attention in 1 SAMUEL 3:1-19. What do you notice about Samuel, Eli, and God in this story?

5.4 TOGETHER | WORKING THE CIRCLE



The circle shape helps you to listen and respond to God's voice in your life. You begin by noticing a moment in time (Chronos) that is calling for your attention. It might be associated with a struggle or a time of joy and celebration. It could be a theme that feels repetitive. In these moments, God often wants to replace false understandings about what we believe about who He is, ourselves, and others. For more information on this shape, see chapter 6, Continuous Breakthrough: The Circle, on pages 75-88 in the book "Building a Discipleship Culture."

The first half of the circle is about paying attention and asking the first question: God, what are you saying?

Here's how you can begin. Have there been particular thoughts or messages that keep coming up in sermons, podcasts, scripture, conversations, situations, etc.? Do you feel stuck or at a loss? It might be associated with a celebration or joyous occasion. The point is to pay attention to the moment and consider what God might be saying to you. Discerning what God is saying is a process and includes personal reflection and the help of others.

As you discern what you sense God is saying, follow these three steps:

- 🕒 **OBSERVE: What is happening? Name it. This is about the facts.**
- 🕒 **REFLECT: What are you noticing about what is happening? How do you feel? When have you felt this way before? What other experiences have been similar? Asking why questions can help uncover what is hidden beneath the surface.**
- 🕒 **DISCUSS: Talk about what you notice and feel with a few trusted friends. What are you discerning? What is God speaking? As a huddle, you should ask a lot of questions so the individual hears from God, not just your personal wisdom.**

Once you have discerned what you believe God is saying, you determine how to respond. The second half of the circle is about our response and answering the question: What am I going to do about it?

In this phase, you are trying to decide what God is asking you to do about what you are noticing. You can do this in three steps:

- 🕒 **MAKE A PLAN: Determine what you can do. Be specific, practical, and detailed about what you will do.**
- 🕒 **ASK FOR ACCOUNTABILITY: Ask your Huddle group to hold you accountable for your plan.**
- 🕒 **TAKE ACTION: Do what you said you would do. A good practice for follow-up is to revisit the Kairos circle, repeat the process, and see what you notice as you take action.**

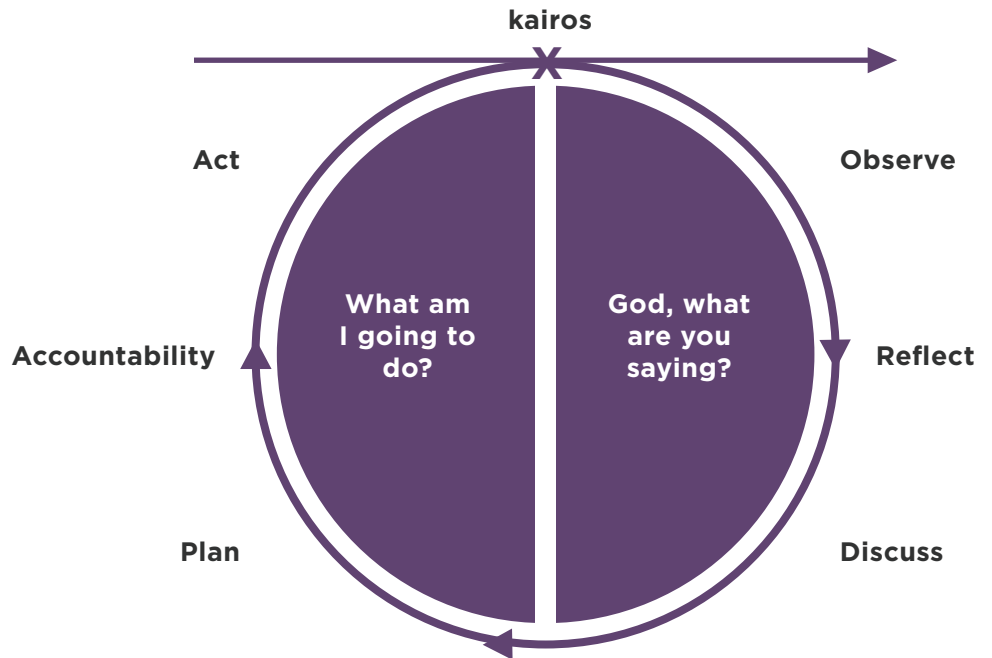
The more you practice paying attention to Kairos moments, the more natural the process will become.

The more you practice paying attention to God's nudges through the Kairos tool, the more natural it will become.

Before the next Huddle, try working the circle by considering a Kairos moment from the past few weeks.

🕒 Were there any moments you wanted to explore more fully? Take a few minutes to quiet your mind and soul. Ask God to raise your awareness of a Kairos moment to reflect upon.

🕒 What has happened (or is happening) that feels like you need to pause and reflect upon? What seems to evoke an emotional response, raising questions or causing concern?



God, what are you saying?



- 🕒 **OBSERVE:** What is happening? Name it. This is about the facts.
- 🕒 **REFLECT:** What are you noticing about what is happening? How do you feel? When have you felt this way before? What other experiences have been similar? Asking why questions can help uncover what is hidden beneath the surface.
- 🕒 **DISCUSS:** Talk about what you notice and feel with a few trusted friends.

Once you have discerned what you believe God is saying, the second-half circle moves to determine how to respond. In this phase, you are trying to decide what God is asking you to do about what you are noticing.

What am I going to do?

- 🕒 **MAKE A PLAN:** Determine what you can do. Be specific, practical, and detailed about what you will do.
- 🕒 **ASK FOR ACCOUNTABILITY:** Ask your Huddle group or a trusted friend to hold you accountable for your plan.
- 🕒 **TAKE ACTION:** Do what you said you would do. A good practice for follow-up is to revisit the Kairos circle, repeat the process, and see what you notice as you take action.

Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion. Make sure to talk about what you are discovering and any questions you may have.

- 🕒 **What stood out to you in this topic that you'd like to discuss?**
- 🕒 **Being aware and responsive to Kairos moments helps us to become more like Jesus. What stops you from noticing Kairos moments?**
- 🕒 **What makes it difficult for you to discern and hear God's voice?**

TOO BUSY TO NOTICE?

If you are having difficulty noticing God's voice in your life. You can start by ending your day with 10 minutes of silence. Find a quiet spot and sit down. Breathe in and out as a way to slow down and calm your body and mind.

Then simply ask God to show you any moments in your day where He may have been trying to reveal something about Himself or you. If something comes to your mind, work the circle. If not, it's okay, try again tomorrow.

- 🕒 **Which parts of the circle life shape come easily? Which do you struggle with the most?**
- 🕒 **How will you grow in this practice of paying attention and hearing God's voice in your life?**

PRACTICE APPLYING THE LEARNING

Have group members practice teaching the model and sharing their learning from this topic before moving on. This may take a few Huddle meetings.

- 🕒 **Have at least one group member teach the group by explaining the discipleship concept and its application with the Huddle.**
- 🕒 **Ask for one or two volunteers to walk through a personal Kairos moment with the group. This will help anchor the concept and learn how to apply it.**
- 🕒 **Make sure to have each Huddle member share their understanding of this topic with a friend or family member.**

The more you practice paying attention to Kairos moments, the more natural the process will become.

5.7 NEXT STEPS

Before moving to the next topic, pause. Review your notes, reflect on your Huddle discussions, and jot down what you have discovered.

🕒 **What have you learned or discovered during this topic?**

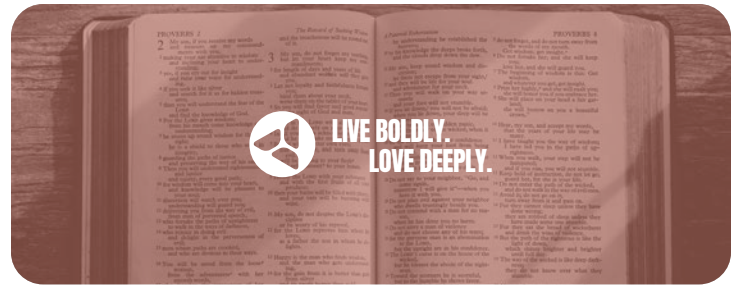
🕒 **Who could benefit from learning about the Kairos Circle? When will you share it with them? Make sure to explain the concept and share how it is impacting your faith and life.**

🕒 **Keep using the Kairos Circle as a way of hearing God. Huddle is a perfect environment for noticing Kairos moments. If you are sensing an opportunity to listen and respond to God is happening, take some time to work the circle and invite your group to join you in discussing what you are noticing. Don't stop in your Huddle, this discipleship tool is one you will want to use over and over.**

TOPIC SIX

6

BIBLE 101



INSTRUCTIONS

BIBLE 101 normally takes three sessions. The group should have read the topic before coming to Huddle.

In the first session, take time to discuss what stood out to the group as you read, reflect on the Diving Deeper questions, and walk through Together 6.7.

During your second session, ask the group to do the Diving Deeper SOAP 1.0 experience and be prepared to discuss it when you meet again. You will also walk through the Together questions in Topic 6.9 the second time you meet on this topic.

As you prepare for the third session in this topic, introduce SOAP 2.0. When you gather again, plan to walk through this topic together.

Finish this topic by discussing the **Topic 6.11 Together** questions.

As you prepare to move to the next topic, your Huddle leader will introduce Topic 7: The Story of God and invite the group to read the topic before the next Huddle.

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



6.1 INTRODUCTION

Read Topic 6: BIBLE 101. Highlight what stands out to you and circle anything that raises a question.

God desires to meet us in the pages of the Bible, and it is the primary way God reveals himself. Reading the Bible helps us to deepen our relationship with God and to embody the heart and ways of Jesus.

The Bible is a rich compilation of sixty-six books, full of history, poetry, prophecy, letters, and more. The authors used common literary styles to convey the story of God. It can be helpful to consider the culture and context of that time period when reading Scripture.

In this topic, you will be introduced to tools and practice meeting God in the pages of the Bible.

How familiar are you with the Bible?

Do you feel like a beginner or well-versed in Scripture?



6.2 HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

God has given us the Bible to deepen our relationship with Him. As we read and reflect on scripture, we will often sense God speaking to us. Reading the Bible is not just about information and learning; it is meant to transform us to become more like Jesus.

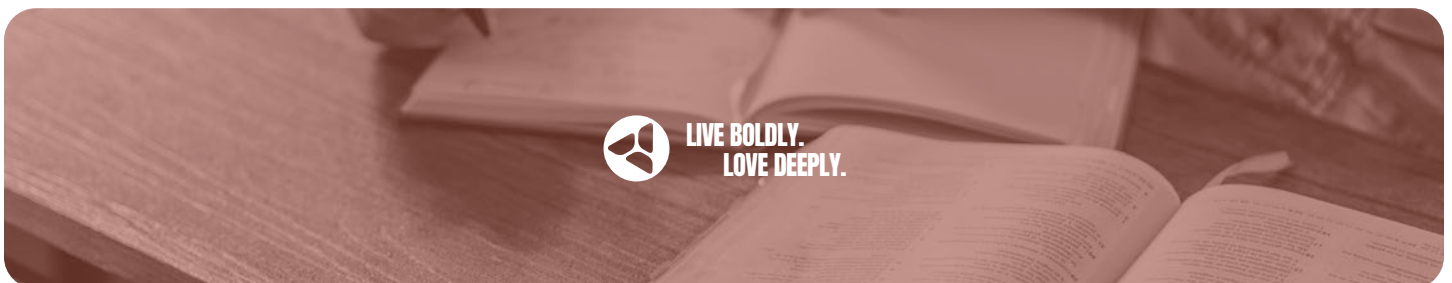
When you read the Bible, it is a good practice to think about the original context before considering the personal application of a particular passage. It is also a good idea to look for the overall meaning of a Bible passage and not base your understanding on isolated verses. Try to think about what it meant to the original audience before considering what it means to us today.

As you read the Bible, first consider the larger context and big idea before you consider how an individual verse fits into the overall passage and purpose. When you dissect and deconstruct scripture by focusing on individual words without considering the context, it is easy to misunderstand the meaning of what was written. Keep in mind that it can not mean what it never meant.

As you read the Bible, exploring larger topics of Scripture and considering a particular Scripture in light of its larger context helps us become familiar with the bigger themes of Scripture. God wants to be known and uses Scripture to reveal himself. When you read Scripture, think of it as an opportunity to meet with God in the pages of the Bible.

It is helpful to start by asking God to open your eyes to what he wants to show. Begin and end your time in Scripture, asking God:

- 🕒 **God, what are You trying to tell me about You?**
- 🕒 **God, what are You trying to tell me about me?**
- 🕒 **God, how are You asking me to respond?**



Huddle Guide Resource:
For more content on how to read the Bible by The Bible Project.



6.3 CHOOSING A BIBLE

Choosing a Bible sounds simple enough. There are dozens to choose from, so here's a little help selecting a Bible.

Check them out. Get familiar with different translations. You can easily do this online at www.biblegateway.com. **READ PSALM 23** in various translations and see which style you most prefer.

This guide uses the New Living Translation (NLT). It is a current, accurate, and easily read translation. Other good options include The Christian Standard Bible (CSB), Common English Bible (CEB), New International Version (NIV), and New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). The English Standard Version (ESV) and New American Standard Bible (NASB) are also accurate translations that are more literal in their approach. In the end, choose one you will read!

We recommend purchasing a study bible to help you understand the context and culture. **Keep in mind, The Message and The Passion Translation are paraphrases.** These paraphrases can be used to complement other translations mentioned above. Paraphrases help make reading the Bible accessible. However, the Message paraphrases scripture based on the author's perspective and personal insight.

The Passion Translation attempts to transfer "the essential meaning of God's original message found in the biblical languages to modern English."

Look at another translation for further understanding and application when you read from a paraphrase, like The Message and The Passion Translation.



The Passion Translation
Philosophy

6.4 A FEW FACTS OF THE BIBLE

This topic provides an overview of the Bible and helps us understand how all Scripture fits together to reveal God's heart, character, and story. Human authors wrote the books of the Bible under the inspiration and direction of God's Holy Spirit.

The Bible is a rich compilation of sixty-six books full of history, poetry, prophecy, letters, etc. It is good to consider the historical setting and genre of each book of the Bible. Although looking at the culture and context of the Bible is critical, our primary focus is to meet God in the pages of the Bible so that we can come to know Him more and be transformed more into the likeness of Jesus.

The Bible is not organized in chronological order. It is divided into two main topics.

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament can also be referred to as the Hebrew Bible. The Old Testament reveals God as Creator and Ruler of the universe. God chose Israel as His covenant people to bring about His plan to **RESTORE** the **RELATIONSHIP** between God and humanity.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament is God's story of **REDEMPTION** through Jesus Christ the Messiah. Jesus completed God's plan for redemption on the cross and through His resurrection. After Jesus returns to be with God, the Father, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in those who believe in Jesus and choose to follow Him. Jesus' mission continues through His followers as they look forward to the return of Jesus and complete restoration.

The Bible includes 66 books and was written:

- 🕒 **over 2,500 years and the span of at least 40 generations.**
- 👤 **by more than 40 authors from every walk of life (i.e., kings, peasants, fishermen, poets, leaders, and ordinary men) inspired by God.**
- 📍 **in different places (i.e., Moses wrote in the desert as he led the Israelites out of Egypt, Daniel wrote in times of war, Solomon wrote in times of peace, John wrote as an older man remembering his relationship with Jesus, and Paul wrote from within prison walls).**
- 📅 **in different seasons of life and includes writings from the heights of joy to the depths of sorrow and despair.**
- 🌍 **on three continents - Africa, Asia, and Europe.**
- 🗣️ **originally in three languages - Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic, and the New Testament was written in Greek. Since its original writing, the Bible has been translated into thousands of languages.**
- 📖 **using various common genres or literary styles.**
- 📖 **as ONE unfolding story of God's pursuit and redemption of mankind.**



Huddle Guide Resource:

Watch an overview of the Bible by The Bible Project.

There are great videos for the TaNaK (Old Testament) and New Testament.

6.5 LITERARY STYLES

One of the first things to consider is the kind of literature or writing you are reading.



Although the Bible was not organized in chronological order, the story of God unfolds across the pages of the Bible. The Bible comprises 66 books, divided between the Old and New Testaments, and includes different genres of literary styles. Each book of the Bible can be categorized and read considering its literary style.



**LIVE BOLDLY.
LOVE DEEPLY.**

OLD TESTAMENT

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



Historical Narratives

Historical narratives are written in story format to give meaning and direction to a particular group of people instead of recounting history in general terms or detailed events like a textbook. Historical narratives inform us of God's character and entrance into the real physical world to restore our relationship with Him.

Psalms

The book of Psalms is a poetic collection of hymns and prayers that reminded the people of Israel of God's character and their history with Him. The book of Psalms includes 150 songs and prayers that are practical and purposeful, meant to connect the worshiper and God. Since worship has always been central to faith, these psalms enhanced corporate worship gatherings and provided words for individuals to express their hearts to God. The Psalms transcend time and culture, making them useful for present-day worship and meditation.

Wisdom Writings

While the wisdom writings seem easy to understand and apply at first glance, they are not intended to be considered in bits and pieces. Instead, they must be read and interpreted based on their overall purpose and message. Together, these writings encourage us to consider how to live wisely in light of God's inspired word.

Generally, there are two broad categories within wisdom literature: proverbial wisdom and speculative wisdom.

- 🔊 **Proverbial wisdom, found in the book of Proverbs, concentrates on practical attitudes and behaviors of everyday life. They convey basic values and offer memorable sayings for the making of responsible choices.**
- 🔊 **Speculative wisdom, as found in Job and Ecclesiastes, is meant to be thoughtfully read, allowing time for reflection. This type of writing challenges the reader to wrestle with the significant issues of life.**

Prophetic Books

The story of God continues in the writings of the Prophets by revealing God's passionate desire to communicate His heart to the people. Through the prophets, God spoke words of warning and promised a future deliverance. He used the prophets' influence and leadership to guide the Israelites back to a life of surrender and trust in Him. The books of prophecy are not mystery books; they have real, historical context. And while much of their messages are pertinent to a specific time and place many centuries ago, the themes we find throughout continue to speak today.

Turning the page from the Old to New Testament crosses approximately 400 years and begins with the birth of Jesus Christ.

The Gospels

Within the gospel accounts—(**Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John**) is the testimony of God's ultimate expression of love. Though each gospel speaks to a different audience, the essence of the message remains: God is fulfilling His promise to rescue, redeem and restore His creation. This promise of a Savior made thousands of years before has been fulfilled.

Now we see God in flesh, ushering in His kingdom through the life and ministry of His Son, Jesus. The gospels are historical narratives about Jesus. Generally, they can be divided into sayings of and narratives about Jesus. They should be read as a collection of teachings and stories woven together as an integral part of a larger whole. While each gospel records a view of Jesus standing alone, they remain incomplete.

Historical Narrative (Acts)

Acts is a continuation of the story Luke began in his first work, the Gospel of Luke. After being put to death, Jesus raised from the dead, was exalted by the Father, and now endows His followers with gifts and power to spread His message to the ends of the earth. Beginning as a small number of frightened believers, the course of Acts reveals the powerful, exponential growth of the early church as its converts are filled with the Holy Spirit. **Through its record of eyewitness accounts, miraculous events, and a series of public addresses, Acts reveals the history of the early church and the beginnings of Christianity.**

The book of Acts and the letters to the early church are invitations to become a part of God's story. Although Jesus is no longer physically present, His power is available, even in His absence. As promised, God will place His very Spirit into His followers—giving them the strength, comfort, and courage they will need to continue His work.

Letters

These books are letters written to the earliest churches and Christ-followers established at the onset of Christianity. As you read, think of yourself as an eavesdropper, able to read the author's heartfelt thoughts and instructions. Each letter addresses questions and concerns facing a particular church or cultural circumstance.

Revelation

Revelation is a blend of genres, including apocalypse, prophecy, and letters. John wrote the book of Revelation after having a powerful vision while in exile on the island of Patmos. In this vision, an angel instructed John to record everything he saw (Revelation 1:19). The book of Revelation offers a glimpse of God's final reign, the redemption of His people, and the restoration of all creation. Through John's writings, we find imagery and language that paint vivid pictures of Jesus and lend to further understanding God's story.

Overall, Revelation is a reminder that God will ultimately complete His plan to rescue and redeem those who surrender their life to Him and restore creation to its original intention. Until then, Jesus' followers are called to be His representatives, working under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to bring God's kingdom to the world while eagerly anticipating the day it will be fully realized.

God is fulfilling His promise to rescue, redeem and restore His creation.

6.6 DIVING DEEPER

Look up the following verses and write down what you discover.

Look up the following Bible verses using an online Bible (biblegateway.org) or Bible App (YouVersion) or a physical Bible. Write down what you discover about how the Bible can impact our lives.

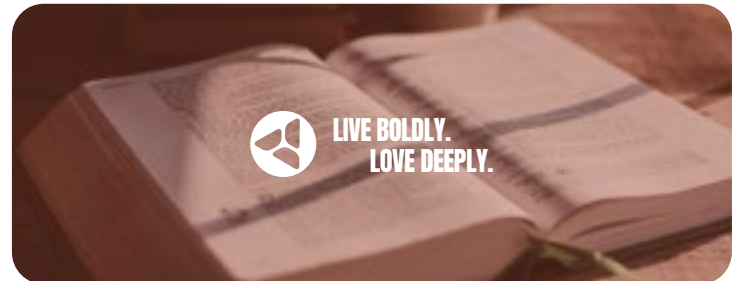
In one word or phrase, summarize what you discover about the Bible from these passages.

OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

- 🔍 PSALM 1:1-3
- 🔍 PSALM 19:7-10
- 🔍 PSALM 119:1-8
- 🔍 PSALM 119:89-90
- 🔍 PROVERBS 30:5
- 🔍 JOSHUA 1:8-9
- 🔍 DEUTERONOMY 11:18-22

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

- 🔍 JOHN 20:29-31
- 🔍 JOHN 17:17
- 🔍 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17



6.7 TOGETHER

Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion. Make sure to talk about what you are discovering and any questions you may have.

- 🔍 **What stood out to you in this topic that you'd like to discuss?**
- 🔍 **What has your experience been with the Bible? How familiar are you with the Bible?**
- 🔍 **Which translation do you prefer?**
- 🔍 **What gets in your way of reading the Bible?**
- 🔍 **There are many different Bible reading plans you can try. Look at these resources and choose one to begin using. The only way to get comfortable with reading the Bible is by reading the Bible.**



Scan QR code for:
Navigators Bible Reading Plan
Bible Gateway Bible Reading Plan (NLT)
Study Light Bible Reading Plan

Or DOWNLOAD the Bible App and choose a Bible reading plan like the Bible Recap by D-Group.



One way you can engage scripture is by reading the Bible using the acronym, SOAP.

You will have the opportunity to practice using it for devotional reading (SOAP 1.0) and for Bible study (SOAP 2.0). Read and answer the questions on each page. Highlight those things that stand out to you and circle anything that raises a question.

The Bible helps us understand who God is and reveals His heart and intentions for our world. It is up to us to create space and practice connecting with God as we read the Bible. The SOAP acronym provides a framework for engaging with God through devotional Bible reading. SOAP helps integrate Bible reading into your daily rhythm and will deepen your relationship with God. Making it a practice to read your Bible provides opportunities for you to share what you are learning with others. Look for opportunities to organically or through spirit-led moments. Share what you are learning with others.

**SCRIPTURE**

Choose a passage of scripture and read it a few times. Underline, highlight, or write down any words or phrases that stand out to you. What does it say?

**OBSERVATION**

What stood out to you about what you read? What is God trying to tell you about Himself? What is God trying to show you about yourself? What does it mean?

**APPLICATION**

How can you apply what you are discovering to your life? So what? Now what? What does it mean to me?

**PRAYER**

Turn these thoughts into prayer. Ask God to help you deepen your relationship with Him and empower you to love deeply and live boldly.

SOAP helps integrate Bible reading into your daily rhythm and will deepen your relationship with God.

SOAP 1.0 PRACTICE

TRY IT: READ PSALM 1 using two different translations and work your way through SOAP.



SCRIPTURE

Choose a passage of scripture and read it a few times. Underline, highlight, or write down any words or phrases that stand out to you. **What does it say?**



OBSERVATION

What stood out to you about what you read? What is God trying to tell you about Himself? What is God trying to show you about yourself? What does it mean?



APPLICATION

How can you apply what you are discovering to your life? So what? Now what? What does it mean to me?



PRAYER

Turn these thoughts into prayer. Ask God to help you deepen your relationship with Him and empower you to love deeply and live boldly.

TRY IT: READ PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11 using two different translations and work your way through SOAP.



SCRIPTURE

Choose a passage of scripture and read it a few times. Underline, highlight, or write down any words or phrases that stand out to you. **What does it say?**



OBSERVATION

What stood out to you about what you read? What is God trying to tell you about Himself? What is God trying to show you about yourself? What does it mean?



APPLICATION

How can you apply what you are discovering to your life? So what? Now what? What does it mean to me?



PRAYER

Turn these thoughts into prayer. Ask God to help you deepen your relationship with Him and empower you to love deeply and live boldly.

Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion. Make sure to talk about what you are discovering and any questions you may have.

- 🕒 **What stood out as you experimented with SOAP 1.0: Devotional Reading?**
- 🕒 **Before being introduced to SOAP, how did you usually read your Bible?**
- 🕒 **Choose a Bible chapter or scripture topic and apply SOAP 1.0 together.**
- 🕒 **How did you answer the question, “What gets in your way of reading the Bible?” Brainstorm ideas as a group about how you can overcome these obstacles. (For example, listen to an audio Bible, do Bible studies with others, find an accountability partner, etc.)**
- 🕒 **How can we encourage each other to read the Bible and practice SOAP regularly?**
- 🕒 **Have at least one group member teach the group by explaining the discipleship concept and its application with the Huddle.**
- 🕒 **Invite a friend or family member to read a passage of scripture together using SOAP 1.0.**

Look up the following verses and write down what you discover. SOAP 2.0 encourages you to dive deeper into Scripture through studying the Bible. The following pages provide tips and techniques for reading the Bible that can enhance your understanding and add depth to the scripture.

STEP 1: SCRIPTURE

The first step is to read the entire topic before looking at individual verses to determine the **MAIN THEME** or **PURPOSE** of the passage.

ASK: What is this passage about? Identify the topic or larger themes. The theme or “big idea” of a chapter or passage will center on the main person, event, teaching, or subject of that topic of Scripture. Themes are often revealed by looking for keywords and topics you notice in the text. Try to express the theme as briefly as possible, using words found in the text.

TRY IT: READ JOHN 4:1-26. What do you see as the BIG IDEA or the main point of this passage?

Ask the five basic questions as you study any passage of Scripture, train yourself to ask:

- 🕒 **Who?**
- 🕒 **What?**
- 🕒 **When?**
- 🕒 **Where?**
- 🕒 **Why?**

Asking the five basic questions help us find the facts and discover the **MAIN THEME** of the passage.

TRY IT: READ JOHN 4:1-26 and answer each of the Five Basic Questions:

🔊 **Who?**

🔊 **What?**

🔊 **When?**

🔊 **Where?**

🔊 **Why?**

STEP 2: OBSERVATION

Look for the important points that support the **MAIN THEME** and **PURPOSE**.

ASK: What are the most important topics addressed?

IDENTIFY KEYWORDS AND PHRASES

A keyword is one that is essential to the text. Keywords and phrases are often repeated to convey the author's point or purpose for writing. Mark them in your Bible. FOR EXAMPLE: The word "world" is used seventeen times in John 17.

MAKE LISTS

Lists reveal truths and highlight important concepts. It can be helpful to list what you learn about each keyword you mark.

WATCH FOR LANGUAGE CLUES LIKE:

🔊 **contrasts and comparisons**

🔊 **verb / action words (past, present or future)**

🔊 **connecting words (but = a contrast; if = condition; because = reason; so / therefore = a result; as, just as, and like = comparison; so that = a purpose)**

🔊 **advice, commands, warnings and promises**

THE GENERAL STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT AND/OR OUTLINE OF THE PASSAGE

WATCH THE LINE OF THINKING AN AUTHOR USES. WHAT POINTS ARE BEING COMMUNICATED? WHAT QUESTIONS ARE BEING ADDRESSED?

- 🔊 **contrast or comparison**
- 🔊 **cause and effect relationships**
- 🔊 **emphatic statements (what is being stressed)**

TRY IT: Mark the keywords and phrases in **JOHN 4:1-26; 39-42. RETELL JOHN 4:1-26; 39-42.**

STEP 3: APPLICATION

Consider how you can apply what you are discovering. The questions below help you discover how God is asking you to respond.

ASK: How can I apply this to my life?

- 🔊 **How do I apply this to my life (at home, in my community, at work, at church)?**
- 🔊 **What specific changes should I make in my life? List them.**
- 🔊 **How will I make these changes? Be specific.**
- 🔊 **What can I be praying about?**
- 🔊 **What verse(s) of scripture should I memorize to summarize and remember this truth?**
- 🔊 **What illustration or image can I develop or use to help me remember what I have discovered? (Maybe a story, song, poem, drawing, or another way)**

TRY IT: Choose one of the questions above and respond. What is one thing you would like to remember from this passage that applies to your life?

STEP 4: PRAYER

Turn to God in prayer. Talk to him about anything you noticed.

ASK: How is God asking me to respond to what I have discovered?

Write a prayer below.

6.11 TOGETHER

Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion. Make sure to talk about what you are discovering and any questions you may have.

- 🔊 **What did you find most beneficial in using SOAP 2.0 for studying the Bible?**
- 🔊 **What did you find most difficult or challenging in using SOAP 2.0?**
- 🔊 **Choose a chapter in the Bible or at least several verses and do SOAP 2.0 together.**
- 🔊 **How can we encourage each other to read the Bible and practice SOAP regularly?**
- 🔊 **Finish this topic through the Lectio Divina, another way to engage in devotional Bible reading. Try this together.**

ANOTHER WAY TO MEET GOD IN THE BIBLE IS TO READ SCRIPTURE USING LECTIO DIVINA.

PSALM 23 paints a beautiful picture of the relationship God desires to have with each of us. Read through this psalm a few times, reflecting on what it means to you. Instead of making observations about this psalm, read it prayerfully, allowing God to use it to speak to you. This type of reading is a type of devotional reading.

Read through this psalm a few times, reflecting on what it means to you. Instead of making observations about this psalm, consider how God may want to speak to you through the psalm.

- 🔊 **Begin by quieting your heart and allowing yourself to become aware of God's presence.**
- 🔊 **Read the passage of Scripture slowly and out loud, listening for a word or phrase.**
- 🔊 **Circle or underline the word or phrase that stands out to you.**

The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

PSALM 23

- 🔊 Read the passage a second time, lingering and listening for any places you sense God inviting you to explore.
- 🔊 Ask yourself, why this phrase or word? What might you need to explore? Write down your thoughts. Ask God to open your eyes to more.
- 🔊 As you rest and wait with God, allow the words to sink deeply into your heart.
- 🔊 Take some time to write down what you sense God is prompting in you and record your thoughts and prayers.

Finish Huddle by reading **PSALM 136** and together recite the phrase *“His Faithful Love Endures Forever.”* After reading the Psalm, invite each person to share one phrase of how they have experienced God’s faithfulness and love enduring forever. Go around the group individually, and after each person shares, everyone recites *“His Faithful Love Endures Forever.”*

6.12 NEXT STEPS

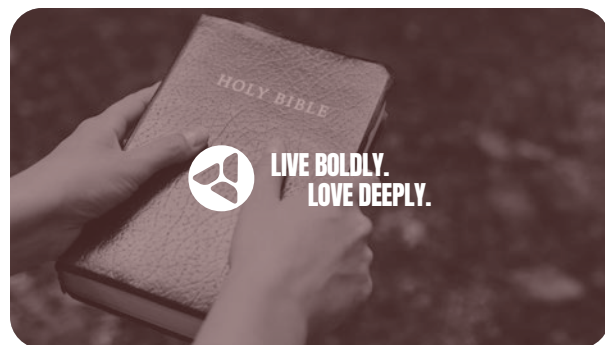
Before moving to the next topic, pause. Review your notes, reflect on your Huddle discussions, and jot down what you have discovered.

- 🔊 **What have you learned or discovered about reading and studying the Bible?**

- 🔊 **Making Bible reading a part of your daily rhythm is an excellent way to grow in your relationship with God. There are many resources available to inspire and guide you in Bible reading. Ask your Huddle members and friends what they like best and experiment with a few different options.**

TOPIC SEVEN

7 THE STORY OF GOD



INSTRUCTIONS

The Story of God normally takes six sessions.

SESSION 1

Introduction and Act 1 - Creation (pg. 56) and Act 2 - Choice to Chaos (pg. 58), Genesis 1, 2 and 3.

SESSION 2

Act 3 - Called People of God (pg. 60), Historical Narratives and Prophets.

SESSION 3

Act 3 continued - Called People of God (pg. 66), Wisdom Writings and Psalms.

SESSION 4

Act 4 - Christ Jesus (pg. 72), Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

SESSION 5

Act 5 - Church—Sent People (pg. 78), Acts and Letters.

SESSION 6:

Act 6 - Re-Creation (pg. 81), Revelation.

Each topic has reading, Diving Deeper questions, and then invites the group to discuss the topic using the Together questions.

Once you have finished this topic and are ready to move to the next topic, your Huddle leader will introduce Topic 8: Prayer and invite the group to read the topic before the next Huddle.

7.1 INTRODUCTION



Read Topic 7: The Story of God. Highlight those things that stand out to you and circle anything that raises a question.

From the early pages of Genesis through the book of Revelation, the Bible tells the story of God. As you read and study, remember that God is the main character. The Bible is God's love story for humanity, filled with stories of rescue, redemption, and restoration.

The following pages provide an overview of the story of God by using a wide-angle lens so you can see the big picture. It also provides opportunities for you to meet God in the pages of the Bible. Our desire is for you to increase your understanding of God and deepen your relationship with Him as you read and reflect upon Scripture.



This topic is designed to help you.

- **Gain a greater understanding of God.**
- **See how the story of God frames the books and stories of the Bible.**
- **Become more comfortable and confident in reading the Bible.**
- **Most importantly, consider how God is asking you to respond to what you are discovering, both about Him and you.**

What's your favorite story or movie? What makes for a good storyline?

7.1.1 THE STORY OF GOD



The Bible is the story of God. Scripture fits together to reveal God's heart, character, and story. It is an invitation to come to know God as we meet Him in the Bible. Let's imagine the Story of God as 6 unfolding acts using the analogy of a play.

As you read, keep in mind the Bible's overall storyline and major themes, noted below:

- **The continual reign of God.**
- **God's desire for His world.**
- **God is at work to redeem humanity and restore creation.**

“

The story of God is the story of the “true God who loves His children, who established for them a way of salvation and provided a route to eternity. Each story reveals the God of grace—the God who speaks, the God who acts, the God who listens, the God whose love for his people culminated in his sacrifice of Jesus, his only Son, to atone for the sins of humanity.”

The Story, by Max Lucado and Randy Frazee page vii

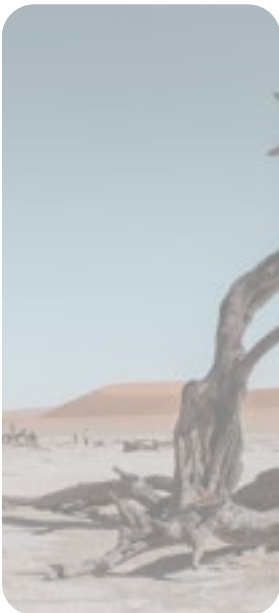


ACT 1: CREATION (GENESIS 1-2)

The story of God begins in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. God is introduced as the Creator. He made everything. He created man and woman in His image. In the beginning, the world was marked by harmony and peace. God made humans and placed them on the earth so He could have a relationship with them. He asked them to take care of creation.

“Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good! And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day. So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed.”

GENESIS 1:31-2:1



ACT 2: CHOICE TO CHAOS (GENESIS 3-11)

The saddest day in history happened when sin entered the story. Adam and Eve did not trust God and disobeyed. Their rebellion caused terrible loss for all creation, bringing confusion, conflict, and chaos. Human beings' face-to-face relationship with God was severed.

Our fractured relationship with God began filtering into every aspect of life. Humanity began to experience pain and suffering. Conflict and hatred erupted between human beings, and even the earth started to feel the effects of sin. No longer were men and women stewarding the land in its natural rhythms. “The tragic accounts of the mistakes and poor choices of Adam and Eve, and their firstborn son Cain, are echoed in the later stories of hardship and tragedy for their children and their children’s children.” *The Story: The Bible as One Continuing Story of God and His People*, Page 7.

Thankfully, the story doesn’t end there. Throughout history, we find God seeking to rescue, redeem, and restore what has been lost.



ACT 3: CALLED PEOPLE (ISRAEL) (GENESIS 12-MALACHI)

God chooses to carry His story forward through human beings. God calls the people of Israel to be His representatives in the world. He pursues His people and promises to rescue and redeem them. The stories of the Old Testament point to a consistent pattern -- God provides, human beings rebel and disobey, and consequences follow, but God is faithful to call them back and rescue them.

God uses men and women to guide His people to a life of trust and surrender. This cycle of rebellion and repentance continued for hundreds of years, yet God kept working to reveal Himself and restore the relationship with Him.



ACT 4: CHRIST JESUS (THE GOSPELS - MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, JOHN)

God entered the world as promised. Thousands of years earlier, God promised to rescue, redeem, and restore His creation. This promise of a Messiah was fulfilled in Jesus. God had brought His Kingdom to earth through the life and ministry of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus’ death and resurrection made it possible for anyone who would believe in Him and follow His ways to know and be known by God. In Jesus, all things are being made new.



ACT 5: CHURCH—SENT PEOPLE (ACTS-JUDE)

The story of God is far from finished. Again, God chooses to carry His story forward through human beings. A few followers grew quickly until many people spread the message of Jesus. Acts and the letters of the New Testament were written to offer encouragement, hope, and guidance to the followers of Jesus. Acts 1:8 reads, “Jesus said: ‘You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’”

The book of Acts and the letters to the early church are invitations to participate in God’s story. Although Jesus is no longer physically present, His power is now available to His followers through the Holy Spirit. As promised, God placed His Spirit into His followers-- giving them the strength, comfort, and courage they would need to continue His work in our fractured world.



ACT 6: RE-CREATION (REVELATION)

The final book in the Bible gives a glimpse of what is to come. Revelation reminds us that God will complete His plan to rescue those who surrender their lives to Him and restore creation. Until then, Jesus’ followers, with the help of the Holy Spirit, are to be His representatives, working to bring God’s Kingdom fully to the world.



Watch The Story of the Bible by The Bible Project.
Huddle Guide Resource: 7.1.1

Scripture
Observation
Application
Prayer

What did it mean, then?
What does it mean, today?
What is it saying to me?
What will I do?

7.1.2 DIVING DEEPER

Answer the following questions and write down what you discover.

🕒 **Before reading this topic, what was your understanding of the Story of God?**

🕒 **How does thinking of the Story of God in 6 acts help you understand God's heart and intentions toward our world?**



Watch The Story of the Bible by The Bible Project.
Huddle Guide Resource Links 7.1.1

🕒 **What stood out from the video?**

You will dive deeper into the different acts in The Story of God. This topic looks at Act 1: Creation and Act 2: Choice to Chaos.

GOD'S INTENTIONS

In the very first pages of the Bible, we begin to see who God is and His desire for His creation.

The grand story of God begins dramatically, revealing God as the masterful and deliberate Creator. All of creation has been magnificently crafted by God, and His work culminates in His creation of human beings. Made in His very image, we are His crowning glory.

A beautiful world had been perfectly fashioned for us by our loving Creator. The desire of our Maker was to dwell with us, offering His continual presence and entrusting humans with the care of creation.

To understand the Bible and see how our story fits within the story of God, we must consider God's intentions by looking at the story's origin. After sin enters the world, the world is no longer the way God intended. Yet, we see glimpses of God's intentions being restored as men and women submit their lives to God and join Him in bringing hope, healing, and restoration to the broken places of our world.

Let's dive deeper into the overarching story and see how it frames our reading of scripture.

CREATION

The story of God begins in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. God is introduced as the Creator. He made everything. He even made man and woman in His image. God wanted human beings to have a relationship with Him and each other. He asked them to take care of creation.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

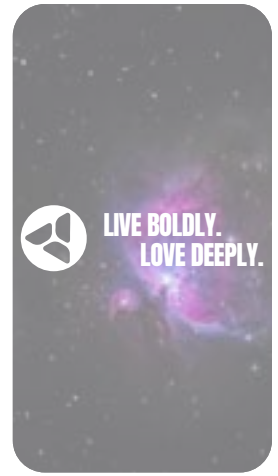
GENESIS 1:1-2



Watch The Bible Project Genesis 1
Huddle Guide Resource Links 7.1.3

"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them... God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array."

GENESIS 1:27-2:1



SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



Before your Huddle meeting, look up the following verses and write down what you discover.

🕒 **READ GENESIS CHAPTERS 1 AND 2.** At first glance, what do you notice about God, the Creator?

🕒 **Drill down a bit.** What are some of the specifics you notice in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 that seem important?

🕒 **In GENESIS 1:26-28, Moses (the author of Genesis) makes a purposeful statement about God's creation of human beings. What do you notice about the purpose of human beings?**

God creates and fills the earth, and then on the seventh day, God comes to rest and dwells in His sacred space where God lives with his people. Creation is established as God intended.

God has brought order to chaos and brought harmonious life to all creation. He has given men and women the responsibility to care for the creation and be fruitful and multiply.

God has created the earth and human beings with the capacity to join Him in caring for His creation. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to come alongside others in our spheres of influence so they may come to know God.

ACT 2: CHOICE TO CHAOS

The saddest day recorded in Scripture happens early as sin enters the scene. Human beings choose their own way instead of trusting their Creator. This fateful choice results in great loss, thwarting God's original intention for His creation and introducing pain, suffering, and violence.



- 🕒 **Read Genesis Chapter 3. What is the passage about? What is the big—picture view?**
- 🕒 **Drill down a bit. What are some of the specifics you notice in this passage that seem important?**
- 🕒 **What do you notice about God?**
- 🕒 **What do you notice about God's relationship with human beings?**
- 🕒 **What stands out to you in the passage?**

There's an interesting sequence of responses in Genesis 3. Consider how Adam and Eve respond to temptation through a series of reactions below:

DECEPTION/DOUBT: listening to and considering the lies the serpent told them
Which led to...

DISTRUST: second-guessing God's instructions and intentions
Which led to...

SHAME AND FEAR: pushing them to hide
Which led to...

BLAME: attempting to avoid responsibility by claiming someone else is responsible
Which led to...

SCRAMBLING: further distancing from God and trying to cover and hide

Temptation is part of life. When we are tempted, we may be inclined to respond in a particular way. Some tend to react with doubt or blame, while others are more likely to feel shame and run to hide. **Which of the above represents the ways you are inclined to respond to temptation or react when you make a mistake or sin?**

Genesis shows us the effects of human beings neglecting their relationship with God. Watch The Bible Project Genesis 1-11 (Huddle Guide Resource Links 7.1.5). Take a few moments to observe what as you watch this video as you prepare for your Huddle.



Step back. Ask the three questions we introduced earlier.

- 🕒 **God, what are You trying to tell me about You?**
- 🕒 **God, what are You trying to tell me about me?**
- 🕒 **God, how are You asking me to respond?**

7.3.1 TOGETHER

Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion. Make sure to talk about what you are discovering and any questions you may have.

- 🕒 **Pretend you are sharing The Story of God with someone who has never heard it. What would you say? Take turns sharing an overview of The Story of God with your group using your own words.**

- 🕒 **Compare what you noticed in GENESIS 1 & 2 with GENESIS 3.**

GENESIS 1 & 2

GENESIS 3

What do you notice about God?

God's relationship with human beings?

Human Beings' relationship with the earth?

Human Beings' relationship with each other?

- 🕒 **Share a time you chose to run away and hide from God or a time when you decided to run toward God. Why do you think you made this choice? What was the result?**



The Old Testament is a compilation of different literary styles, including historical narratives, psalms and poetry, wisdom writings, and prophetic books.

Throughout the Old Testament, God chooses to carry his story forward through human beings. God calls a people to be His representatives in the world. He pursues His people and promises to rescue and redeem them.

The stories of the Old Testament point to a consistent pattern: God provides, human beings rebel and disobey, and consequences follow, but God is faithful to rescue them. God uses men and women to guide His people back to a life of trusting and surrendering to Him. This cycle of rebellion and repentance continues for hundreds of years, yet God keeps working to reveal Himself and restore the people's relationship with Him.

Genesis chapters 1-3 reveal God masterfully creating all things and the tragic consequences of sin and poor choices. The story of God continues throughout the historical narratives with the recounting of the movements of God and His chosen people. God pursues them. He makes lasting promises intended not only for them but for all generations to follow. God rescues them from slavery. He provides a place to worship Him and promises to dwell there with them. He equips and enables them to enter the land He promised. Unfortunately, people rebel and do things their way.

Historical narratives are written in story format. They are meant to give meaning and direction to a particular group. They don't report history in general terms or detailed events like textbooks. The first five books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) were written by Moses to help the Israelites who had left Egypt. They wandered in the desert and needed to know their history and mission. These books tell the story of God's faithfulness and grace to His people. Leviticus and Deuteronomy are considered law books because they set up the guidelines for the people to maintain a relationship with God and showed how to live as the people of God in their context.

"God rescued the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, called them to a special relationship with Himself, revealed His will to them, and took care of them as they traveled through the wilderness. Finally, they stood on the verge of entering the land of Canaan, which God had promised to their ancestors." NLT Parallel Study Bible, Introduction to the Pentateuch, page 11.

These books tell many stories to provide an understanding of God's intentions, human beings' failures, and God's faithfulness. The historical narratives demonstrate God consistently working to bring people into a relationship with Him. From the books of Joshua through Esther, leaders, prophets, and Godly women help guide the people back to God.

In these stories, times of obedience brought blessing, while disobedience brought judgment and failure. The main themes of the Old Testament historical books are:

- 🔑 **Loyalty to God (we must be faithful and surrender to God)**
- 🔑 **The importance of Godly leadership to lead and guide**
- 🔑 **God is faithful in keeping His promises**



Adapted from African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries (ALARM, Inc.) Bible Survey: Old and New Testament Survey and Meeting God in the Bible is a collaborative project between ALARM, Inc. and Corinne Gunter.

GENESIS**Noah (GENESIS 6-9)**

Man's sin and disobedience reached a point where God brought a flood that destroyed man and other creation saving the family of Noah and pairs of animals

The Tower of Babel (GENESIS 11:1-9)

Man's continuation in sin caused God to confuse their language, marking the beginning of nations.

Abraham and Sarah (GENESIS 11-25)

God begins a new history with Abraham offering him a three-fold promise of land, nationhood, and blessing.

Isaac (GENESIS 24-26)

God renews his promise with Abraham through Isaac (GENESIS 26:2-4).

Jacob (GENESIS 26-50)

God molds him into a useful tool in the link of the salvation story. His sons become the 12 tribes of Israel.

Joseph (GENESIS 37-50)

God uses Joseph being sold into slavery in Egypt to turn a family into a mighty nation.

EXODUS, LEVITICUS, NUMBERS, & DEUTERONOMY**Moses (EXODUS, LEVITICUS, NUMBERS & DEUTERONOMY)**

Moses is called by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and out of slavery.

Aaron (EXODUS 4-40)

Aaron is Moses' brother and is called to serve with Moses. God uses Aaron as a spokesman.

Joshua (EXODUS 18 - JOSHUA 24)

Joshua becomes the leader of the Israelites after Moses' death and leads the Israelites into the Promised Land.

JUDGES & RUTH**Deborah (JUDGES 4-5)****Gideon (JUDGES 6-8)****Jephthah (JUDGES 12)****Samson (JUDGES 13-16)****Ruth (THE BOOK OF RUTH)**

The story of Ruth occurred during the time of the judges and is a powerful story of righteousness and devotion to God and God's faithful care and provision.

1 and 2 SAMUEL

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



Samuel (1 SAMUEL 1-4)

Israel wanted a king, and God told Samuel to appoint Saul. Samuel was the last judge and first prophet. He transitioned Israel from judges to kings.

Saul (1 SAMUEL 10-31)

Saul, the first king of Israel began well but soon became an ungodly tyrant.

David (1 SAMUEL 16- 2 SAMUEL)

Israel wanted a king, and God told Samuel to appoint Saul. Samuel was the last judge and first prophet. He transitioned Israel from judges to kings.

1 & 2 KINGS

Solomon (1 KINGS 1-11)

Solomon is David's son. David makes Solomon king. Under Solomon's leadership, the kingdom reached its political and economic peak. During Solomon's leadership, the temple was constructed and dedicated. After Solomon's death, the kingdom was divided into 10 northern tribes of Israel and 2 southern tribes of Judah. The southern tribes continue the line of David.

1 & 2 CHRONICLES

1 CHRONICLES tells the story of Israel from a priestly perspective. It reminds them to remain faithful to God as they wait for the future Messiah.

2 CHRONICLES is a book of revivals. Pay attention to the characteristics and outcomes of the revivals that occurred under these Kings:

Asa (2 CHRONICLES 15)

Jehosaphat (2 CHRONICLES 20)

Joash (2 CHRONICLES 23-24)

Hezekiah (2 CHRONICLES 29-31)

Josiah (2 CHRONICLES 35)

1 & 2 SAMUEL / 1 & 2 KINGS FOCUS:

The continuation of Israel's history from the united kingdom to the two captivities

Political history

Prophetic authorship; emphasized the prophetic ministry and moral concerns

More negative rebellion and tragedy

Message of judgment; Humanity's failings

Emphasize kings and prophets

1 & 2 CHRONICLES FOCUS:

Focuses on the southern kingdom and the line of David

Religious history

Priestly authorship; emphasize the priestly ministry and spiritual concerns

More positive-apostasy (turning away from God) but hope in spite of tragedy

Message of hope; God's faithfulness

Emphasized the temple and priests

NEHEMIAH

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



Nehemiah (a contemporary of Ezra and cupbearer to the king in the Persian palace) obtained permission, supplies, and money from the king to rebuild and restore the walls of Jerusalem. He rebuilds the walls and spends years reviving and reforming the people of God through his life and leadership.

ESTHER

Esther tells the story of how God protected and delivered His people through Queen Esther and Mordecai. For context, read Ezra chapters 6 and 7. Esther steps up while those who remained in exile were in danger of being killed.

7.4.2 DIVING DEEPER | HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Choose 1 person from the storylines from the previous pages and read the corresponding Bible passages. Write down the references for the Bible passages you chose. Then complete the following chart for each.

STORYLINE _____

Step back. Ask the three questions we introduced earlier.

🕒 **God, what are You trying to tell me about You?**

🕒 **God, what are You trying to tell me about me?**

🕒 **God, how are You asking me to respond?**

🕒 **Reflecting on your journey with God is a great way to remember His love and faithfulness. Record three or four events, people, or places that made you aware of God and His love for you. Before you begin, ask God to show you what He wants you to notice.**

Events/People/Places

What did you notice about God?

7.4.3 WRITINGS OF THE PROPHETS



The story of God continues in the writings of the Prophets by revealing God's desire to communicate His heart to the people. Prophet means to "speak for," and the Prophets of the Old Testament were God's spokesmen. The prophets would receive and relay God's messages.

Through the prophets, God spoke words of warning and promised a future deliverance. The prophets called the Israelites to repent from their sinful behavior and turn to follow Him. This cycle of rebellion and repentance continued for hundreds of years, yet God faithfully sought to reveal Himself and restore the people to a relationship with Him. The prophetic books were written by real people responding to real situations. Most of the words of the prophets are written in the form of poetry.

Because the people's rebellion against God and His law was blatant, the prophets spoke out. They continually reminded the Israelites that they belonged to God, and He was Ruler over all things and nations. Therefore, they expressed both words of judgment (warning against sinful behavior) and redemption (God's continual desire to rescue, redeem, and restore).

The prophets called people to reflect God's character and walk in His ways.

THE FOLLOWING THEMES ARE FOUND ACROSS THE PROPHETIC BOOKS:

- ❖ See with God's eternal perspective.
- ❖ Believe God to be above all and ruler of all things.
- ❖ Call for justice and righteousness.
- ❖ Call for repentance from sin.
- ❖ Warn of and announce judgment.
- ❖ Anticipate the future reconciliation of God with His people.



Watch The Bible Project and The Prophets
Huddle Guide Resource Links 7.4.3

God faithfully sought to reveal Himself and restore the people to a relationship with Him.

Look up the following verses and write down what you discover.

- 🕒 **Turn to Isaiah 49. The people of Israel felt that God had forgotten them, but Isaiah pointed out that God would never forget them. READ ISAIAH 49:8-18, and record what you notice.**

Step back. Ask the three questions we introduced earlier.

- 🕒 **God, what are You trying to tell me about You?**
- 🕒 **God, what are You trying to tell me about me?**
- 🕒 **God, how are You asking me to respond?**

7.4.5 TOGETHER

Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion. Make sure to talk about what you are discovering and any questions you may have.

- 🕒 **Which Bible story or character in the Historical Narratives did you read about this week? What did you notice about God and the person (or people group)? Have each Huddle member share.**
- 🕒 **What themes did you notice as people were sharing?**
- 🕒 **Reflect on the words of Isaiah found below. Circle the ways God is faithful to His people.**

The Lord will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. Some of you will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as a rebuilders of walls and a restorer of homes.

ISAIAH 58:11-12

- 🕒 **How might God ask you to rebuild or restore broken things in your life or come alongside people and places He has placed in your sphere of influence?**



The wisdom writings should be read and interpreted based on their overall purpose and message. Together, these writings encourage us to consider how to live wisely. The wisdom books were written by various individuals, and most are unknown. The wisdom writings have primarily been arranged either chronologically or by the author. In Old Testament times, a group of people was sought out to provide guidance in making wise choices.

The Old Testament books of **PROVERBS, JOB, ECCLESIASTES, SONG OF SONGS** (or Song of Solomon), and some of the Psalms are considered wisdom writings. These writings would guide the people and future generations to the source of wisdom to help them live wisely.

Generally, there are two broad categories within wisdom literature: proverbial wisdom and speculative wisdom.

- 🕒 **Proverbial wisdom, found in the book of Proverbs, concentrates on practical attitudes and behaviors of everyday life. They convey basic values and offer memorable sayings for the making of responsible choices.**
- 🕒 **Speculative wisdom, as found in Job and Ecclesiastes, is meant to be thoughtfully read, allowing time for reflection. This type of writing challenges the reader to wrestle with the great issues of life.**

Although each book was written to provide guidance and counsel, there are different styles of wisdom writing.

PROVERBS is a collection of concise statements regarding basic attitudes and patterns of behavior for mature and responsible adulthood.

ECCLESIASTES is a monologue (a speech or writing) from one person (Solomon) reflecting on what he thought mattered in life.

JOB is a dialogue or conversation between Job and his friends sharing their opinions on the truth about life and suffering.

SONG OF SONGS is a love song or poem about the joy and fulfillment of sexual intimacy in a marriage relationship. More importantly, it pictures Israel as God's espoused bride (see HOSEA 2:19-20) and the church as the bride of Christ.

Wisdom literature is meant to help people learn to make Godly choices. A good deal of wisdom writings uses literary techniques (i.e. parallelisms, acrostics, alliteration, numerical sequences, and comparisons) to be more easily remembered.



We must resist taking portions of these writings and using them to make sweeping claims or promises. Proverbs were not meant to be dissected. Neither were they intended to be formulas for guaranteed results. In contrast, they are brief sayings that are easy to remember. Their function is similar to other common sayings, like “Look before you leap.” Like wisdom writings, these figures of speech point toward a general truth rather than an exact declaration.



**LIVE BOLDLY.
LOVE DEEPLY.**

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



For example, the book of Job contains a series of dialogues dealing with suffering. Reading only a portion of Job or ignoring the context of the entire book would result in all sorts of bad advice and incorrect conclusions. The majority of Job is simply a conversation between friends who, while well-meaning, are desperately wrong in their conclusions and advice. It is not until the end of the story that the words of God are recorded.

Ecclesiastes is a monologue in which the author often refers to the vanity, meaninglessness, shortness, and futility of life. A quick reading may initially be confusing, and some passages seem contradictory. However, reading within the broader context of the Bible encourages a person to embrace life and its various seasons as a gift from God, even though difficulties and uncertainty will come.

Song of Songs is a lengthy poem with several scenes celebrating the sexual love between a man and woman within the context of marriage. It is written in three voices (noted by the NIV headings): the woman (beloved), the man (lover), and the woman’s companions (friends). Although not in the original writings, the headings help the reader see when the speaker changes. The poetry is rich and full of powerful images intended to induce imagination. The purpose of this book depends on the viewpoint. Some say it is primarily fictional, while others say it is allegorical or historical. “Whatever the case, the book has spiritual illustrations and application. Historically, it depicts the wooing and the wedding of a shepherdess by King Solomon and the joys and heartaches of wedded love. Allegorically, it pictures Israel as God’s espoused bride (see Hosea 2:19-20) and the church as the bride of Christ... The book explores the relationship dimensions between two lovers: attraction, desire, companionship, pleasure, union, separation, faithfulness, and praise. Like Ecclesiastes, this little book is not easy to outline. However, it can be divided into the beginning of love 1:1- 5:1 and the broadening of love 5:2-8:14.” ALARM WLTI Bible Survey Module p. 43



Anyone who seeks to apply God’s truth daily and learn from his or her experiences can become wise eventually.”

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, p. 229

THESE WRITINGS REMIND US:

- 🕒 **Wisdom begins with acknowledging and surrendering to God.**
- 🕒 **Wisdom focuses on a person’s beliefs, thoughts, and behavior.**
- 🕒 **Wisdom is learning how to make choices that honor God.**

7.4.7 DIVING DEEPER | WISDOM WRITINGS

Look up the following verses and write down what you discover.

Before reading the passage, pray, asking God to help you identify areas in your life where you need wisdom so that you will honor Him with your thoughts and behaviors.

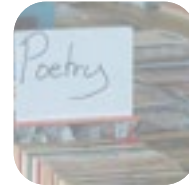
- 🕒 **After King David's death, Solomon becomes king. Even though 1 Kings isn't a wisdom book, it shows Solomon to be a man who desired to be wise. READ 1 KINGS 3:1-12.**

- 🕒 **What is the main theme of these verses?**

- 🕒 **What do you think about Solomon's request to God in verses 8 & 9?**

- 🕒 **The first chapter of Proverbs talks about the overall purpose of the book. READ PROVERBS 1:1-6. What is the purpose of the book of Proverbs?**

- 🕒 **The book of Proverbs is filled with general wisdom principles. READ PROVERBS 3 to discover some of the wisdom principles. Make a list of what you discover about living wisely from these verses.**



SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



The **BOOK OF PSALMS** is one of the Old Testament's most loved and quoted books. It is a collection of inspired Hebrew musical poems containing words spoken to or about God.

The writers use creative imagery, leading to a deeper understanding of God and His relationship with human beings. Although written thousands of years ago, these songs and prayers help us express ourselves to God. The Psalms also point toward God's faithfulness and encourage worship and thanksgiving.

David wrote 73 of the 150 Psalms. Moses wrote Psalm 90, and Solomon wrote Psalms 72 and 127. The remaining psalms were written by various individuals who were part of a school of musicians.

The book of Psalms is a poetic collection of hymns and prayers that reminded the people of Israel of God's character and their history with Him. The book of Psalms includes 150 practical and purposeful songs and prayers to connect the worshiper and God. They help people worship together as they gather in groups and provide words for individuals to express their hearts to God.

The Psalms were songs written and collected to remind the exiled Jews of God's desires for them. They were meant to be a gift to God and an inspiration to the world as they spoke of His faithfulness and worthiness to be worshiped and obeyed.

“

Because psalms are basically prayers and hymns, by their very nature, they are addressed to God or express truth about God in song.

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, p. 205

THE PSALMS REMIND US:

- 🕒 **God is the Creator of all, and everything is subject to His rule.**
- 🕒 **God is loving, faithful, merciful, good, and righteous.**
- 🕒 **God desires to be known and followed.**
- 🕒 **God invites our open, honest, and heartfelt prayers.**
- 🕒 **God is worthy to be worshiped.**

Look up the following verses and write down what you discover.

🕒 PSALM 1

God wants to engage with us through Scripture. Ask God to help you come to know Him more through reading Psalms. READ PSALM 1 and record your observations.

Since David wrote almost half of the Psalms, it is important to learn about him and the role he played in God's story. David was chosen by God to be the King of Israel as a young shepherd boy. His story can be found in 1 and 2 Samuel. It took 15 years for David to become king. David's psalms reflect both joy and struggle in his journey with God.

🕒 David wrote Psalm 59 during times of difficulty and danger. READ PSALM 59. What words or phrases stood out to you?

🕒 What is the main theme of these verses?

Step back. Ask the three questions we introduced earlier.

🕒 God, what are You trying to tell me about You?

🕒 God, what are You trying to tell me about me?

🕒 God, how are You asking me to respond?

🕒 PSALM 91

Many of the Psalms are reminders that God can be our dwelling place and refuge.

🕒 READ PSALM 91. What words or phrases stood out to you?

🕒 What is the main theme of these verses?

Step back. Ask the three questions we introduced earlier.

🕒 God, what are You trying to tell me about You?

🕒 God, what are You trying to tell me about me?

🕒 God, how are You asking me to respond?

7.4.10 TOGETHER

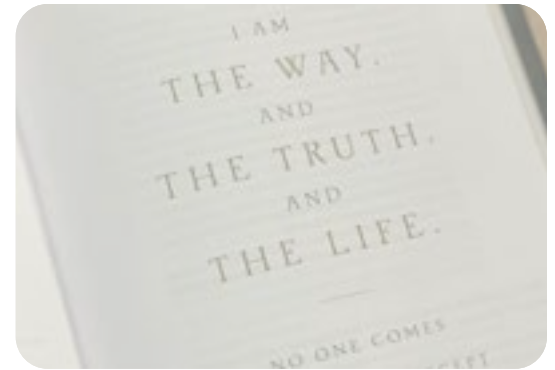
Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion. Make sure to talk about what you are discovering and any questions you may have.

🕒 **Who has taught you, both through words of wisdom and by example? What did you learn from this person?**

🕒 **In what area(s) do you most need to trust God and not depend on your understanding? Take time to pray for wisdom for each Huddle member.**

🕒 **What have you discovered about the Psalms? What is your favorite Psalm? Why?**

🕒 **What is your favorite worship song? How does it help you connect with God and remember what is true about who He is?**



Turning the page from the Old to New Testament begins with the story of Jesus Christ's birth. This event had been prophesied about in the Old Testament, and now after 400 years of silence, the Messiah comes into our world.

God came to the world He created because He had promised thousands of years earlier to rescue, redeem, and restore His creation. This promise of a Messiah was fulfilled in Jesus.

God had brought His Kingdom to earth through the life and ministry of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus' death and resurrection made it possible for anyone who would believe in Him and follow His ways to know and be known by God. In Jesus, all things are being made new.

The gospels reveal God's continually unfolding plan to bring human beings into a relationship with Him through Jesus. Their purpose was to help people see Jesus for who He was in hopes that they would choose to follow Him. These books tell the same story, each in a distinct voice.

The gospels are historical narratives about Jesus. Generally, they can be divided into sayings of and narratives about Jesus. Though each gospel speaks to a different audience, the message is the same: God is fulfilling His promise to rescue, redeem, and restore His creation. This promise of a Savior made thousands of years before has been fulfilled. Now we see God in flesh, ushering in His kingdom through the life and ministry of His Son, Jesus.

MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, and **JOHN** each wrote their respective narratives about Jesus.

- 🕒 **Matthew wrote from firsthand experience as one of the twelve disciples to a primarily Jewish audience.**
- 🕒 **Written first, Mark is considered a resource for the other books. Mark's writings are a recollection of Peter's memoirs and were written for the broad audience of the church.**
- 🕒 **Luke gathered eyewitness accounts and wrote based on his research. His style was more narrative and was intended for a Gentile audience.**
- 🕒 **John, one of the twelve original disciples, provides a firsthand testimony of time spent with Jesus. He was the leader of the disciples and a member of Christ's inner circle of friends (Peter, James, and John).**

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



The gospels should be read as a collection of teachings and stories about Jesus.



Watch How to Read Gospel
Huddle Guide Resource
Links 7.5

As you read the gospels, remember the historical context of Jesus' life and the primary audiences of the four gospel writers. Jesus lived and taught in Palestine, a rural, farming, primarily Jewish community whose native language was Aramaic. Because the stories about Jesus rapidly spread into Rome, Ephesus, and Antioch, the gospel writers needed to communicate effectively beyond Jewish followers. When John wrote this final gospel, the message of Christ spread not only to the Jewish people but also to the Gentiles. While lists of Hebrew genealogies spoke volumes to the Jewish nation, they didn't interest the Gentiles.

These new followers needed to express Jesus as fully human and God in practical language. John uses Greek to speak of forgiveness, healing, mercy, joy, and love available through Jesus Christ.

Understanding the method Jesus uses and the audience He is addressing is helpful. Determining whether Jesus is speaking to His disciples, the larger crowds, or an adversary will help you understand the point of the teaching. Jesus also uses a variety of communication styles, including hyperbole, proverbs, metaphors, poetry, story, and questions.

As you examine the gospels, try to read on two levels.

- 🕒 **First, pay attention to what Jesus is saying and doing and why this would have been important to the primary audience of each gospel.**
- 🕒 **Second, read the surrounding passages and consider parallel stories found in the other gospels to enhance your understanding further.**

THE RECURRING THEMES FOUND IN THE GOSPELS ARE:

- 🕒 **The Kingdom of God has come. God reigns, and His priorities are experienced in and through Jesus. God is present with His people, and their lives show His kingdom to be honest and present.**
- 🕒 **Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promise. The Gospels illustrate how, through Jesus, God has been faithful to keep His promise of redemption.**
- 🕒 **Jesus' unparalleled authority. Jesus possesses authority because He is both human and divine. Jesus is God with us – Emmanuel.**
- 🕒 **God's redemption includes all people and nations. The gift of salvation offered by Jesus is for everyone.**
- 🕒 **Jesus is the basis for faith. Bold statements of who Jesus is and what He has accomplished provide the foundation for our faith.**
- 🕒 **The death and resurrection of Jesus are central to the gospels. Without the cross, Jesus would be a good man. However, the gospels reveal Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah. Jesus was the final sacrifice for sins.**
- 🕒 **Jesus will return. The Gospels teach of the time when Jesus will return and complete what He has begun. His kingdom and reign will be fully established and will last for eternity.**

Look up the following verses and write down what you discover.

TITLE/DESCRIPTION**MEANING**

🔗 **MATTHEW 16:15-17**

🔗 **LUKE 1:35**

🔗 **LUKE 2:10-12**

🔗 **JOHN 4:10**

🔗 **JOHN 6:35; 6:48-51**

🔗 **JOHN 8:12**

🔗 **JOHN 10:6-11; 10:14-15**

🔗 **JOHN 14:6**

🕒 A WORD ABOUT JESUS' PARABLES

Jesus came to Earth to provide a way for mankind to be reconciled with God and to reveal His Kingdom. This Kingdom would eventually make all things new by bringing hope and healing to the broken places of the world. His message would be unlike anything His listeners had ever heard. Sometimes Jesus spoke and taught in a straightforward way. Other times He used parables to engage the hearts and minds of His listeners. This method was a long-accepted Jewish means of teaching.

Parable (noun)—a story or ordinary object used to illustrate deeper spiritual understanding.



Passionate about getting His message across, Jesus used parables to connect with all kinds of individuals. He used things they readily understood to open their eyes to the character of God and His Kingdom. Because cultural norms were woven so tightly into the fabric of the people's lives, it would take a masterful storyteller to explain the realities of this new Kingdom. The parables of Jesus would change hearts, challenge deep-rooted beliefs, and reshape the imaginations of those who would hear and receive their message."

Parables of Jesus by Corinne Gunter, Cara Howard, & Julie Meiners (2018)

🕒 As you've explored the gospels, you've seen Jesus reveal Himself through His titles, descriptions, actions, and teachings. What is something new you've learned about the identity of Jesus? How will knowing this impact your life?

🕒 Jesus sometimes taught using parables, metaphors, and stories. Below you will find some of the parables of Jesus. Read through the following parables. What is the MAIN THEME or point Jesus is trying to make in each parable? Dive deeper using some of the tools you discovered from SOAP 2.0. See what you discover together.

🕒 FARMER SOWING SEEDS - LUKE 8:4-15

🕒 SHEEP AND SHEPHERD - LUKE 15:1-7

🕒 FATHER AND SONS - LUKE 15:11-31

🕒 WISE AND FOOLISH BUILDERS - LUKE 6:46-49



Look up the following verses and write down what you discover.

Invite God to join you as you observe and respond to Scripture. Seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in helping you to understand the importance of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Together, we will look at some events during the last days of Jesus' life on earth. As you read and listen, make notes of what you observe.

🕒 **READ MARK CHAPTERS 14, 15, AND 16. What do you notice about Jesus? What do you notice about disciples and others?**

🕒 **PLOT TO KILL JESUS - MARK 14:1-2**

🕒 **LAST SUPPER - MARK 14:12-16**

🕒 **JESUS PRAYS IN GETHSEMANE - MARK 14:32-42**

🕒 **AT THE TRIAL - MARK 14:53-15:5**

🕒 **JESUS WAS SENTENCED TO DEATH - MARK 15:6-20**

🕒 **CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH - MARK 15:21-41**

🕒 **JESUS' RESURRECTION - MARK 16:1-8**

🕒 **John 17 describes Jesus' prayer as he enters the last few days before His crucifixion. As we read John 17, we have the benefit of knowing the rest of the story. On the other hand, the disciples had no idea what was coming. Jesus' hour has come. He will be arrested, mocked, interrogated, beaten, and abandoned.**

His prayer as He contemplates what must now occur is personal and prophetic. He will ask for strength to complete His mission. He will ask His Father to be glorified. And He will ask His Father to care for and protect those who follow Him.

It encourages His followers to go to the Father in the same manner and know He will listen. After His prayer, Jesus steps forward, fully accepting His mission.

Knowing the difficulties that will soon be upon Jesus and His followers, Jesus seeks out His Father in his longest documented prayer in John 17. It poignantly reveals more of Jesus' heart and identity.

For whom and what does Jesus pray?

🕒 **JOHN 17:1-5**

🕒 **JOHN 17:6-19**

🕒 **JOHN 17:20-26**

7.5.3 TOGETHER

Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion regarding what you have been discovering and any questions you may have using these questions.

- ④ **What stood out to you in this topic?**
- ④ **What did you notice in reading JOHN 17?**
- ④ **In light of the difficult coming days, Jesus prays that His followers will have unity. Division is human nature. Unity is extraordinary and could be the thing to supernaturally convince the world of Jesus. What does Jesus say about unity in JOHN 17:20-23?**
- ④ **READ JOHN 16 using SOAP 1.0, and discuss any discoveries you make as you read more of the context of this passage.**
- ④ **Although the followers of Jesus were confused and discouraged after His death, His resurrection would give them new hope. How do you see Jesus inviting His followers into the story of God in MATTHEW 28:18-20?**



The story of God is far from finished. Again, God chooses to carry His story forward through human beings. A few followers grew quickly until many people spread the message of Jesus. Acts and the letters of the New Testament were written to offer encouragement and hope to the followers of Jesus.

The book of Acts and the letters to the early church are invitations to become a part of God's story. Although Jesus is no longer physically present, His power is now available to His followers. As promised, God placed His Spirit into His followers—giving them the strength, comfort, and courage they would need to continue His work in our fractured world.

Before He left Earth, Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

ACTS 1:8

This work will not be easy. The early church would be called to live in sacrificial ways. They would face challenges. They would experience suffering. Even though life on earth will have pain and suffering, Jesus tells His followers, "Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

JOHN 16:33

In addition to Acts, there are twenty—one books in the Bible that are, in fact, letters. These letters were written to communities of Jesus' followers and often addressed questions and concerns facing a particular church. Paul wrote thirteen letters to the earliest churches established at the onset of Christianity.

As with all Scripture, it is imperative to consider the overall purpose of a passage and look for the BIG IDEA instead of drawing conclusions from isolated verses.

THE LETTERS LEND TO OUR UNDERSTANDING BY:

- 🕒 **Affirming the identity and mission of Jesus.**
- 🕒 **Encouraging followers of Jesus to live in God-honoring ways.**
- 🕒 **Emphasizing the breadth of God's love for His world.**
- 🕒 **Reminding the reader that God holds all things in His hands.**

AS YOU READ THE LETTERS, PAY ATTENTION TO:

- 🕒 **What you learn about Jesus and His mission.**
- 🕒 **How Jesus' followers and the early churches are living out their faith.**
- 🕒 **Particular issues or concerns each letter addresses and the application it holds for us today.**

To learn more about the New Testament Letters, watch the Bible Project's teachings. [Huddle Guide Resource Links 7.6](#)



Look up the following verses and write down what you discover.

- 🕒 **The story of the sent people (church) begins in the book of Acts. READ ACTS 1:1-11. What do you notice? What instructions do the followers of Jesus receive in verse 8?**

- 🕒 **READ ACTS 2. Why was Peter's teaching on the Day of Pentecost so effective? How did the crowd respond?**

- 🕒 **The new faith community came together to strengthen each other (see ACTS 2:42-47). What kinds of behaviors do you notice in this community?**

- 🕒 **God used Peter and Cornelius to expand the church beyond Jewish boundaries. Describe Peter's experience in ACTS 10:1-11:18 as he understood that God's story was meant for everyone.**

Despite the believers' new found hope in Jesus, things became difficult. Some were dispersed, no longer able to find comfort in their community. Some had their possessions seized. Others were imprisoned. Some were even put to death. Hebrews, Peter, James, and Jude were written to offer hope, comfort, and encouragement for followers of Christ to press on in their faith despite hardship. The following topic invites you to read a few selections of these letters. Make notes regarding how these letters would have encouraged the followers of Jesus.

HOW ARE THESE PASSAGES ENCOURAGING?

🕒 **1 PETER 1**

🕒 **JAMES 1**

🕒 **HEBREWS 4**

7.6.2 TOGETHER

Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion regarding what you have been discovering and any questions you may have using these questions.

- 🕒 **What stood out in your reading?**
- 🕒 **Look up JAMES 1:19-27 and discuss the new way of life that James calls Jesus' followers to live out.**
- 🕒 **ROMANS 12 summarizes God's desire for us to be living sacrifices. What does it look like to be a living sacrifice?**

- 🕒 **In the letter to the Galatians, chapter 5:16-26, we read about the fruit of the spirit as evidence of the Holy Spirit living in us. To what degree does your life exhibit the fruit of the spirit (verses 22-23) referred to by Paul in GALATIANS 5:22-23? Which one(s) seem to come more naturally in your life? Which one(s) seem to be more of a stretch?**
 - 🕒 **Ask a trusted friend to pray for the fruit of the spirit to grow in you.**

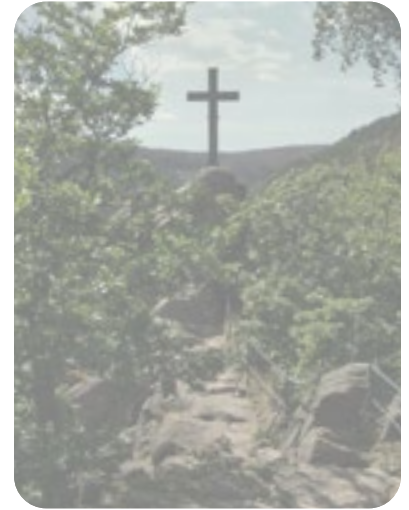
- 🕒 **When Jesus ascended to heaven to be with His Father, the Holy Spirit was sent to dwell in His followers. Together make a list of the role of the Holy Spirit in John 14:15-31.**

- 🕒 **Since Jesus returned to be with the Father, the Holy Spirit has been available to everyone who decided to surrender their life to Jesus and follow Him. When have you experienced comfort from, felt the presence of, or received help from the Holy Spirit? How would you describe these experiences?**



The writings of apostle John provide much of what we know about Jesus and the Kingdom of God, present and future. John describes the ministry of Jesus in his gospel and addresses specific issues within the early church through his letters. The book of Revelation offers a glimpse of God's final reign, the redemption of His people, and the restoration of all creation. Through John's writings, we find imagery and language that paint vivid pictures of Jesus and lend to further understanding God's story.

John wrote the book of Revelation after having a powerful vision while in exile on the island of Patmos. In this vision, an angel instructed John to record everything he saw. (Revelation 1:19) Revelation addresses seven churches in Asia, imploring them to surrender their lives to Jesus wholeheartedly. It also provides the church with a glimpse of eternity.



Overall, Revelation is a reminder that God will ultimately complete His plan to rescue and redeem those who surrender their life to Him and restore creation to its original intention. Until then, Jesus' followers are called to be His representatives, working under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to bring God's kingdom to the world while eagerly anticipating the day it will be fully realized.

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a great roar, 'Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!' And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living beings. And they fell before the throne with their faces to the ground and worshiped God. They sang, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength belong to our God forever and ever! Amen.'

REVELATION 7:9-11

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

REVELATION 21:1-4, NIV



John uses rich and unusual imagery in Revelation as he addresses seven churches in the Roman province of Asia. Like John, many members of these churches struggled as they experienced oppression and persecution for their faith. (Revelation 1:9) Because of the severe persecution, Jesus' followers needed to remember the promise of complete restoration and ultimate victory when Jesus returns.

The book of Revelation can be difficult to read without understanding its overall purpose. Unfortunately, varied interpretations have caused division in churches. Rather than considering bits and pieces and trying to read too much into the details, reading the entire book and seeing the visions as a whole will help you see the big picture and overall purpose of John's writings.



Apocalypses in general, and the Revelation in particular, seldom intend to give a detailed chronological account of the future. Their message tends to transcend this kind of concern. John's larger concern is that, despite present appearances, God is in control of history and the church. And even though the church will experience suffering and death, it will be triumphant in Christ, who will judge his enemies and save his people. All of the visions must be seen in terms of this greater concern."

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, page 257

AS YOU READ REVELATION, IT WILL BE HELPFUL TO REMEMBER THESE THEMES:

- 🕒 **God is in control of all things past, present, and future.**
- 🕒 **Suffering and death are part of this life.**
- 🕒 **The new age (Kingdom of God's reign) has begun through the coming of Jesus.**
- 🕒 **There will be a time of judgment, but Jesus' followers can be confident in their relationship with God through Jesus Christ, the slain lamb.**
- 🕒 **Jesus will return and establish His eternal Kingdom, redeeming all the effects of the Fall and restoring what has been lost and distorted throughout history.**

John concludes his writing with an invitation to his original audience and to us. "The Spirit and bride say 'Come!' And let the one who hears say, 'Come!' Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life."

REVELATION 22:17, NIV

Look up the following verses and write down what you discover.

- 🕒 **READ REVELATION 1.** What do you notice about why John wrote Revelation? Why would this be important to record?

- 🕒 **The book of Revelation begins with seven letters to seven churches. READ REVELATION CHAPTERS 2 AND 3.** What did Jesus tell these seven churches? What were they doing well? What did they need to change?

CHURCH OF...**DOING WELL****AREAS OF CHANGE****EPHESUS****SMYRNA****PERGAMUM****THYATIRA****SARDIS****PHILADELPHIA****LAODICEA**

- 🕒 **John paints a picture of the Kingdom coming in the following passages. What do you notice in each passage?**

🕒 **REVELATION 7:9-12**

🕒 **REVELATION 21:1-7**

- 🕒 **Much of the life we know today is not how God intended it to be. God promises a day when He will finally and fully restore all creation. How does imagining the day when we'll see the end of this story and experience the beginning of eternity provide hope to you and others?**

- 🕒 **Jesus says: "Come! Let the one who is thirsty come, and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life." REVELATION 22:17 How thirsty are you for Jesus in your life?**

- ⊕ Until God’s Kingdom is fully realized, Jesus’ followers, with the help of the Holy Spirit, are to be His representatives working to restore our world to God’s intention. This future space is where Jesus’ prayer in MATTHEW 6:9-10 will be fulfilled *“Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”*

We live in a fractured world reeling from the cumulative chaos of generations of human beings choosing their own way.

The Old Testament is complicated and reveals the best and worst of humanity. Much of the Old Testament tells the story of generations of people falling into patterns of disbelief, distrust, and disobedience resulting in devastating effects. There are stories of men and women being called by God to reveal His heart and ways to a broken and hurting world. And yet no matter what humans do, God continues to call people back to a relationship with Him.

In Jesus, we see God’s heart embodied. Jesus came to establish the Kingdom of God by redeeming and restoring the broken places of our world. Jesus’ life and ministry exposed the cracks in the foundation of the religious order because they had lost track of God’s heart and intentions for our world.

As you read Scripture, it is important to use a redemptive lens. A redemptive lens means Scripture and the story of God is about restoring and redeeming the broken nature of our world to His original intention.

In the beginning, creation was at peace. The Hebrew word for peace is shalom, which refers to completeness or wholeness. Shalom can be individual in nature. Shalom can also refer to the broader world in which we live.

When shalom is absent, wholeness is fractured and fragmented individually and collectively.



Watch The Bible Project’s video Heaven & Earth
Huddle Guide Resource Links 7.7.2



Watch The Bible Project’s video Shalom
Huddle Guide Resource Links 7.7.2



True peace (shalom) requires taking what is broken and restoring it to wholeness, whether it is in our lives, our relationships, or in our world.”

YouTube

7.7.3 TOGETHER

Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion regarding what you have been discovering and any questions you may have using these questions.

- 🕒 **What stood out in your reading?**
- 🕒 **Where do you see evidence of our world's broken and fractured nature?**
- 🕒 **Where do you see evidence of shalom becoming present in and around our world?**

“

Just as the opening word of Scripture speaks of God and creation, so the concluding word speaks of God and consummation. If there are ambiguities for us as to how all the details are to work out, there is no ambiguity as to the certainty that God will work it all out – in his time and in his way. Such certainty should serve for us as a warning and encouragement, as it did for the book's original recipients. Until Christ comes, we live out the future in the already, and we do so by hearing and obeying his Word.”

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, page 264

7.8 NEXT STEPS

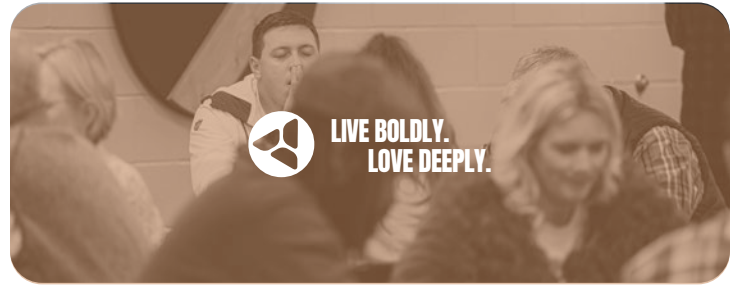
Before moving to the next topic, pause. Review your notes, reflect on your Huddle discussions, and jot down what you have discovered.

- 🕒 **How does understanding The Story of God impact your faith and how you view God and our world?**
- 🕒 **What would “living out the future” in the “already” look like in your life? In what ways do you feel called to partner with God in restoring shalom in our world?**

TOPIC EIGHT

8

PRAYER



INSTRUCTIONS

Prayer normally takes two sessions. The group should have read the topic before coming to Huddle. Take time to discuss what stood out to the group in the reading and Diving Deeper.

In this topic, you'll be introduced to and have the opportunity to practice various ways to pray.

In the first session, the focus will be the Lord's Prayer, and invite your Huddle to experience this prayer practice together.

In the second session, you'll be introduced to other ways of praying.

Finish this topic by discussing the Together questions.

As you prepare to move to the next topic, your Huddle leader will introduce Topic 9: Identity and invite the group to read the topic before the next Huddle.

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



8.1

INTRODUCTION

Prayer is conversation with God. Prayer is the space where we get to know God and allow ourselves to be known. It involves speaking and listening. It includes praise, adoration, confession, intercession, petition, lament, and guidance. When we talk with God we are declaring our dependence on God and our longing to be aware of his presence.

“

There is no right or wrong way to pray. Unfortunately, we can get so caught up in what we are saying that we lose track of the point. Prayer invites us... to lower our defenses and present the self that no other person fully knows to a God who already knows.”

Philip Yancey, Prayer: Does it Make Any Difference, p. 30

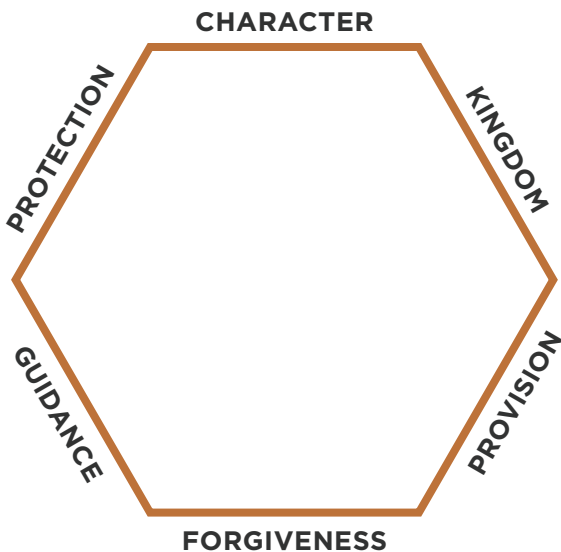
8.2 PRAYER SESSION 1 | THE LORD'S PRAYER

Before Huddle, look up the following verses and write down what you discover.

- 🕒 **As we begin thinking about prayer and practicing praying, let's LOOK AT MATTHEW 6:5-13. What do you notice about Jesus' instructions when the disciples asked him how to pray?**

- 🕒 **Reciting this prayer is a beautiful practice, especially as we pause to consider its rich meaning. READ MATTHEW 6:9-13. Describe your previous experience with the Lord's Prayer. What was it like? How was it practiced?**

- 🕒 **The hexagon shape provides a framework to guide our prayer by focusing on six different aspects of the Lord's Prayer.**



“Praying these six phrases, or aspects, of the Lord’s Prayer plants the seed of the Kingdom in our hearts that, when nourished, will bear fruit in our leadership of others and our walk with God.

Slow down and study each topic of the prayer. As you do so, you will find a framework in which every corner of your life is addressed. You might begin by praying each phrase word-for-word, giving pause so that your cares and concerns fill the space that phrase created.”

“Your prayers will take on an ever-growing shape and substance as you move from the Lord’s Prayer being something you learn how to recite to something that continually takes you into deeper communication with the Father.”

Mike Breen, Building a Discipleship Culture Study Guide, p. 42

Jesus gave us the example of how to pray, which is more straightforward than we sometimes make it. It is a simple yet profound framework that guides us beyond our habitual prayers into prayers of adoration, confession, intercession, petition, guidance, and warfare, declaring our dependence on God and seeing him as Lord.

MATTHEW 6:9-13

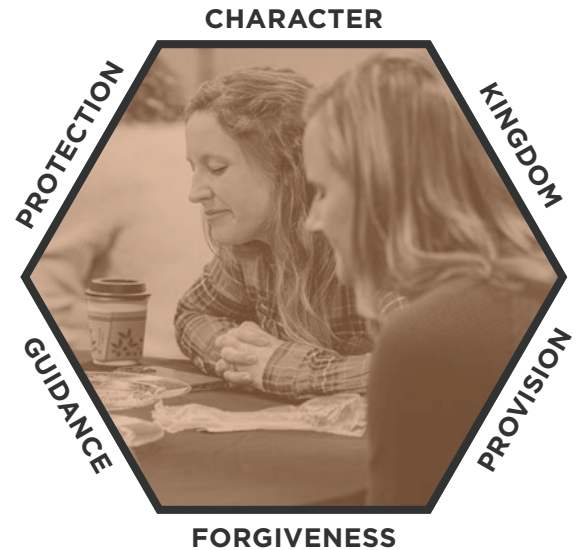
9 Pray like this: Our Father in heaven,
may your name be kept holy. (**CHARACTER**)

10 May your Kingdom come soon.
May your will be done on earth,
as it is in heaven. (**KINGDOM**)

11 Give us today the food we need, (**PROVISION**)

12 and forgive us our sins,
as we have forgiven those who sin against us.
(**FORGIVENESS**)

13 And don't let us yield to temptation,
(**GUIDANCE**) but rescue us from the evil one.
(**PROTECTION**)



THE FATHER'S CHARACTER

Jesus shows us that we can intimately interact with God. He is our Father, our Abba. There is an element of respect and reverence. He is in heaven and deserves to be hallowed (honored as holy, worthy of awe). He is both our Father and our King. How do you recognize God as Father and King?

THE FATHER'S KINGDOM

When you surrender to God and recognize He is Lord, you desire the things He wants. You desire for His Kingdom to come to Earth. How can you be part of building His Kingdom on Earth?

THE FATHER'S PROVISION

Jesus shows us that we can admit our need to God and request His provision. We have physical, spiritual, and emotional needs, and we can trust that He wants us to invite Him into every area of our lives. Where do you need to ask for His provision in your life?

THE FATHER'S FORGIVENESS

When we trespass (sin) against God, we're telling God that He and what He has provided for us is not enough to satisfy us; sin is an act of our distrust of Him. We must confess our sins against God and others and follow God's example by forgiving others. Where do you need to ask for forgiveness? Where do you need to forgive others?

THE FATHER'S GUIDANCE

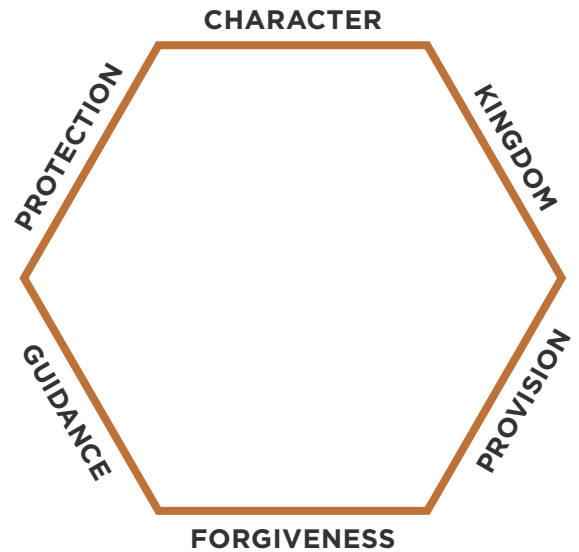
God wants us to go into the world to share His kingdom. But we should not be of the world and succumb to its temptations. We should pray for God to guide us in our interactions with the world as we seek to join His mission. Where do you need to ask for His guidance in your life?

THE FATHER'S PROTECTION

We are in a spiritual battle, and the enemy wants to distract us from God's presence and will in our lives. We can pray that God would protect us from temptation and spiritual warfare as we do His mission here on Earth. What do you need His divine protection from?

8.2.1 TOGETHER

Let's practice using the Lord's Prayer and hexagon shape as a prayer prompt. We are going to pray through the hexagon in our group line by line. We will take turns praying out loud for whatever God puts on our hearts.



- ④ **OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN, MAY YOUR NAME BE KEPT HOLY.**
What **CHARACTER** traits come to mind?

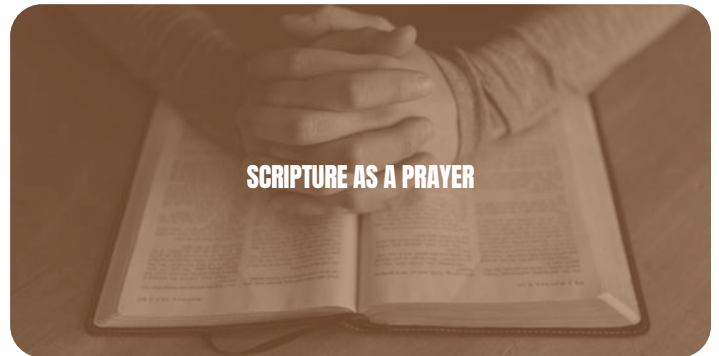
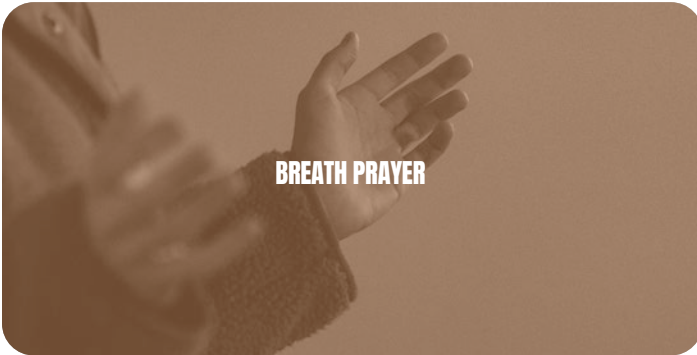
- ④ **MAY YOUR KINGDOM COME SOON. MAY YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.**
How do you long for the **KINGDOM** to come?

- ④ **GIVE US TODAY THE FOOD WE NEED,**
How do you or others you know need God's **PROVISION**?

- ④ **AND FORGIVE US OUR SINS, AS WE HAVE FORGIVEN THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST US.**
In what ways do you need to ask for or extend **FORGIVENESS**?

- ④ **AND DON'T LET US YIELD TO TEMPTATION,**
In what areas are you seeking **GUIDANCE**?

- ④ **BUT RESCUE US FROM THE EVIL ONE.**
How can you seek and rest in His **PROTECTION**?



8.3.1

BREATH PRAYER

Although rather simple, this practice requires a connection between the unconscious act of breathing and a conscious expression to God. The church has practiced breath prayer or “prayer of the heart” for millennia. The Eastern Orthodox Church, in particular, has seen breath prayer as a way of living out Paul’s instruction to “pray without ceasing.”

EXAMPLES

JESUS PRAYER

Take a moment to become aware of your breathing. It might help to find a quiet place — close your eyes and notice your breathing.

As you breath in — bring your thoughts to Jesus.

As you breath out — express a word of gratitude or need.

For example, breath in — saying “Lord, Jesus Christ” — breath out saying “have mercy on me.”

Throughout your day — as you notice your breathing — take note and express your gratitude to Jesus Christ.

ESSENCE OF THE PRACTICE

Repeat a simple one-sentence prayer.

Connect the prayer to your breathing and return to it throughout the day.

Breath prayers can be short prayers of love, gratitude, desire, surrender, etc.

MAKING IT YOUR OWN

Choose a scripture or spiritual truth and meditate on it for a few minutes. Consider what you recently have read, significant messages you have heard, or familiar phrases from a song. Put together a few words or a short phrase that is easy to remember and flows gracefully.

Quiet your mind and begin to recite the phrase either aloud or silently. I recommend aloud unless you are in a public location (that might be a bit too awkward).

As you breathe in and out -- simply whisper or say the statement over and over. You could do this while sitting at your desk, washing dishes, taking a walk, commuting to work, during your shower... then throughout the day try to remember to recite the statement as you become more aware of your own breathing and your connection with God.

HERE ARE A FEW PHRASES I'VE CREATED BASED ON SCRIPTURE TO GET YOU STARTED:

- 🕒 I will praise you with all my heart. PSALM 9:1
- 🕒 I trust in you for protection. PSALM 11:1
- 🕒 I wait quietly for you (breathing out) for you will never fail me (breathing in). PSALM 62
- 🕒 Help me recall what you have done for me. PSALM 77
- 🕒 You are the God of great wonders. PSALM 77:14
- 🕒 Bend down and answer me because I need your help. PSALM 86:1
- 🕒 I come to you (breathing out). Give me rest (breathing in). MATTHEW 11:28

There is no right or wrong way to do this. Breath prayers are short prayers of love, gratitude, desire, surrender, etc. Try this throughout the day.

By offering a simple prayer with every breath, we can be reminded that *"in him we live and move and exist"* (ACTS 17:28).

8.3.2 SCRIPTURE AS A PRAYER PROMPT

As you read the Bible, you'll find a variety of descriptions and metaphors for God.

One of the metaphors you'll notice is that of "shepherd." Most of us are familiar with Psalm 23 which begins with "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want...."

We'd love to invite you to think about God as your shepherd. Although it's a stretch to imagine the full significance of this metaphor (since we suburbanites have little reference for sheep and shepherding), there is still much to be discovered about who God is and how he relates to His sheep (I mean people).

READ PSALM 23 AND JOHN 10:1-18

As you read these two passages, what are you discovering about Who God is and how He thinks about you?

As you enter into prayer, meditate on this verse:



“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me...” John 10:14

Allow God to use this verse to begin your prayer. You may want to start with the phrase, “Father, I am so thankful that you are my shepherd.”

HERE’S AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT YOUR PRAYER MAY LOOK LIKE:

*Father God,
I am SO thankful that You are my Shepherd... leading and guiding me. You are all knowing, and Your wisdom I cannot fathom, so help me to hear Your voice at all times and know Your direction. Help me to not get impatient when You guide me to rest and to trust that You are leading me to green pastures where I can be fed and nourished and my soul can be restored. Just as a shepherd is constantly on guard protecting his flock, help me to have a deep understanding that you are always on watch concerning all that is going on in my life...nothing goes unnoticed by You. Give me ears and a heart that only hears You. Let me rest in the confidence that You will not let me go astray. Today, I am confident that You will. . .*

8.3.3 A.C.T.S. PRAYER

The ACTS prayer model focuses on who God is and what he has done before making requests.

A - ADORATION

C - CONFESSION

T - THANKSGIVING

S - SUPPLICATION

Using this model, you begin with **ADORATION**—Praising God for all WHO He is. Then you take time to **CONFESS** your sins—those things you have done and those things you have not done, asking God for forgiveness.

Moving toward **THANKSGIVING**, you begin to thank God for what He has done, is doing, and will do. As you finish your time in prayer, **SUPPLICATION** is about presenting your requests to God. This is the time to speak your requests and ask God to intervene.

8.3.4 INTERCESSION

Interceding on the behalf of others is a significant part of our faith. PHILIPPIANS 4:6 (The Message) reads: *“Don’t fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns.”* God wants us to talk with him, to lift others up in prayer.

Often people ask others to pray for them. Instead of saying, “I will,” ask if you can pray for them right then. Prayers don’t have to be eloquent; just simply repeat what the person has spoken and ask God to intervene on their behalf. If you don’t know how to pray, ask God to guide your prayers.

Pay attention to when a person pops into your mind. When this happens offer, a prayer for this person.

The good news is that when we don’t know how to pray for ourselves or others, Scripture says the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf. And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. (ROMANS 8:26 NLT)

8.3.5 TOGETHER

Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion regarding what you have been discovering and any questions you may have using these questions.

- 👉 **What has your experience with prayer been? What prayer practices have you learned or used that might be helpful to share with the group? i.e. acronyms like ACTS or PRAY, breath prayer, centering prayer, etc...**
- 👉 **When you consider praying through the Lord’s Prayer, which parts do you ignore or tend to minimize?**
- 👉 **What new prayer practices will you try?**
- 👉 **End your Huddle this week praying.**

8.4 NEXT STEPS

Before moving to the next topic, pause. Review your notes, reflect on your Huddle discussions, and jot down what you have discovered.

- 👉 **What prayer practices will you use regularly?**
- 👉 **Who would you like to share what you’ve learned about prayer with this week?**
- 👉 **How can you pray for others?**

TOPIC NINE

9

IDENTITY

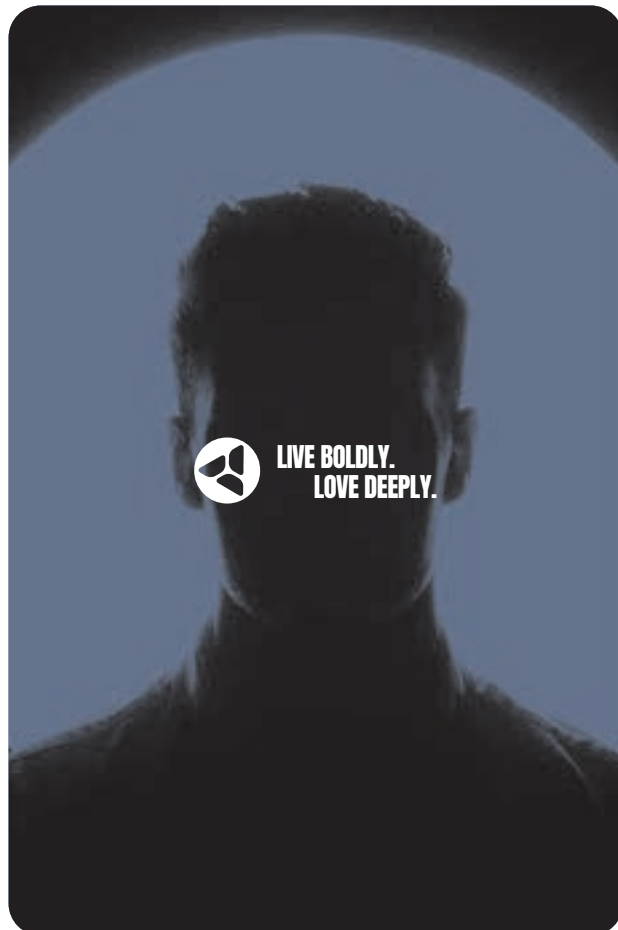
INSTRUCTIONS

Identity normally takes one session. The group should have read the topic before coming to Huddle. Take time to discuss what stood out to the group in the reading and Diving Deeper.

Finish this topic by discussing the Together questions.

A nice way to end this topic is to have a person read the Father's Love Letter over the group. Invite the group to close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so), and imagine God saying these words to them.

As you prepare to move to the next topic, your Huddle leader will introduce Topic 10: Sharing Your Faith and invite the group to read the topic before the next Huddle.



9.1

INTRODUCTION

Our identity is anchored in our relationship with God. When we surrender our lives to Jesus, we become one with Jesus, and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us. As Christ followers, we can live confidently as sons and daughters of God, our Father. Through the empowerment and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are given authority to be ambassadors of the Kingdom of God.

“

But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.”

JOHN 1:12

Disciples of Jesus acknowledge sin has separated people from God. Disciples also know it is through Jesus' death and resurrection God offers forgiveness of our sins and calls us His children. This identity guarantees a relationship with God here on earth and throughout eternity. As children of God, we begin a lifelong journey of learning to trust God and align our lives to His kingdom. Choosing to surrender and trust God is both a one-time decision and ongoing practice.

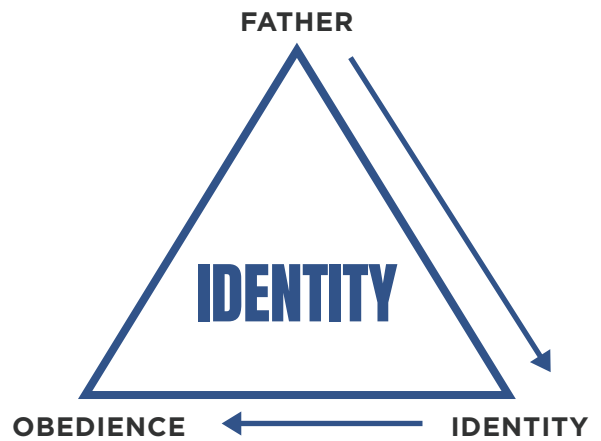
Our response to God's grace flows from our gratitude, not our attempts to prove ourselves worthy. We do not gain God's approval through striving for perfection. We already have it because we are His children.

Our identity is anchored in our relationship with God through Jesus. And our ability to live out our identity as ambassadors of Jesus is through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The triangle shape helps us grasp this reality. God created a way for us to be reconciled to God through Jesus. Scripture says we become God's children when we surrender our lives to Jesus and choose to follow Him.

Therefore, our identity is based on God being our Father, and our obedience flows from this relationship.

As children of God, we are called to join God in bringing His Kingdom forward. This is our Kingdom calling. It is through the Holy Spirits' activation in our lives that we are empowered to live boldly and love deeply.

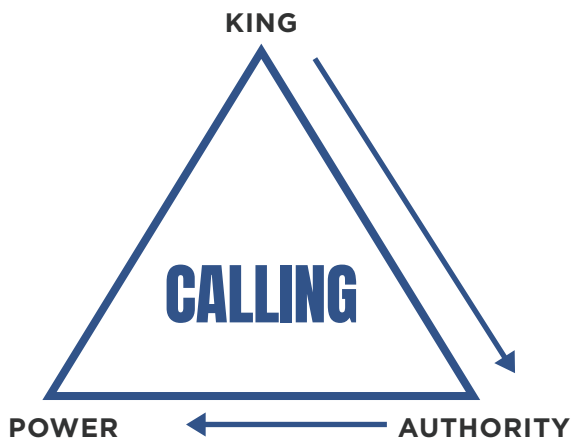
We live out our responsibility to be ambassadors of the Kingdom of God through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.



The second triangle illustrates our responsibility as heirs of the kingdom of God. Being an heir means we receive the benefits and accept the responsibilities of our inheritance.

Jesus is not only our Savior, bridging the gap between God and us. He also wants to be the Lord of our lives. He asks us to surrender all parts of our lives to Him. When we submit our lives to God and accept Jesus as the sacrifice that restored our relationship with God, the Holy Spirit dwells within us.

Through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we are capable of living a life marked by surrender and trust. Our ability to make a Kingdom impact is possible through the transferred authority of God and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.





Scripture has a lot to say about who we are and how God feels about us. Read through this compilation of scriptures and circle the words or phrases that stand out to you.

My child,

You may not know me, but I know everything about you. (1) I know when you sit down and when you rise up. (2) I am familiar with all your ways. (3) Even the very hairs on your head are numbered. (4) For you were made in my image. (5) In me, you live and move and have your being, for you are my offspring. (6) I knew you even before you were conceived. (7) I chose you when I planned creation. (8) You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in my book. (9) I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live. (10) You are fearfully and wonderfully made. (11) I knit you together in your mother's womb. (12) And brought you forth on the day you were born. (13) I have been misrepresented by those who don't know me. (14) I am not distant and angry but am the complete expression of love. (15) And it is my desire to lavish my love on you. Simply because you are my child, and I am your Father. (16) I offer you more than your earthly father ever could. (17) For I am the perfect father. (18) Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand. (19) For I am your provider, and I meet all your needs. (20) My plan for your future has always been filled with hope. (21) Because I love you with an everlasting love. (22) My thoughts toward you are countless as the sand on the seashore. (23) And I rejoice over you with singing. (24) I will never stop doing good to you. (25) For you are my treasured possession. (26) I desire to establish you with all my heart and all my soul. (27) And I want to show you great and marvelous things. (28) If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me. (29) Delight in me, and I will give you the desires of your heart. (30) For it is I who gave you those desires. (31) I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine. (32) For I am your greatest encourager. (33) I am also the Father who comforts you in all your troubles. (34) When you are brokenhearted, I am close to you. (35) As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you close to my heart. (36) One day, I will wipe away every tear from your eyes. And I'll take away all the pain you have suffered on this earth. (37) I am your Father, and I love you even as I love my son, Jesus. (38) For in Jesus, my love for you is revealed. (39) He is the exact representation of my being. (40) He came to demonstrate that I am for you, not against you. (41) And to tell you that I am not counting your sins. Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled. (42) His death was the ultimate expression of my love for you. (43) I gave up everything I loved that I might gain your love. (44) If you receive the gift of my son Jesus, you receive me. (45) And nothing will ever separate you from my love again. (46) Come home, and I'll throw the biggest party heaven has ever seen. (47) I have always been Father and will always be Father. (48) My question is... Will you be my child? (49) I am waiting for you. (50)

Love, Your Dad.

Father's Love Letter is a compilation of the following paraphrased Bible verses presented in the form of a love letter from God to you... (1) Psalm 139:1; (2) Psalm 139:2; (3) Psalm 139:3; (4) Matthew 10:29-31; (5) Genesis 1:27; (6) Acts 17:28; (7) Jeremiah 1:4-5; (8) Ephesians 1:11-12; (9) Psalm 139:15-16; (10) Acts 17:26; (11) Psalm 139:14; (12) Psalm 139:13; (13) Psalm 71:6; (14) John 8:41-44; (15) 1 John 4:16; (16) 1 John 3:1; (17) Matthew 7:11; (18) Matthew 5:48; (19) James 1:17; (20) Matthew 6:31-33; (21) Jeremiah 29:11; (22) Jeremiah 31:3; (23) Psalm 139:17-18; (24) Zephaniah 3:17; (25) Jeremiah 32:40; (26) Exodus 19:5; (27) Jeremiah 32:41; (28) Jeremiah 33:3; (29) Deuteronomy 4:29; (30) Psalm 37:4; (31) Philippians 2:13; (32) Ephesians 3:20; (33) 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17; (34) 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; (35) Psalm 34:18; (36) Isaiah 40:11; (37) Revelation 21:3-4; (38) John 17:23; (39) John 17:26; (40) Hebrews 1:3; (41) Romans 8:31; (42) 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; (43) 1 John 4:10; (44) Romans 8:31-32; (45) 1 John 2:23; (46) Romans 8:38-39; (47) Luke 15:7; (48) Ephesians 3:14-15; (49) John 1:12-13; (50) Luke 15:11-32.

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Look up the following verses and write down what you discover.

Disciples of Jesus acknowledge sin has separated people from God. Disciples also know it is through Jesus' death and resurrection that God offers forgiveness of our sins and adopts us as His children. This identity guarantees a relationship with God here on earth and throughout eternity.

As children of God, we begin a lifelong journey of learning to trust God and align our lives to His kingdom. Choosing to surrender and trust God is both a one-time decision and an ongoing practice. Our response to God's grace flows from our gratitude, not our attempts to prove ourselves to God through obligation or striving for perfection.

Therefore, our identity is based on God being our Father.

Often we misunderstand who God is. There are various metaphors used throughout the Bible to help us come to know God more. Look up the following verses, and write down what you discover.

METAPHOR USED
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

🔗 **PSALM 103:13**

🔗 **ROMANS 8:15**

🔗 **PSALM 68:5; ISAIAH 49:14-15**

🔗 **HOSEA 3:1**

🔗 **JAMES 2:23**

🔗 **ROMANS 5:10-11**

🔗 **EZEKIEL 34:11-12; 31**

🔗 **PSALM 23:1**

🔗 **LUKE 15:3-7**

🔗 **JOHN 10:11**

🔗 **JEREMIAH 18:6**

🔗 **ISAIAH 64:8**

🔗 **EXODUS 15:3**

🔗 **JEREMIAH 10:6-7**

🔗 **ISAIAH 43:10-14**

9.2.2 TOGETHER

Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion regarding what you have been discovering and any questions you may have using these questions.

- 🕒 **What kind of father do you imagine God to be? What makes you think this?**
- 🕒 **How has (is) your understanding of whom you are changed (changing)?**
- 🕒 **From whom do you most often seek approval? Where are you tempted to find your identity other than God?**
- 🕒 **Kingdom living begins with the recognition of God as King. As God's representatives, God works in and through us. Our authority through the Holy Spirit empowers us to join God in bringing hope and healing to our world. What do you notice about our role and responsibility as God's heirs in the following passages?**
 - 🕒 **EPHESIANS 2:8-10**
 - 🕒 **2 CORINTHIANS 2:14-17**
 - 🕒 **2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-18**

9.3 NEXT STEPS

Before moving to the next topic, pause. Review your notes, reflect on your Huddle discussions, and jot down what you have discovered.

- 🕒 **Describe a recent kairos moment that you noticed God inviting you to grow in your identity and/or calling.**

- 🕒 **Who needs to hear about their identity in Christ? When could you share what you are learning and how it is impacting your life and faith?**

EXTRA NOTES



A series of 20 horizontal dotted lines spanning the width of the page, providing a guide for writing notes.

SHARING YOUR FAITH

INSTRUCTIONS

Sharing Your Faith normally takes one session. The group should have read the topic before coming to Huddle.

Take time to discuss what stood out to the group in the reading and Diving Deeper. Finish this topic by discussing the Together questions.

As you prepare to move to the next topic, your Huddle leader will introduce Topic 11: Rhythm of Life and invite the group to read the topic before the next Huddle.



INTRODUCTION

As a follower of Jesus, we are called to share our faith with others, no matter how long we've been followers. This happens both organically by what we say and do throughout our normal everyday lives but also through intentional spiritual conversations.

However, two things can work against us. Sometimes, the longer we have been Christians and the more invested we are in the local church, the less likely we are to build relationships with those who do not yet have a relationship with Jesus. Or, possibly, the idea of sharing your faith feels intimidating. It doesn't have to be.

The first obstacle is an easy one to fix. Just look around. Who is in your home, workplace, neighborhood, or community? Who do you see or interact with routinely outside of your relationships at church?

God brings people together at different times for various reasons. These relationships typically fall into one of three categories:

- 🕒 **REASON:** These are people with whom you share something in common (a shared life circumstance, a challenge in your life, or another opportunity that connects you with another person, etc.).
- 🕒 **SEASON:** These are people in your life that you share a similar season of life with or are part of the same group or community that will only last for a particular span of time (young adult, sports team, college, neighborhood, workplace, volunteer opportunity, etc.).

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



🕒 **LIFETIME:** This group of people are special gifts from God. They are the ones you get to journey alongside for a lifetime. You may be surprised by who all makes up this group because no matter how old you are, there is always room for a few more lifetime friends.



Prayerfully consider whom God has placed in your life that you could share your life and faith with.

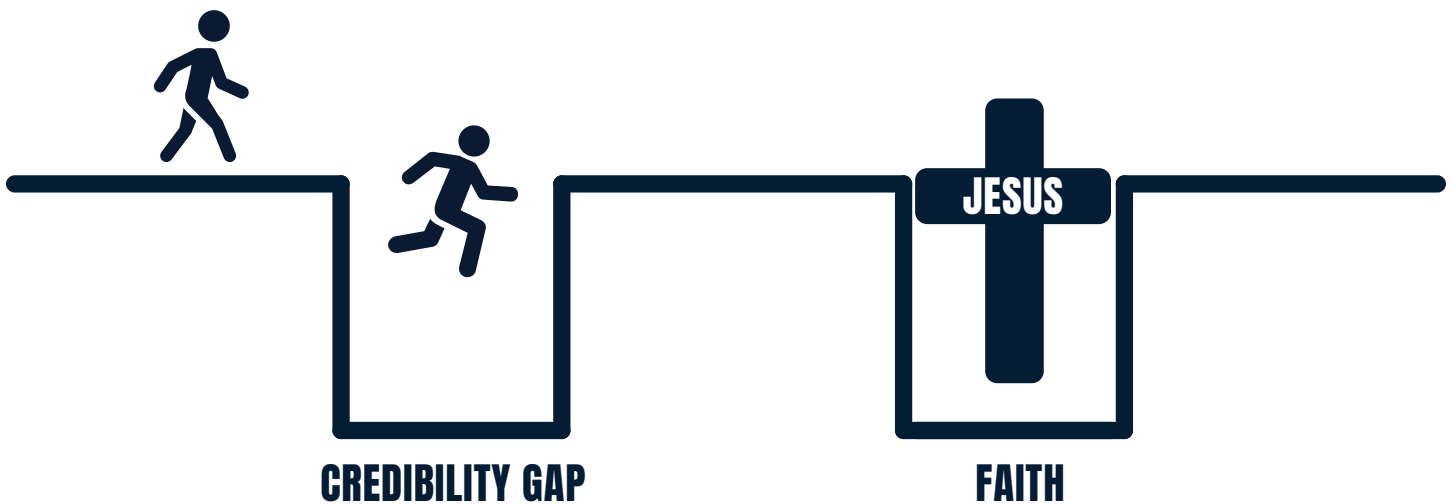
Think of sharing your faith as a journey of getting to know each other and a series of conversations rather than a one-time pitch.

THE CREDIBILITY GAP

One of the most important factors of being good ambassadors of Jesus is the way we treat other people. Way before a person decides to follow Jesus, they are watching those who call themselves Christians. That means people are watching you and deciding if they are interested in Jesus by what you say and do.

The problem is too often Christians do a poor job of representing Jesus. When you are living a life that draws people toward Jesus instead of pushing them away, you are helping people to take a step in their spiritual journey and helping to bridge the credibility gap.

The truth is those of us who call themselves Christians play a huge role in the faith journeys of friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, classmates, etc. People are watching us to see if Jesus is someone they have any interest in getting to know.



THE ENGEL SCALE

Every person is somewhere on their faith journey and either moving toward God or away from Him. It may help to think about a person's spiritual journey as a continuum beginning with little interest in spiritual things and God all the way to being a fully committed follower of Jesus.

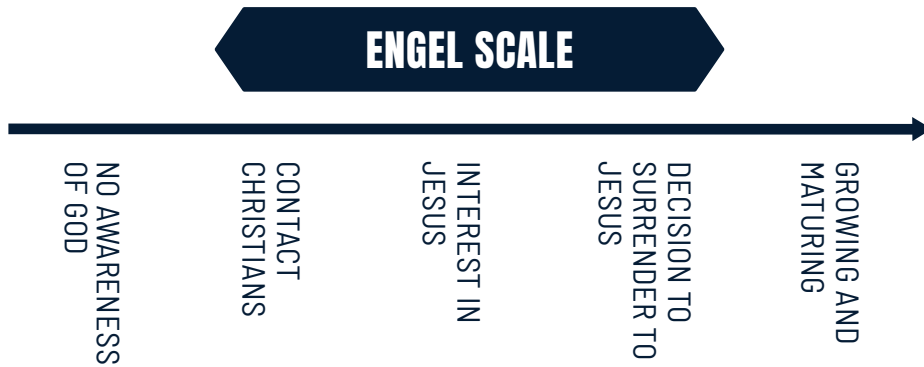
The Engel scale was developed by James F. Engel as a way of representing a person's spiritual journey. There are moments between a person moving toward God, placing their faith in Jesus, and becoming a passionate follower of Jesus.



SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



Everybody starts somewhere. Don't get lost in the details or stages of the Engel Scale illustrated below. The point is for us to realize the importance of interacting with people wherever they are in their spiritual journey.



Realizing every person you interact with is somewhere on this continuum, what would it look like for you to help the other person move one step closer to Jesus?

The first step to sharing our faith is listening and getting to know more about the person and their story. Sharing your faith doesn't necessarily mean sitting down and telling people about Jesus right off the bat. It can look like loving a person in a way that surprises them. Sometimes the door opens for you to share your faith when a person notices something different about you and asks why.



We believe we are called to live boldly and love deeply with the people closest to us. At Mercy Road Northeast, we call that our 8 to 15. On average, we have 8 to 15 people, whom God has supernaturally and strategically placed in our relational world so that He might use us to show them His love. We call this our sphere of influence.

We believe we are all sinners who are transformed by surrendering our lives to Jesus. Transformation is a continual process of becoming more and more like Jesus. As we grow and mature, we will embody Jesus' lifestyle (love, joy, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, generosity, hospitality, forgiveness, justice, mercy, peace, self-control, peace, reconciliation, and more).



Jesus modeled coming alongside others to not only change their lives but also to invite them to join him in changing our world. *“Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”* MARK 5:19

Practically speaking, sharing your faith journey with 8 to 15 others is about being intentional in how you interact and engage with the people in your life.

Start by making a list of the 8 to 15 people who are part of your life. They may be family members, neighbors, co-workers, or friends.

- 🕒 **List them by name.**
- 🕒 **Pray daily for your 8 to 15 to know God more.**
- 🕒 **Look for ways you can invest in their lives.**
- 🕒 **Invite your 8 to 15 to deeper spiritual conversations.**
- 🕒 **Look for opportunities to share your faith with your 8 to 15, and encourage them to take a step closer to God.**

As you develop your list of 8 to 15, think about the people in your life who have not surrendered their lives to Jesus yet and people who are struggling in their faith. Watch for who God has placed in your life and reach out to them. Be authentic and focus on getting to know the person.

God uses a variety of people to come alongside a person in their spiritual journey. Please don't push it, but pay attention to who is open and ready to hear more. Remember to celebrate each step a person takes toward Jesus.



PERSON OF PEACE

Be on the lookout for people of peace. Jesus' way of sharing was authentic and personal. As disciples were sent out, they were encouraged to seek people of peace. People of peace are those you encounter and interact with who show interest in your relationship with Jesus. They will demonstrate a curiosity and openness to knowing God in deeper ways.

Jesus' disciples included more than the 12. In Luke 10, we read that he sent out 72 of his disciples in pairs to proclaim the kingdom of God. Jesus instructed the disciples to seek people of peace who would open their homes and lives to the disciples so that they could share their faith with them.

🕒 **READ LUKE 10:1-24. Ask God to show you who the people of peace are in your life.**

**SCRIPTURE**

Underline, highlight, or write down any words or phrases that stand out to you. What does it say?

**OBSERVATION**

What stood out to you about what you read? What is God trying to tell you about Himself? What is God trying to show you about yourself? What does it mean?

**APPLICATION**

How can you apply what you are discovering to your life? So what? Now what? What does it mean to me?

**PRAYER**

Turn these thoughts into prayer. Ask God to help you deepen your relationship with Him and empower you to love deeply and live boldly.



Answer the following questions and write down what you discover.

We are not talking about standing on the street corner with a megaphone. We are talking about sharing your faith with people in your life—those close to you physically or relationally. Let's start with why.

🕒 **Why is sharing your faith important? READ ROMANS 10:8-15 in one of our suggested translations.**



SCRIPTURE

READ ROMANS 10:8-15 a few times. Underline, highlight, or write down any words or phrases that stand out to you. What does it say?



OBSERVATION

What stood out to you about what you read? What is God trying to tell you about Himself? What is God trying to show you about yourself? What does it mean?



APPLICATION

How can you apply what you are discovering to your life? So what? Now what? What does it mean to me?



PRAYER

Turn these thoughts into prayer. Ask God to help you deepen your relationship with Him and empower you to love deeply and live boldly.

- 🕒 In Acts 16, we read about the impact of Lydia as she shared her faith with others. READ ACTS 16:11-15; 40. What is Jesus speaking to you about the impact you could have by sharing your faith with others?



SCRIPTURE

READ ACTS 16:11-15; 40 a few times. Underline, highlight, or write down any words or phrases that stand out to you. What does it say?



OBSERVATION

What stood out to you about what you read? What is God trying to tell you about Himself? What is God trying to show you about yourself? What does it mean?



APPLICATION

How can you apply what you are discovering to your life? So what? Now what? What does it mean to me?



PRAYER

Turn these thoughts into prayer. Ask God to help you deepen your relationship with Him and empower you to love deeply and live boldly.



Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion regarding what you have been discovering and any questions you may have.

🕒 **What has been your experience in sharing your faith with others?**

🕒 **In Acts 1:8, Jesus instructs his followers to be his witnesses. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth.” Toward what person, group of people, or place do you sense the Holy Spirit nudging you? Think in terms of:**

your family, friendships, neighborhood, or workplace? (your Jerusalem)

your connections in the larger community? (your Judea)

enemies, difficult people, or in places others avoid? (your Samaria)

places farther away? (your ends of the Earth)

🕒 **Who do you sense the Holy Spirit nudging you to include in your 8 to 15?**

🕒 **How could you begin being more intentional with those in your sphere of influence?**

🕒 **End your time in prayer using the words found in 2 Corinthians 5:11-21. Take a few moments to read and reflect on this passage together.**



RHYTHM OF LIFE

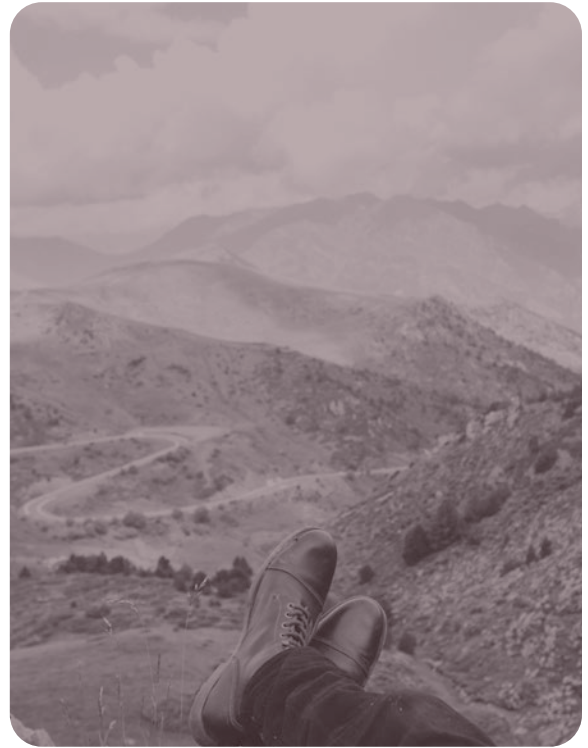
INSTRUCTIONS

Rhythm of Life normally takes two sessions. The group should have read the topic before coming to Huddle. Take time to discuss what stood out to the group in the reading and Diving Deeper.

The first session focuses on the rest and work inviting members to learn to rest in God and abide in his presence.

The second session delves into the practice of Sabbath.

As you prepare to move to the next topic, your Huddle leader will introduce Topic 12: Calling and invite the group to read the topic before the next Huddle.

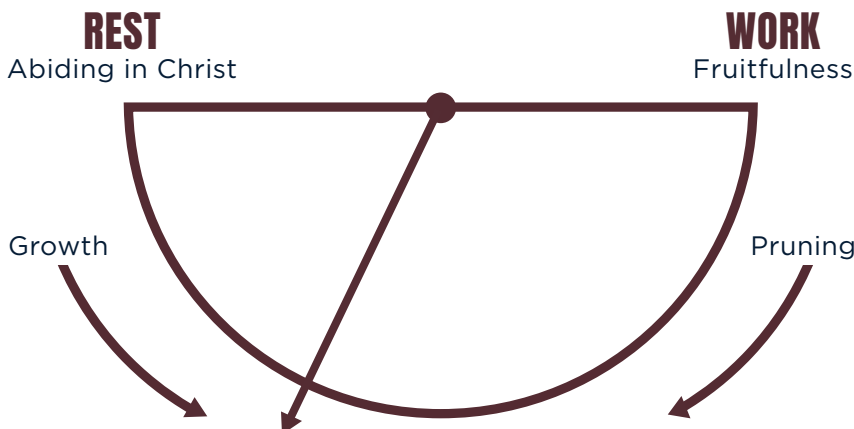


11.1 INTRODUCTION

Jesus modeled a rhythm of life. He included times of rest and reflection alongside action and engagement.

A regular rhythm requires intentionally integrating various spiritual practices that heighten your awareness and responsiveness to God’s presence and promptings. There are a lot of spiritual practices to choose from. Some practices are designed for you and God alone, while some are for practicing with others. Whichever spiritual disciplines you choose, they are meant to form you more and more into the likeness of Jesus.

11.2 REST AND WORK



The Semi-Circle Tool was adapted from "Building a Discipling Culture" by Mike Breen and Steve Cockram.

Do you ever feel like our culture elevates doing above your being? We applaud busy people who can find their identity in what they do and how much they accomplish. “God designed us to be productive. But we build our identities around our activities. We are not living in the truth of whom God created us to be. We have become human “doings” rather than human “beings” (Mike Breen, Building a Discipling Culture, p. 124).

Our “doing” is meant to flow from our “being.” And our “being” comes from abiding or being connected to God. When we operate from a place of rest and work, we are more likely to know what to say yes and no to. It also helps us in difficult times to persevere through hardship and heartache.

Jesus knew how important it was to stay connected to God, the Father. He regularly spent time with God, no matter how many things were calling for His attention. When we take time to be with God in prayer and spiritual practices, we will:

- 🕒 **Be reminded of our path and purpose**
- 🕒 **Remember God’s faithfulness to provide and care for us**
- 🕒 **Find comfort and peace from being in His presence**
- 🕒 **Be given strength for today— for what is happening now**
- 🕒 **Be strengthened for tomorrow— for what lies ahead**

Jesus regularly stopped what he was doing to be with God. He prayed in the morning and evening. He prayed before decisions and before and after serving. Jesus knew it was critical to be connected to God, the Father.

MATTHEW 6:5-6

Jesus prayed in private, allowing him to pour his heart out to God without concern for others.

LUKE 6:12-13

Jesus went to God for guidance, wisdom, and discernment before a big decision.

LUKE 5:15-16

More and more people were coming to Jesus to meet their needs. During Jesus’ most busy times, he withdrew to pray and take time to be with God.

MATTHEW 14:22-23

After feeding five thousands, Jesus went away to pray. After serving, Jesus took time to be with God.

MARK 1:35

Jesus prayed early in the morning before he started his day to keep him focused on God, His father.

WHEN ARE YOU MOST LIKELY TO PAUSE TO PRAY?



🕒 How do plants grow?

The most natural thing for a healthy tree to do is bear fruit.

Branches don't force or strain.

Their seasons of pruning and growing prepare them to bear fruit.

On farms, fields are rested in between the harvests.

JESUS TAUGHT US THIS SAME PRINCIPLE IN JOHN 15.

🕒 He said remain (abide) in the vine to produce fruit.

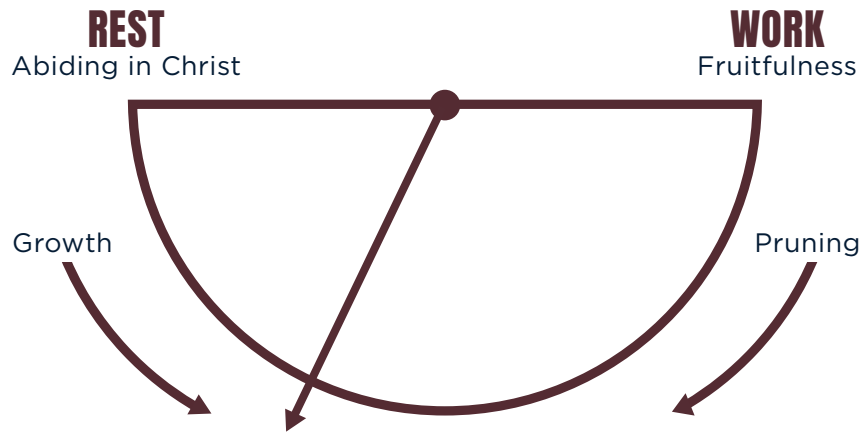
LOOK AT JOHN 15:1-5: *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful... Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*

We learn two truths from this teaching: (1) Spiritual rest (remaining) in Jesus produces great fruitfulness; and (2) Pruning follows great fruitfulness so that we can produce even more fruit. This is the pattern of the semi-circle:

- 🕒 From abiding, we grow,
- 🕒 from growing, we bear fruit,
- 🕒 from bearing fruit, we are cut back (pruned),
- 🕒 and then we need to abide again.

“

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches.”



The pendulum is always swinging back and forth.

Our culture and our habits make us want to push into work; instead, we need to push toward rest and allow gravity to pull us toward being fruitful.

Also remember that when we grow and produce fruit, God often prunes us - He corrects or challenges us. This pruning should again lead us to abide/rest in Him so that we can again grow and produce even more fruit.

When we're not fruitful, it's because we're not resting.

Fruit is both physical (office job/tasks/school) and spiritual - so rest must be holistic.

I can't abide spiritually when I'm physically exhausted and vice versa - it's hard for me to rest physically when I'm spiritually or emotionally unsettled or anxious.

We must rest (abide) to experience the fruit of the Spirit.

In John 15, Jesus says we can't do it on our own - "Apart from me, you can do nothing." But we certainly try to do it on our own!

We push harder to work. We try harder to be patient! We try harder to be loving!

Instead of trying harder, we are invited to just rest in who God is. Then let the overflow of rest empower us to be more patient and loving toward others.

Until we rest in the goodness of God, we won't experience the fruit (the spiritual growth or breakthrough) He has for us.

“

Work for the Kingdom is only fruitful when it comes from rest and abiding in God.”



Before your Huddle meeting, answer the following questions and write down what you discover.

- 🕒 **Jesus emphasizes the importance of being connected to God by using the analogy of a grapevine. He reminds us that we can only be fruitful by remaining in Him. Use SOAP as you read and reflect on JOHN 15:1-8.**

**SCRIPTURE**

READ JOHN 15:1-8 a few times. Underline, highlight, or write down any words or phrases that stand out to you. What does it say?

**OBSERVATION**

What stood out to you about what you read? What is God trying to tell you about Himself? What is God trying to show you about yourself? What does it mean?

**APPLICATION**

How can you apply what you are discovering to your life? So what? Now what? What does it mean to me?

**PRAYER**

Turn these thoughts into prayer. Ask God to help you deepen your relationship with Him and empower you to love deeply and live boldly.

11.2.2 TOGETHER

Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion regarding what you have been discovering and any questions you may have using these questions.

🕒 **What does it look like for you to integrate rest and work in your life? How is your “doing” impacted by your “being” or “abiding?”**

🕒 **How is the rhythm of your life allowing space for you to be fully present to God, yourself, and others?**

🕒 **What did you discover about God, yourself, and others? What do you sense God is challenging you to start and stop doing?**



You have probably heard people say, “I’m not getting enough rest” or “I’m feeling anxious, worried, or stressed.” They are common symptoms because most people in our culture are not good at rest. Our culture tends to value work, productivity, and busyness over rest. So, it’s important to understand God’s design for rest so we can live fruitful lives, both physically and spiritually.

From the very beginning of time, God called us to tend to the earth and all that He created. *“Then God said, ‘Let us make human beings in our image to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.’ So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Then God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it.’”* GENESIS 1:26-28

Looking back at the creation story, you will see God created from rest. *“And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.”* GENESIS 1:5 Evening passed and morning came implies we live and move from our rest.

What if we began to think of our days beginning as we lay down to rest at night versus falling into bed after a full day of activity?

From the moment of creation, we learn we were designed to rest in order to work. Fruit comes out of the overflow of our rest. We rest (or abide) in order to work (be fruitful).

We know how important Sabbath is to God. The fourth commandment is to rest.

But we get it backwards. We work to rest. We’re working for the weekend. We’re working to get through a project or busy time.

We deplete our tanks and then we need to recover. The only reason to recover is when you’re sick.

So we’re actually engaged in a pattern of work that’s sick. It’s not how God designed us to be fruitful.

In “The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath,” Mark Buchanan writes “In some ways, the whole point of the Exodus was Sabbath. Let my people go, became God’s rallying cry, that they might worship me. At the heart of liberty—of being let go—is worship. But at the heart of worship is rest—a stopping from all work, all worry, all scheming, all fleeing—to stand amazed and thankful before God and his work. There can be no real worship without true rest.” Sleep is the ultimate moment when all our striving, defenses, and doing cease and we surrender to knowing God is above and beyond our circumstances. He is present and awake attending to all the things we have held and are holding.

Practicing rest is a spiritual discipline.

SO WHAT IS REST?

There's a difference between recreation and amusement.

RECREATION IS HEALTHY REST.

It "recreates" us, replenishes us, and brings us life.

After recreation, we feel re-energized, refreshed, renewed in our vision, reaffirmed in our identity in God, and purposeful in our direction. Our mind and heart is settled and focused. When we are resting and abiding in God, we feel peace and joy.

AMUSEMENT IS UNHEALTHY REST.

Unhealthy rest can be mindless entertainment or distraction, or even worse, addictive behaviors. It can be unhealthy anything that depletes us instead of filling us up.

After times of unhealthy rest, we feel irritated, disgruntled, exhausted. It looks like self-indulgence, binging, and escapism. It may feel good at the time, but none of it brings life or re-creation.

When we're caught up in unhealthy rest, we're really working to rest, and we end up crashing or burning out. When we crash, we need to pay attention - it's a symptom of not resting well. So we need to start regularly practicing healthy rest.

Recreation looks differently for each of us. What brings me life may actually deplete you.

DISCOVER THE BEST WAYS FOR YOU TO RECREATE AND EXPERIENCE HEALTHY REST.

Like we said, rest likely doesn't come naturally to us. So we have to be more intentional about it. Schedule rest first. We must remember that true rest is spending intentional time abiding with God. Making rest a regular rhythm of life daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly will make a big difference in your life and relationships.

EXAMPLES:

DAILY TIME WITH GOD

WEEKLY SABBATH

MONTHLY/ QUARTERLY/ ANNUALLY

take a retreat or vacation that incorporates daily time with God and Sabbath

Key Take-Away: Rest to work, not work to rest.



**LIVE BOLDLY.
LOVE DEEPLY.**

Sabbath "generously hands us hours to look into the eyes of those we love. We have time for loving and being loved. Rhythmically, the sabbath reminds us that we belong to a worldwide family of God. We are citizens of another kingdom—a kingdom not ruled by the clock and the tyranny of the urgent. God's sabbath reality calls us to trust that the Creator can manage all that concerns us in this world as we settle into his rest."

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, Spiritual Disciplines Handbook p. 44

Scriptural examples of the Semi-Circle
Look at how Jesus finds rest:

Regular daily rest: (MARK 1:35-39) Jesus "got up early." It took daily retreat with His Father so that He could do the things He saw the Father do.

Jesus taught the disciples to rest (MARK 6:30-32) even during "revival" time. He can also be seen pulling back with His disciples: (MARK 3:7, 3:13).

Through extended retreat (MARK 1:12-13) in the desert... This retreat preceded the start of his new ministry/phase/task. We often focus on the temptations that happened here, but the text also tells of how He was made strong in the Spirit.

Other examples of Jesus withdrawing: MARK 2:13, 4:35, 5:1, 5:21, 6:45-46.

Before your Huddle meeting, answer the following questions and write down what you discover.

- 🕒 **As you think about rest, take a few moments to reflect on Jesus' words in MATTHEW 11:28-30 in one of our suggested translations and in The Message.**

**SCRIPTURE**

READ MATTHEW 11:28-30 a few times. Underline, highlight, or write down any words or phrases that stand out to you. What does it say?

**OBSERVATION**

What stood out to you about what you read? What is God trying to tell you about Himself? What is God trying to show you about yourself? What does it mean?

**APPLICATION**

How can you apply what you are discovering to your life? So what? Now what? What does it mean to me?

**PRAYER**

Turn these thoughts into prayer. Ask God to help you deepen your relationship with Him and empower you to love deeply and live boldly.



If Sabbath is a new idea or struggle, we wanted to provide some tips for getting started.

Start small by setting aside a couple of hours to be with God and others you love.

Mark the time by lighting a candle, taking three deep breaths, or simply saying, “God, I am here. Here I am.”

Let go of everything on your to-do list and anything weighing you down or stressing you out. Sometimes it helps to name it by writing it down and putting the piece of paper on a shelf. Practicing Sabbath isn’t necessarily about not doing anything. It is more about doing relaxing and refreshing activities.

FOR EXAMPLE, SABBATH FOR YOU MAY LOOK LIKE ONE OR MORE OF THESE IDEAS:

- 🕒 **walking**
- 🕒 **picnics**
- 🕒 **preparing a meal leisurely**
- 🕒 **savoring the various flavors and textures**
- 🕒 **enjoying a meal with others**
- 🕒 **napping**
- 🕒 **meeting a friend sipping tea, coffee, or your favorite beverage (alone or with others)**
- 🕒 **family fun time**
- 🕒 **fishing**
- 🕒 **reading (not for learning but fun)**
- 🕒 **golfing**
- 🕒 **games**
- 🕒 **etc.**

Be creative and try different things.

It doesn’t matter what you do as long as your focus is to rest on doing and accomplishing and create intimacy with God and those you love.

As you practice Sabbath, notice the abundance of God’s presence by paying attention to what you notice. Your God-given senses are a great way to notice.

WHAT DID YOU:

- 🕒 **see?**
- 🕒 **touch?**
- 🕒 **hear?**
- 🕒 **smell?**
- 🕒 **taste?**

Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion regarding what you have been discovering and any questions you may have using these questions.

🕒 **Do you tend to be more inclined to “doing” or “being?” Why? What needs to be pruned in your life?**

🕒 **What day/time of your week have you set aside for Sabbath?**

🕒 **How did you do with practicing Sabbath? What was it like for you? What was difficult?**

🕒 **What are practices you sense God asking you “to do” on the Sabbath? What are things you sense God telling you “don’t do” on the Sabbath?**

🕒 **What did you discover about yourself and God?**

11.4 NEXT STEPS

Before moving to the next topic, pause. Review your notes, reflect on your Huddle discussions, and jot down what you have discovered.

🕒 **What are you currently doing that God didn't ask you to do and you should stop?**

🕒 **How will you build rest into your life? Be specific.**

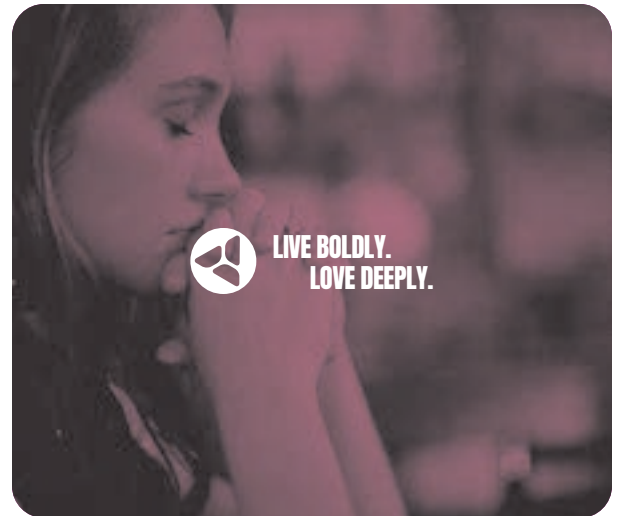
🕒 **Experiment with different ways to experience Sabbath this month. What will you try? When?**

🕒 **Who needs to hear about rest? How will you share this information? Make sure to talk about how it is impacting your life and faith. You could invite them to experiment with Sabbath with you.**

TOPIC TWELVE

12

CALLING



INSTRUCTIONS

Calling takes typically four to six sessions. The group should have read the topic before coming to Huddle. When you meet, discuss what stood out to the group in the reading and Diving Deeper topic. This topic is divided into four parts. Feel free to take as much time as your group needs to process the information.

SESSION 1

Introduction (pg. 123) and Personality (pg. 126)

SESSION 2

Spiritual Gifts (pg. 128) and Five-Fold Personality Style (pg. 130)

SESSION 3

Life Experiences (pg. 134)

SESSION 4

Passion and Purpose (pg. 143)

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



Calling invites you to look inward and outward. Looking inward asks you to consider how God has created you with a unique personality and gift mix. Looking outward challenges you to think about the broken places of our world and consider how God is nudging you to join him in bringing hope and healing.

THE GOAL OF CALLING IS TWO-FOLD:

- 1. To provide a framework for understanding how God has created you and**
- 2. To take steps in living out your calling.**

As you prepare to move to the next topic, your Huddle leader will introduce Topic 13: Multiplying Disciples and invite the group to read the topic before the next Huddle.

12.1

INTRODUCTION

This topic will help you discover how God has uniquely created you and how you can step more boldly into your calling.

We have been created on purpose for a purpose. God has uniquely hand-crafted each of us and planted passions deep inside of us. It is through our unique makeup and our life experiences we can love and lead others toward Jesus.

Paul says, “I beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling (EPHESIANS 4:1).” Our primary purpose as disciples of Jesus is to **LOVE GOD** and **LOVE OTHERS**. However, we express this love in various ways that are unique to how God has created us and unique to the people and places he has entrusted to our influence.



SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



The Bible opens with God at work, creating the world. He creates humans in his likeness and gives them the responsibility to use their strengths and skills to steward the creation alongside Him.

From the early pages of the Bible, story after story illustrates the brokenness of the world and God’s faithfulness to pursue human beings and restore what has been broken. God works to stop the cycle of brokenness despite humanity’s continued failure to follow God.

Jesus, God incarnate, enters the world to reveal the heart of God and His Kingdom and to bridge the gap between God and humanity. Jesus became the final and complete sacrifice for sin, allowing men and women to be reunited with God, their Father, in this life and throughout eternity.

When we surrender our lives to Jesus and decide to follow Him, we are to live as Jesus did. To desire the same things Jesus desired. His words and actions show us what is important and provide a picture of the kingdom of God. Therefore, we are called to join God in the work He is doing to bring hope, healing, and restoration to our world.

TWO THINGS ARE TRUE:

- 🕊 **The world is fractured and reeling from the effects of sin. (ROMANS 8:20-22)**
- 🕊 **We are created for good works. (EPHESIANS 2:10)**

Paul’s writings in the New Testament help us to understand the purpose of our calling. Paul reminds us, *“Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”* ROMANS 8:20-22

The world is not the way God intended it to be. Therefore, Paul also reminds us of who we are and what God has planned for us to do. *“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”* EPHESIANS 2:10

The intersection of our passion, giftedness, and God’s heart for the world is where you find your calling. God desires to tell His story and build his kingdom through your gifts, abilities, and passions.

“**The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s hunger meet.**”

Frederick Buechner

12.1 DIVING DEEPER | SOAP MATTHEW 25:14-30

Before your Huddle meeting, answer the following questions and write down what you discover.

As you think about work, think broadly about what you're doing. We can tell a lot about people based on how they spend their time and money and invest their talents. One aspect of being a disciple of Jesus is acknowledging everything we have is a gift from God. There is a story Jesus tells about servants who were entrusted with an amount of money.

- 🕒 **READ MATTHEW 25:14-30 as you consider the talents and treasures God has entrusted to you. Use SOAP as you read and reflect on MATTHEW 25:14-30.**



SCRIPTURE

READ MATTHEW 25:14-30 a few times. Underline, highlight, or write down any words or phrases that stand out to you. What does it say?



OBSERVATION

What stood out to you about what you read? What is God trying to tell you about Himself? What is God trying to show you about yourself? What does it mean?



APPLICATION

How can you apply what you are discovering to your life? So what? Now what? What does it mean to me?



PRAYER

Turn these thoughts into prayer. Ask God to help you deepen your relationship with Him and empower you to love deeply and live boldly.

Our unique personalities and individual giftings are not random occurrences but intentional design elements woven into who God has created us to be. From the extroverted enthusiasm that captivates a room to the quiet strength that provides calm reassurance in times of need, each personality trait serves a purpose. The very ways God has created you hold the potential to be powerful tools for God to use to influence and impact the lives of others.

THINK OF IT THIS WAY: GOD HAS GIVEN ALL OF US SOMETHING THAT IS UNIQUELY HIM IN US.

12.2.1 DIVING DEEPER

Before your Huddle meeting, answer the following questions and write down what you discover.



To discover more about your personality, take this free assessment at Huddle Guide Resource Links.

- 🔊 Once you complete the assessment, review the results and jot down what stood out to you.

- 🔊 Which words or phrases from your assessment did you resonate with?

- 🔊 Were there any that you did not resonate with?

- 🔊 What parts of your personality do you need to be aware of that have the potential to cause harm to others, especially if overused?

- 🔊 As you begin to think about how God has made you, what are some ways you are either currently serving or could serve others?

12.2.2 TOGETHER

🕒 Share the results of your personality test with the group.

🕒 What words or phrases resonated with you as you read your description?

🕒 Talk about what you have noticed about other group members that affirms how God has crafted their personality.

🕒 Pray together asking God to enlarge your imagination and broaden your perspective of how God is at work in and through you.



In this topic, you have the opportunity to consider the ways God has gifted you. You will explore your spiritual gifts and how you best express your gifting considering the five-fold personality styles.



12.3.1

SPIRITUAL GIFTS



Throughout scripture, you read stories of people living out their callings and using their gifts. In the New Testament, three primary passages create a list of spiritual gifts. Before looking at these individual passages, it is important to frame the topic.

- 🕊️ **God has given each of you a gift. Use them well to serve one another. 1 PETER 4:10**
- 🕊️ **There are different spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-5**
- 🕊️ **Just as our bodies have many parts, each with a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. ROMANS 12:4-6**



12.3.2 DIVING DEEPER | SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The key passages for spiritual gifts are **ROMANS 12**, **1 CORINTHIANS 12**, and **EPHESIANS 4**.

- 🕒 Look up the following scriptures to create a list of spiritual gifts. For this exercise, consider looking up the verses using a few different translations and how they describe the various spiritual gifts.

ROMANS 12:1-13

1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-31

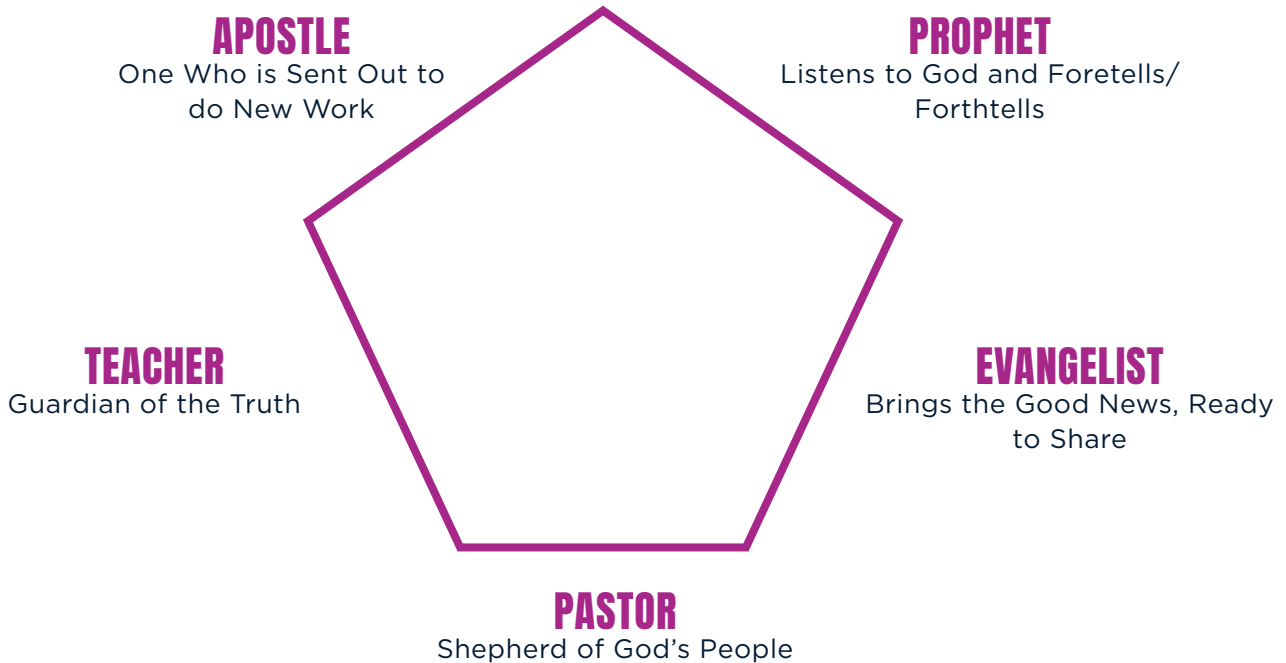
EPHESIANS 4:1-14

- 🕒 To discover more about your unique mix of spiritual gifts, take the online assessment at www.giftstest.com

- 🕒 Describe a time when you have been able to use your top spiritual gifts.

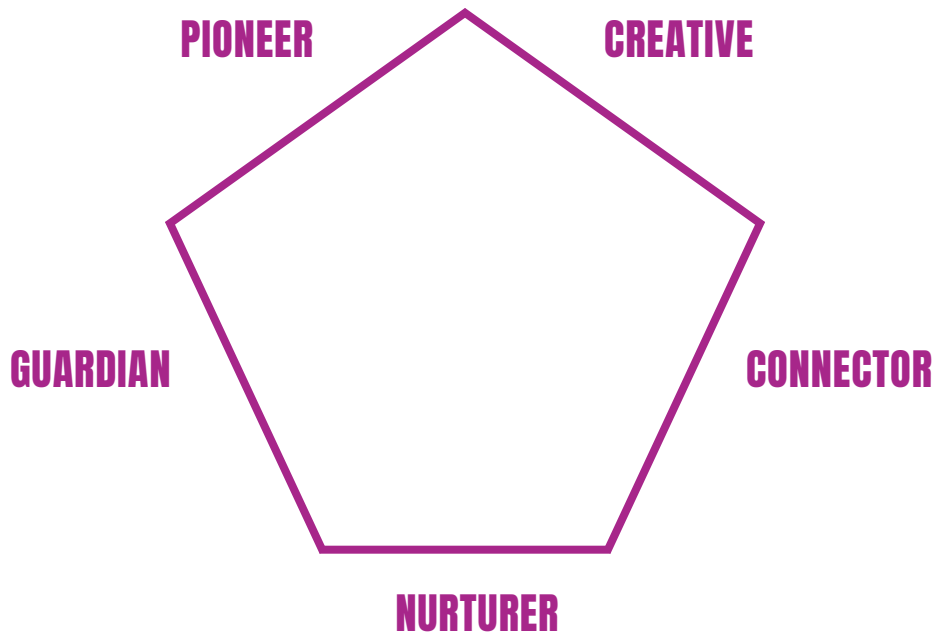
Another way to consider how God has uniquely created you is through the five-fold gifting lens.

The pentagon shape helps create a visual to remember the five-fold gifts. According to this approach, effective organizations and teams need people who naturally express each area. This model is referred to using the acronym APEST. APEST language applies best when you are thinking about more traditional ministry roles.

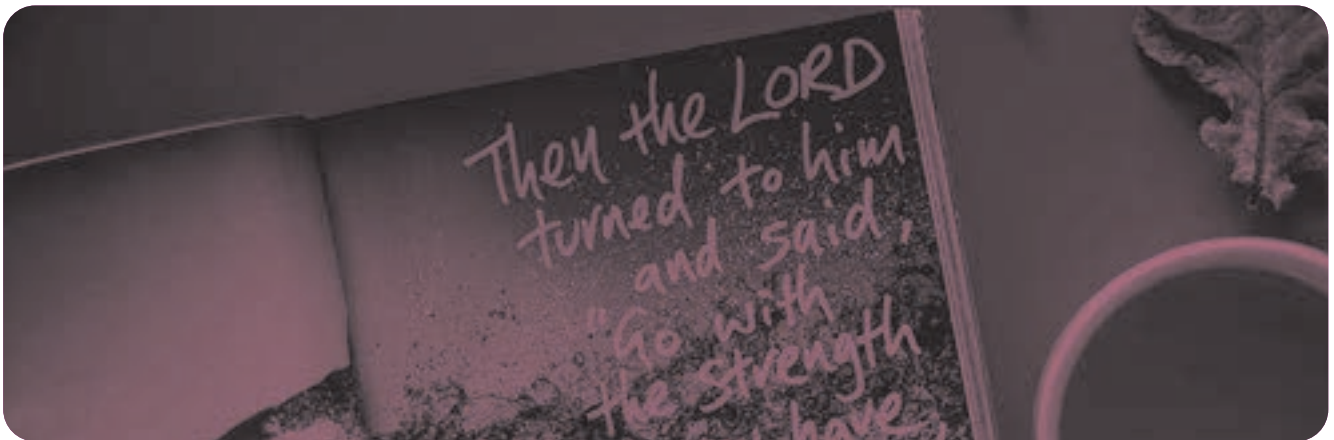


- 🕒 **APOSTLE = one who is sent out to do new work**
- 🕒 **PROPHET = one who is particularly attuned to hearing God's voice**
- 🕒 **EVANGELIST = one who shares the good news with people who have not yet entered into a relationship with Jesus**
- 🕒 **PASTOR = one who shepherds others through encouragement and care**
- 🕒 **TEACHER = one who is gifted in understanding and explaining theology and sharing observations and application of scripture**

Jeremie Kubicek and Steve Cockram created GiANT Worldwide (another way of looking at the five-fold gifts) by expanding the APEST language to 5-Voices. The five voices are considered distinct personality styles. According to the 5 Voice system, “everyone can and does speak all five voices.” It is not meant to identify who you are or are not. Instead, the 5-voices identify which voice is most natural.



- 🕒 **PIONEER (APOSTLE)** = is driven to take new ground; they align people, systems, and resources
- 🕒 **CREATIVE (PROPHET)** = is innovative and forward-oriented; they push new ideas and social consciousness
- 🕒 **CONNECTOR (EVANGELIST)** = makes connections, builds strategic partnerships, is good at networking, communicates vision, and can see possibilities
- 🕒 **NURTURER (PASTOR)** = builds relationships, cares for people, and works to maintain relational harmony
- 🕒 **GUARDIAN (TEACHER)** = is the custodian of traditions, systems, and processes; they see reality and thrive on information and analysis



12.4.1 DIVING DEEPER | FIVE-FOLD PERSONALITY STYLE

To discover more about the ways God has created you, take one or both of the free assessments:



Huddle Guide Resource Links.

APEST - www.fivefoldministry.com

5-Voices - www.giant.tv/5voices/hq5v

🔍 Record your results from these assessments.

🔍 Which of the 5-fold gifting do you most resonate with?

🔍 What was surprising?

12.4.2 TOGETHER

Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion regarding what you have been discovering. Make sure to discuss any questions you have.

🗣️ **What did you discover that you already suspected? What surprised you?**

🗣️ **What are the strengths?**

🗣️ **Is there a particular role you love to do when you are serving or part of a team? Pay attention to your spiritual gifts and five-fold assessment.**

🗣️ **In what ways can you continue to develop and sharpen your spiritual gifts?**

Now, we turn our attention toward our life experiences. Our life story, with all the triumphs and trials, is a witness to our resilience, growth, and potential for transformation.

Before your Huddle meeting, explore your life experiences. Write down what you discover.

Go back and look at your Life Map or River of Life you created at the beginning of Huddle. Fill in the gaps and add details about significant life events.

As you reflect on your life, pay attention to the events, people, and places that were highs and lows.

Choose four high points and explore what makes each time satisfying or fulfilling.

Use this template to gain perspective and gain insight into your passion.

12.5.1

DIVING DEEPER | LIFE EXPERIENCES

 #1 HIGH POINT Describe it: What made the experience so meaningful or good? How did you feel?

 #2 HIGH POINT

 Describe it:

 What made the experience so meaningful or good?

 How did you feel?

 #3 HIGH POINT

 Describe it:

 What made the experience so meaningful or good?

 How did you feel?

 #4 HIGH POINT

 Describe it:

 What made the experience so meaningful or good?

 How did you feel?

Now, we will turn our attention to the low points. Sometimes, our calling is connected to challenging experiences, pain, suffering, and loss. Paul writes these words to show us how we can offer comfort, hope, and healing to others because of what we have experienced.

“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us.”

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7

🔊 #1 LOW/PAIN POINT

🔊 What Happened?

🔊 What were you feeling during the low point?

🔊 How did this impact your understanding of God, yourself, or others?

🔊 What (if anything) has helped you remember God was with you?

🔍 #2 LOW/PAIN POINT

🔍 What Happened?

🔍 What were you feeling during the low point?

🔍 How did this impact your understanding of God, yourself, or others?

🔍 What (if anything) has helped you remember God was with you?

#3 LOW/PAIN POINT

What Happened?

What were you feeling during the low point?

How did this impact your understanding of God, yourself, or others?

What (if anything) has helped you remember God was with you?

#4 LOW/PAIN POINT

What Happened?

What were you feeling during the low point?

How did this impact your understanding of God, yourself, or others?

What (if anything) has helped you remember God was with you?

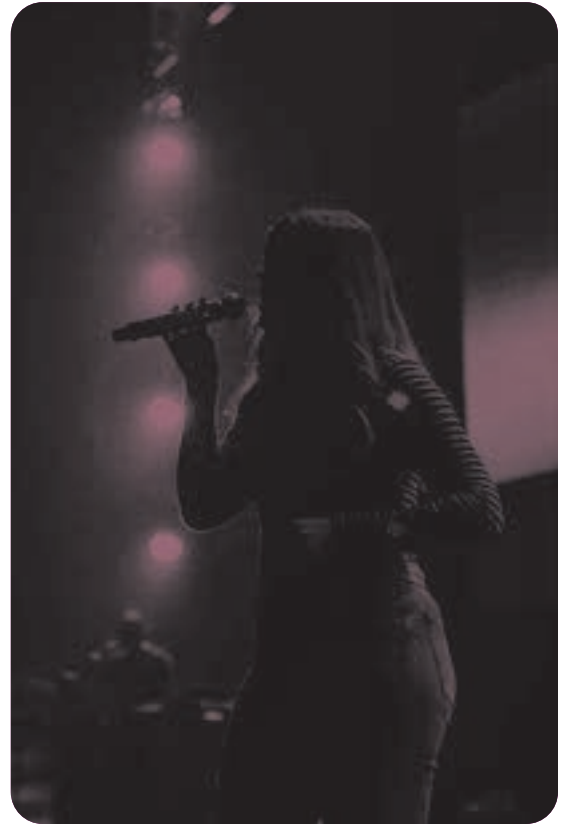
When we align our passions with God's desire to bring hope and healing to our world, we become agents in God's work of redemption and restoration. We recognize that our passions are not accidental inclinations but intentional callings that enable us to live a life of purpose. Through the intersection of our life stories and passions, we discover a profound opportunity to connect with and love others toward a deepening relationship with God.

The fall of humanity and ongoing disobedience against God fractured the perfect world God created and intended for us. We long for shalom. The peace of God that existed at the beginning of the story of God will someday be fulfilled when Jesus returns.

Because people are separated from God and choose their own path, we experience the continual fracturing of our world. However, we are not without hope. Jesus came to declare that his kingdom has come and is coming where all things are being made right. Until that day, our calling as Christ followers is to bring hope and healing to the broken places of our world.

Our purpose is to join God in what he has done through Jesus and is doing. We join God in sharing our faith and inviting others to no longer be alienated from God by surrendering their lives to Jesus and choosing to follow him.

When we speak of passion and purpose, we are talking about the combination of your desires, hopes, interests, ambitions, and dreams aligned with one or more of the broken places of our world. This topic invites you to think about what breaks your heart and what you can't seem to stop thinking or talking about.



Answer the following questions to help you uncover your passion and purpose.

As you look around, where and with whom do you long to offer hope and healing? Read through the list below and ask God to help you see how you can join him in restoring the broken places of our world. Is it around any of the areas listed below?

- PAIN:** To come alongside others experiencing pain in their body, mind, and spirit.
- ISOLATION:** To come alongside the lonely, marginalized, and forgotten.
- HATRED:** To work against division, discrimination, and dehumanization that leads to violence, racism, war, and genocide.
- INJUSTICE:** To work toward just systems that eliminate inequality, poverty, hunger, disease, slavery, etc.
- DECAY:** To help steward the earth by the ways we care for creation.
- OTHER,** specify _____

Try to answer these three questions to help uncover your passion. Don't force it. Just write down what first comes to mind.

👉 **Is there a particular group of people you are drawn to and desire to come alongside?**

👉 **Is there a particular cause or issue you can't stop thinking about?**

👉 **At the end of my life, I'd love to be able to look back and know that I'd done something about:**

Considering everything you have explored in this topic, take some time to pull it together.

🔍 **What are your strengths? (personality, spiritual gifts, and 5-fold/voice)**

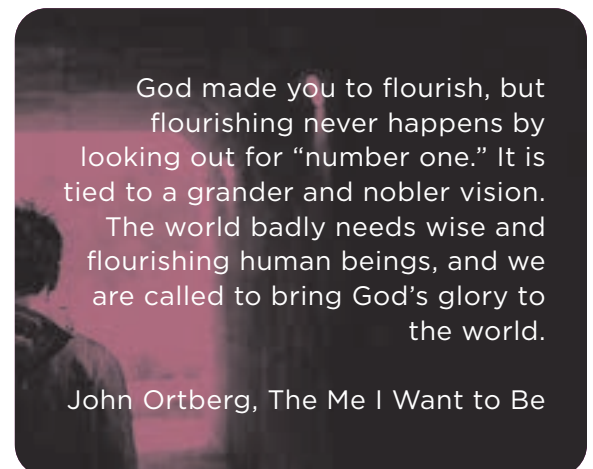
🔍 **What themes emerged as you looked at your high and low points? How has your story shaped you? (life experiences)**



🔍 **Whom do you feel called to come alongside? What cause, issue, or topic are you most interested in? (passion and purpose)**

🔍 **How do you sense God wants to use your unique design now? How do you see the elements of your calling coming together?**

🔍 **Based on your answers to the previous questions, how would you complete this sentence? I sense God calling me to....**



12.7 NEXT STEPS

Before moving to the next topic, pause. Review your notes, reflect on your Huddle discussions, and jot down what you have discovered.

🕒 **Use the Kairos circle to discern what God is saying and what you will do about it.**

🕒 **What do you sense God calling you to? What would it look like to get started?**

🕒 **Participate in the Start Something New workshop at Mercy Road Northeast.**

🕒 **One of the best ways to confirm what you are sensing is to share what you discover with a trusted friend. You might be surprised by some areas you have overlooked when you ask a friend for their affirmation. Share what you are discovering with a trusted friend or mentor.**

MULTIPLYING DISCIPLES



INSTRUCTIONS

Multiplied Disciples normally takes one session. The group should have read the topic before coming to Huddle. Take time to discuss what stood out to the group in the reading and Diving Deeper.

Finish this topic praying for who God is encouraging you to invite into a Huddle.

As you prepare to move to the next topic, your Huddle leader will introduce Topic 14: Next Steps and invite the group to read the topic before the next Huddle.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Making disciples is inviting others to follow Jesus alongside you.

“

To follow Jesus implies that we enter into a way of life that is given character and shape and direction by the one who calls us. To follow Jesus means picking up rhythms and ways of doing things that are often unsaid but always derivative from Jesus, formed by the influence of Jesus. To follow Jesus means that we can't separate what Jesus is saying from what Jesus is doing and the way that he is doing it. To follow Jesus is as much, or maybe even more, about feet as it is about ears and eyes.”

Eugene Peterson, *The Way of Jesus*



MULTIPLYING DISCIPLES | HUDDLES

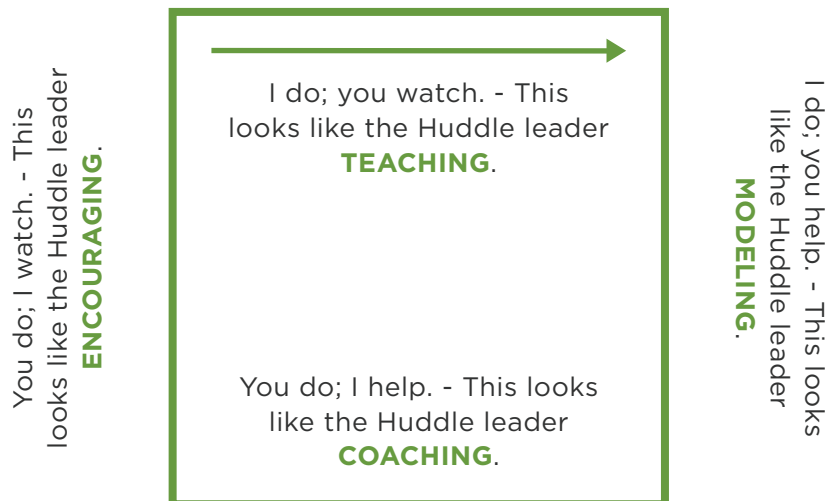
Jesus came and told his disciples, *“I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* (MATTHEW 28:18- 20)

The twelve disciples and many others had been following Jesus and learning from Him for nearly 3 years. It was time to step into their calling to multiply disciples and spread the gospel.

With God’s help and the power of the Holy Spirit, the church spread through ordinary men and women. You can read all about this in the book of Acts and throughout the New Testament.

Paul was most likely discipled by Barnabus, who was discipled by Peter, who was discipled by Jesus. Paul went on to disciple others like Timothy and Titus, who then discipled others. Paul writes, *“And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.”* (1 CORINTHIANS 11:1)

Jesus invited his disciples to follow him. There came the point when Jesus released them to go and do what he has done. Huddle leaders facilitate this gradual release method starting with teaching and then progressing toward encouraging.



The Leadership Square helps us think about how we actually develop and mature as a disciple and how the disciple maker should teach and equip other disciples at each stage.



STAGE 1: I DO; YOU WATCH. - THIS LOOKS LIKE THE HUDDLE LEADER TEACHING.

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



Disciples in Stage 1 are excited by a new vision or way of life, but they've never done this before. They are inexperienced and need a lot of teaching and guidance.

(MARK 1:15-20): *"Come follow me..." At once they left their nets and followed him.*

Jesus invited the disciples to follow him, and then Jesus would teach his disciples in private and in public. The disciples would watch and learn. Jesus would often explain what he had said or done with the disciples.

STAGE 2: I DO; YOU HELP. - THIS LOOKS LIKE THE HUDDLE LEADER MODELING.

Disciples in Stage 2 begin to assist in the doing. Disciples in stage 2 are still learning and considering what it looks like to live a life like Jesus and prepare to share what they are learning with others. This is why we invite huddles to practice teaching the concepts to one another. This provides a safe space to talk about and try to teach the concepts with others. This builds confidence to begin sharing what they are learning with others and prepare to disciple others.

During this stage, disciples may begin to question and doubt they have the ability to lead others. **"I can't do it the way my Huddle leader is doing it!"** It is normal to feel intimidated. Stage 2 creates a safe space to ask questions, practice teaching the concepts, and receive feedback from your group and Huddle leader. It is important to understand the concepts and application to communicate effectively. However, you need to find your own voice and way of communicating.

STAGE 3: YOU DO; I HELP. - THIS LOOKS LIKE THE HUDDLE LEADER COACHING.

In stage 3, the disciples are growing in their confidence and competence. Having spent time with Jesus and learning the discipleship concepts, the disciple has been putting the learning into practice and is ready to start sharing with others.

"... You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants... I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you..." (JOHN 15:12-17)

This is the season where the grace of God and new skills, lessons, and life rhythms get worked into a disciple's life. Faith increases as we practice what we are discovering. It is in this stage, disciples experience more growth and build confidence by sharing their faith with others.



STAGE 4: YOU DO; I WATCH. - THIS LOOKS LIKE THE HUDDLE LEADER ENCOURAGING.

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



It is important to check in periodically to discuss how you are applying the learning to your life and what it is like sharing with others. This is the time to move from being disciplined to discipling others.

God has uniquely gifted you and surrounded you with people you can help to grow spiritually. Remember, our ability to lead others is not about us, it is about God's grace and the Holy Spirit at work in and through us.

Then Jesus came to them and said, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* (MATTHEW. 28:18-20)

Jesus is gone, just like He said He would be. In this passage, he delegates authority to them. He is teaching them to trust the Holy Spirit. Their deep relationship and ministry experience with Him guides them in this stage, as they now look for those that they can disciple into the character and skills of Christ. This is not only true for the disciples; it is also true for us.

We are a new generation of people, deeply rooted in Christ through the Huddle experience. There is growing knowledge of God's Word and His grace through continual listening, obeying, and practicing the ways of Jesus.

Jesus delegates the work to us with a release of authority and responsibility. Celebrate what God has done in and through your Huddle experience as you begin to make room for more people to be disciplined.



CONCLUSION

If this feels intimidating and like too much responsibility, it is. The good news is that you are not doing this alone; you have the Holy Spirit to guide you and teach you everything you need to know.

Jesus warns the disciples of what lies ahead for them in Mark 13. *"You will be handed over to the local councils and beaten in the synagogues. You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell them about me. For the Good News must first be preached to all nations. But when you are arrested and stand trial, don't worry in advance about what to say. Just say what God tells you at that time, for it is not you who will be speaking, but the Holy Spirit."* (MARK 13:9-11)

Before your Huddle meeting, answer the following questions.

When Jesus ascended to heaven to be with His father, the Holy Spirit was sent to dwell in all His followers. Highlight or underline the role of the Holy Spirit and write down what you discover about the Holy Spirit.

JOHN 14:15-31

15 *"If you love me, obey my commandments. **16** And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. **17** He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. **18** No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you. **19** Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. **20** When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. **21** Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them."*

22 *Judas (not Judas Iscariot, but the other disciple with that name) said to him, "Lord, why are you going to reveal yourself only to us and not to the world at large?" **23** Jesus replied, "All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them. **24** Anyone who doesn't love me will not obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me.*

25 *I am telling you these things now while I am still with you. **26** But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.*

27 *"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid. **28** Remember what I told you: I am going away, but I will come back to you again. If you really loved me, you would be happy that I am going to the Father, who is greater than I am. **29** I have told you these things before they happen so that when they do happen, you will believe.*

30 *"I don't have much more time to talk to you, because the ruler of this world approaches. He has no power over me, **31** but I will do what the Father requires of me, so that the world will know that I love the Father. Come, let's be going."*

I CAN COUNT ON THE HOLY SPIRIT TO...

🕒 JOHN 14:16

🕒 JOHN 14:17

🕒 JOHN 14:26

🕒 JOHN 14:26

🕒 JOHN 14:27

🕒 WHICH OF THESE THINGS DO YOU NEED MOST RIGHT NOW?

13.2.2 TOGETHER

Your Huddle leader will use these questions to guide your discussion regarding what you have been discovering and any questions you may have using these questions.

👉 **How have you experienced the Leadership Square in your workplace or in some other area of your life?**

👉 **What stage of discipleship do you currently feel you are in?**

👉 **The Holy Spirit is available to everyone who decides to surrender their life to Jesus and follow Him. When have you experienced comfort, felt the presence, or received help from the Holy Spirit? How would you describe these experiences?**

👉 **Where do you feel you have grown the most through Huddle?**

13.3 NEXT STEPS

Before moving to the next topic, pause. Review your notes, reflect on your Huddle discussions, and jot down what you have discovered.

Remember leading a Huddle is not about perfection or knowing all the answers. It is about doing life together and encouraging one another to become more like Jesus.

👉 **Whom may God be inviting you to invite into a Huddle you would lead?**

👉 **Who could you invite to co-lead your Huddle?**

👉 **How can your Huddle leader or group members support you in leading a Huddle?**



NEXT STEPS

INSTRUCTIONS

Next Steps marks the end of this Huddle. This is the perfect time to celebrate all that God has done in and through the group. Take some time to share what God has done in your life and how you've seen growth in others.

Discuss what could be each person's next step and pray for courage and confidence to follow God's nudges.

Make sure to plan a time to celebrate either in your last official Huddle meeting or another time.



14.1 INTRODUCTION

Well done! You just finished Huddle. Huddle has likely been a significant part of your spiritual journey. But don't stop being intentional about your growth.

So what's next? Discuss your next step with your Huddle.

- 🔗 **Launch a Huddle (see next pages)**
- 🔗 **Volunteer at Mercy Road using your time and talents**
- 🔗 **Become a Rooted Facilitator**
- 🔗 **Join an Outpost**
- 🔗 **Start an Outpost**
- 🔗 **Continue Growing in another Huddle**
- 🔗 **Other**

THIS WEEK IS A TIME TO CELEBRATE!

Your group made it through a year or more of intensive discipleship, and that is a reason to celebrate! You have invested deeply into your faith journey and walked alongside others as they have grown.

One of the ways you can encourage each other is to affirm the work that God has done in and through this experience.

Give each group member a piece of paper and ask them to write their name on it. Pass the paper to the right, allowing a few minutes to write or draw something you want to celebrate about each person. Then pass the paper to the right and repeat until everyone has their own sheet of paper. When the person's paper has made its way back to them, take some time to ask the group to share in a sentence or two how they have seen them grow.

Close your time praying for each other.

4 STEPS TO LAUNCH A HUDDLE

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



PRAY

Take 2-3 weeks to pray. Ask God to reveal WHO He is calling you to invite into your Huddle. Pray God will clear the way for them to say yes. Pray for wisdom and peace this next year.

CHOOSE DAY/TIME

Consider your schedule first. Before you do anything else, choose a day and time of the week you can commit to for the next year.

HOLD 1-2 PRE-HUDDLE MEETINGS

Be upfront. This is a big commitment for you and the Huddle. Be upfront about the commitment. It will be challenging but worth it. Share and discuss pages 1-10 of this guide with your potential Huddle participants.

COMMUNICATE

Once your Huddle members have committed, complete the Huddle Launch Form so our team can support you.

4 STEPS TO LAUNCH A HUDDLE

PRAY - ASK EVERYONE TO PRAY BEFORE COMMITTING

We believe in the power of prayer. This is a big commitment. Invite potential Huddle participants to pray & discuss with family before committing. Be upfront about 1-year commitment and the vision of making future disciples.

GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER - INTRODUCE EVERYONE & ASK QUESTIONS

Let everyone briefly introduce themselves. This could help everyone “get a feel” for how this group could be. Allow people to ask questions during and at the conclusion of the meeting.

EXPLAIN THE WHY - MATTHEW 28:19-20 - THE GREAT COMMISSION

The objective of Huddle is to make disciples who then make disciples. Jesus calls all believers to do this and promises to be with us as we step out in faith and obedience. We disciple in groups because that’s how Jesus led; we learn from one another. Discipleship Huddle is a teacher-learner relationship as modeled by Christ.

BE UPFRONT - BE REAL & SET EXPECTATIONS

It’s a 1-year commitment. Communicate the day/time Huddle will take place and the importance of regular attendance.

FOLLOW UP - REACH OUT & EQUIP

Follow up within a few days. Let people know the start date/time/place. Have everyone either purchase a Huddle guide or download the PDF to use as a reference.

Don’t forget to contact Pastor Corinne at corinne@mercyroadne.com to inform her who will be in your Huddle.



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For more information about Mercy Road Church or this guide, please get in touch by contacting info@mercyroadne.com.

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