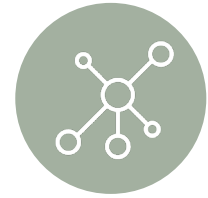


OUTPOST NETWORK



Mercy Road Church is missional at its core. Outposts are gatherings of people who meet regularly - combining community, discipleship and mission.



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Introduction

We invite you as Ministry, Outreach, or Micro Church Outpost leaders into Part Three of the Outpost Network Leader Training Guide.

We have prayerfully compiled these “building blocks” to continue the support of your growth in Christ and development as a leader. This is an ongoing journey, so you may want to re-read and utilize specific sections as you move forward with your group.

Our hope is that the influence, joy, and impact of your Outpost will increase as you dive into these pages. Developing yourself as a leader is important work. The Body of Christ needs well equipped and Spirit-filled leaders!

The Body of Christ needs YOU!

Major themes you will experience in this section include:

**Maturity, Character, and Community
Leadership Skills Development**

Spirit-Led Evangelism and Disciple-Making

Please begin by meditating on this scripture, and allowing it to soak into your heart and mind...

“...until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ...
but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, that is, Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” **Ephesians 4:13, 15—16 NASB**

We want you to be equipped and encouraged to follow the Spirit’s lead — **UP, IN,** and **OUT.**

UP Deepening worship, growing in intimacy with Jesus and learning to listen to Him

IN Encouraging maturity, facilitating healing, and building joy-inspired relationships

OUT Engaging the community and the world in natural and supernatural ways

The opportunities to learn and grow within this section are extensions of Mercy Road’s Mission and Values, and fit hand-in-glove with instruction presented in our Huddle Guide and in the ROOTED Discipleship Experience. Together, in all things, “We exist to see those far from God disciplined into a passionate relationship with Jesus.”

Disciple-making never stops!

As you progress through this section, please keep these outcomes prayerfully in mind:

Cultivation of self-learning and regular training practices within your group.

Commitment to grow as a group of believers towards deepening trust, safety, and joy as true identity in Christ emerges among individuals and within your group.

Growth in your engagement with those far from Jesus: learning to pray for “persons of peace”, utilizing tools to support your group, and creating authentic connection and conversations that are intentional—not forced.

Some of the concepts and group practices you will discover in this section are:

- A Culture of Trust
- Relational Love Bonds + Brain Science
- DNA Groups
- Pathways to Wholeness (Shalom)
- Personal And Group Evangelism
- The Five “Cs” of Leadership

Growing in all these areas is a work of the Spirit of Jesus in us, as we cooperate with Him. If you remind yourself that this will all take time and is not really a “program” but a lifestyle, you will be forever changed. If any part seems overwhelming, just go slowly, one step at a time.

There are no experts here—just learners on His journey to become the hands, feet, heart, and family of Jesus. Work through this section at your own pace, as part of your life-long journey of discovery and adventure!

Much prayer is required, and the process can be messy, but the rewards are eternal, and evident in our present life together!

Initial Direction





What is Our “Why”?

Have you ever considered what it will be like when you enter Heaven?

Who will you see? What will you experience? How will you feel?
Do you realize it could be just a few short years from now?

Experiencing the Glory of God, finally seeing Jesus face-to-face, and experiencing the multitude of heavenly beings will certainly be our most joyous time!

Just second to that, perhaps, will be the moment that you join those from every tribe, tongue, and nation in worship around the Throne.

Imagine that!

Then imagine the overflowing gratitude of those who come to you and say, “It is because of you that I am here now! The life you lived, the sacrifices you made, the way you loved me, your support and prayers, your obedience to our Lord and Savior... these are the reasons that I am here!”

You will be experiencing this together with all the saints:

“Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders... You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God **persons from every tribe and language and people and nation**. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.” Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.”

Revelation 5:6, 9-10, NIV (emphasis added)

“After this I looked, and **there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb**. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

Revelation 7:9-10, NIV (emphasis added)

Sometimes, we can be tempted to feel inconvenienced here on earth as we strive to make disciples and live a life worthy of our calling. But your willingness to be “inconvenienced” could very well result in great heavenly reward—the reunion with souls saved because you chose to yield control of your life to the Most High.

As a leader, the choices you make—to allow your time to be used differently, your talents to be uniquely expressed on behalf of others, your relational love to be manifested, your finances to be used to impact the lives of others, your schedule to be interrupted—collectively represent a yielding that produces eternal fruit. When we all get to heaven, we will be thrilled and humbled to see what the Father has done uniquely in you and through you to bring others to His Son forever.

Reflection: Have you come to a place in your spiritual walk where you are willing to be inconvenienced? If not, why not?

THE COVENANT OF BLESSING: WHY YOU?

God set His plan in motion in Genesis for all peoples of the earth to be blessed through Abraham:

Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Genesis 12:1-3 NASB

This covenantal promise is restated in Genesis 17:3-7:

“Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you will be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer will you be called Abram; But your name shall be Abraham; For I have made you a father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant...”

Genesis 17:3-7 NASB

Now we too enjoy the Promise!

We are grafted into God’s family—with Abraham as our spiritual father in the faith. God’s ultimate desire is to make spiritual family of all nations; a people united in Christ who belong to His family, and to one another.

“Christ redeemed us... in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the Promise of the Spirit through faith...”

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.”

Galatians 3:13-14, 28-29 NASB

We are of Abraham's seed in Christ. We are heirs with him. Will we choose to walk in that promise made to Abraham, and choose life to the full? As an Outpost Leader, ask yourself this question consistently, and bring this question to your group as well.

In the spirit of pursuing God's promises, the Outpost Network operates by pursuing the following values and practices:

- Prayer and "Listening to Jesus"
- Obedience to God's Word
- Pursuit of inner healing and wholeness ("Shalom")
- Worship in the Spirit
- Discipleship in community
- Evangelism in DNA Groups (DNA = Disciple-making, Nurturing, Apostolic mission)
- Development of diverse expressions—Ministry/Outreach/Micro Church Outposts
- Church everywhere (not just where there is a building, sound system, and staff!)
- Willingness to move as the Holy Spirit leads
- Commitment to going anywhere, anytime, to any people group

**We are called to be missionaries in spiritual families
going out to people who are far from Jesus, making disciples of all nations—
this is His Plan, His Desire, and His Delight!**

Reflection:

Can you see our "WHY?" as Outposts, and its eternal value?

Can you imagine the crowd of people around you eager to give testimony to the impact you had on their life?

Can you imagine the eternal gratitude, and glory? Can you see it?

Your role, therefore, as a disciple and as an Outpost Leader, is to discover to which “plows” (Luke 9:57) Jesus has for your hands. Remember to ask yourself these questions first, and then ask them of your group:

- Am I willing to be “inconvenienced” for a greater eternal treasure?
- Am I one who is willing to study and absorb the content of our Outpost training?
- Do I believe that the Bible calls me to be a missionary?
- Am I Spirit-led or self-oriented?
- Am I ready to move out of the shallow and be led into deeper waters?
- For whom am I praying? Am I praying to lead others towards the Kingdom of God?
- Who am I discipling?
- Am I willing to surrender to His greater purposes?
- Am I willing to live by Galatians 5:24-25 and let the old self die?

Inconvenience represents a different type of death. Perhaps it is death to comfort, to controlling your schedule, to leisure, to your plans or dreams. Are you ready to embrace His call to a new reality of life?

If so, let’s continue this journey as a Mercy Road family to become equipped as leaders — modeling Jesus and mentoring others towards this great eternal work!

Remember, Jesus endured the cross and despised its shame for the JOY set before Him. The joy set before Jesus was YOU! Even if it was for just you, He would have suffered the same.

“And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

Hebrews 12:1—3 NIV

Relational Love Bonds

“Our Creator designed our brains to grow and change through strong relational attachment to Him and to the important people in our lives. Putting practices in place that deepen these attachments brings about character change, maturity, and transformation into Christlikeness.”

- Amy Brown, Trainer for Life Model Works

What would happen if the perfect love of Jesus was expressed as a demonstration of service and care that was so radical that the broken and lost literally began running to our doors?

Do you believe we could see that happen?

A “relational revolution” in our lifetime is possible—if we discover the wonder of relational love bonds and secure attachments—in a culture of high joy.

But what do these words actually mean?

We encourage you to press in and deeply ponder the truths that follow. When you live into these concepts and lead others to do the same, true disciple-making and transformational ministry will manifest and flourish. Keep God’s Word always in mind:

“By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another.”

John 13:35 NASB

“... that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

John 17:21 NASB

RELATIONAL LOVE BONDS

This type of bond manifests most clearly when practiced in community life. As relational realities are more often “caught” than “taught”, it’s important that you practice and experience together how relational love bonds work. This is the type of love to which Jesus points us in John 13:35.

There is supernatural power in the unity and flow of affection that results from establishing an environment of safety, trust, and deep connection. As we build life-giving relationships, we also begin to experience the next concept.

SECURE ATTACHMENTS

The concept of secure attachments can be found in the work of pioneers in the field of neuroscience, like Dr. James Wilder of Life Model Works. This research shows that God has “hardwired” humans to have a desire to be loved, to fully know others, and to be fully known by others. In healthy community, secure attachments are exhibited by a sense of safety and belonging, by a delight in one another, by warm smiles and eye contact, and by a heart—felt endearment to one another.

Researchers have also discovered that the right side of our brain receives messages that trigger emotional responses much faster than the left side of our brain. Their work shows that as messages of love and joy are received in the right hemisphere of the brain, deep connection with others is formed. If those messages are consistently conveyed through loving community, they can positively impact our entire limbic system and may even help to heal issues of trauma for some individuals.

CULTURE OF HIGH JOY

When we are, first and foremost, secure in our relationship with Jesus, and then secure in our relationships within the group, a sense of spiritual family develops. Deep relational love bonds produce joy that is almost palpable.

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit that brings healing and hope. Dr. Allen Schore, a former Research Professor in Neuropsychology at UCLA, discovered that joy is an actual nutrient for healthy brain function.

As an Outpost leader, intentionally cultivating the exchange of love—filled joy within your group creates an environment where biblical unity can be experienced. When your group is in proximity with the world, those who are watching can see (and feel) that something is different and very attractive!

To build a culture of high joy in our Outpost communities, we must be committed to the practice of listening to Jesus first, then praying and studying the Bible together. We must also strive to develop “**hesed**”, from the Hebrew word meaning a profound love that is “sticky” and won’t let go (similar to the Greek word “**agape**.”)

When this type of love is understood and is bountifully expressed as part of the weekly Outpost gathering, life and character transformation can be realized on a scale that we have not yet seen in most North American churches.

American culture has watered down the word “love” so much that it can mean almost anything. But if we are determined to build “hesed” love, we will begin to understand and express a commitment that looks much different than the status quo.

A culture of “hesed” looks to Jesus as they hold on to each community member with an unwavering patience, forbearance, and heart connection that remains constant—even in the midst of pain, upheaval, conflict, or confrontation.

When the world sees this powerful display of biblical relationship—they will recognize us as Christians by this type of love—and begin to see Jesus for who He really is!

But building a culture of “hesed” is challenging!

Our Outposts are made up of people with all kinds of baggage, fears, broken places, and sin. Humans are messy, and often an Outpost leader is unsure how to navigate the mess.

Oftentimes, we are tempted to take a posture of avoidance. Because in all honesty, it seems easier and more comfortable to just not deal with difficult dynamics and/or the course corrections that are needed.

In addition, we sometimes haven't had experience or training in how to facilitate a group through the power of the Holy Spirit, bringing the healing and perspective which are desperately needed, especially in the midst of challenges or confrontation.

As leaders, when we are listening to Jesus, following the Spirit, learning to suspend judgement and willing to model honesty and vulnerability—real breakthrough can occur. We can help create an atmosphere of safety by our example, and trust can begin to flourish as our communities begin to feel comfortable sharing their own weaknesses and broken places.

Our hope remains that people gathering at our Outposts from every walk of life—with all types of past trauma and difficult backgrounds—can begin to experience transformation and healing in this culture of high joy.

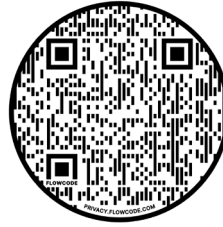
Relational love bonds and secure attachments forged in an atmosphere of biblical joy—this is the journey of relational health, or “Shalom”. If you commit to this journey together as an Outpost, this can change everything.

So, let's yield to the working of the Holy Spirit to empower us to build lasting friendships and to reach those far from Jesus as a powerful expression of Colossians 1:27: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

TRAINING RESOURCES

“The Other Half of Church”

by Jim Wilder and Michel Hendricks

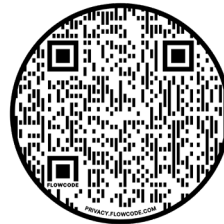


“The Other Half of Church” is a powerful book that dives into the neuroscience of the relational community for which we are designed but that is often neglected in the typical church experience. The truths revealed can dramatically impact you and all of the relationships in your group as you create love-filled life change!

We encourage you to purchase the book and to check out “The Other Half of the Church” Podcast wherever you stream.

“Life Model Works”

We encourage you to look into the wealth of material available from Life Model Works!



On their website, you will find resources designed to help you unlock relational skills, go deeper in connection, and reclaim biblical community. Utilizing this site can be a great way to equip yourself to lead by example in spiritual and character development!

Life Model XP is a free resource with twelve modules that can help you build meaningful relationships, accelerate spiritual growth, and experience greater joy in Christ!

Joy Stream is a growing library of Life Model Works resources you can stream on demand, with new resources being added each month. Membership with unlimited video and audio access, all designed to inspire Christ-like transformation, is \$9.99/month.

We encourage you to research additional training opportunities, seminars, and classes that all link brain science with the Bible to create authentic community around “hesed” at www.lifeworks.org—and to pray through what might inspire your Outpost.

Deeper Covenant Relationships

The essence of a healthy spiritual family living on mission together is only realized when relationships are forged that are of both the heart and the Holy Spirit. Building covenant relationships that reflect biblical love is a process, developed over time, as we solidify safety and trust in our Outposts.

Caring leaders, much like spiritual mothers and fathers, help set the culture of high joy described previously. The ethos of Christ's love works when we come together in this culture through the good, the bad, and the ugly of our lives.

We are encouraging you to join in covenant with your Outpost!

Covenant is a biblical concept that does not reflect any sense of legalism or a contract. Rather, this is a mutual agreement to pursue bonded relationships that should produce commitment to respect, responsibility, integrity, and deference to one another. It's in the spirit of unity and shared purpose that we enter such a covenant as Outposts, and we remain under God's spiritual authority through the leaders of each Mercy Road Church.

Please note, everyone in a leadership role at Mercy Road Church is expected to sign a Leadership Covenant.

In addition to the standard leadership agreement, the example group agreement that follows would be a part of establishing Micro Church Outposts. You may or may not want to set up a similar covenant for your gathering. Many Ministry and Outreach Outposts are set up for people to flow in and out, so written group covenant agreements would be optional.

But regardless of the type of Outpost you are leading, the principles and values found in this example agreement are worth discussing, and commitments like this help establish healthy, thriving groups!

As a member of the _____ Outpost,

I agree to the following:

OUR PURPOSE: We grow healthy spiritual lives by building a small spiritual family of authentically loving people who are pursuing God together.

GROUP ATTENDANCE: We give priority to the group meeting. We will notify the group if we will be late or absent.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT: We help create a safe place where each person can be heard and feel loved. We agree to strive to listen well to Jesus and to one another, to suspend judgment, to avoid trying to “fix” one another, and to be mindful of the scriptures that instruct our words and actions.

CONFIDENTIALITY: We hold everything stated in the group in absolute confidence. Nothing goes outside without the expressed consent of the one who has shared.

SPIRITUAL HEALTH: We practice mutual submission and permission-giving, and we give permission to one another to offer prayers, encouragement, and suggestions for course correction or biblical admonishment towards repentance as necessary. Our expected outcome is for each individual to be growing towards spiritual health and a life that is pleasing to God. We support the concept of “submitting to one another’s strengths and protecting one another’s weaknesses,” realizing these are only discovered over time in a place of trust and safety.

INVITATION: We keep an open heart towards newcomers, and desire to live out Jesus’s prayer in John 17—finding a shepherd for every sheep as we invite others into our group or share the good news of Jesus together.

SHARED OWNERSHIP: We remember that every member is a minister, and we encourage each individual in the group to serve in the role or responsibility to which they are called.

LISTENING TO JESUS: We commit to “Listening to Jesus” before, during, and after gatherings and fellowship.

DISCIPLESHIP: We recognize that challenges, disagreements, and different perspectives will most likely come, and when they do, we commit to open, honest, and non-combative adult conversations. We are open to the change and growth needed, as revealed in conflicts or conversations.

We recognize this is all part of becoming a mature and healthy disciple of Jesus. Therefore, we commit as a community to make disciples (that will make disciples) and to multiply new groups and Outposts as the Holy Spirit inspires and leads!

Key Values

Mercy Road Church has identified key elements that form the foundation of the expression of God's Church—where we live in fellowship with the Body of Christ and through which we can impact the world as disciple-makers.

We encourage all Outpost leaders to review these values with your group, and to discover what these values mean to each individual and the Outpost as a whole.

Take an entire session to dialogue over each one of Mercy Road's Core Values, and then brainstorm different ways these values can be demonstrated through your Outpost:

CORE VALUES

PASSIONATE WORSHIP

We love to wholeheartedly worship God!

SPIRITUAL APPRENTICESHIP

We make disciples, who make disciples.

INTENTIONAL MISSION

We seek to live on mission using our time, talents and treasures to expand God's Kingdom!

UNIFIED COMMUNITY

No one should ever feel alone at Mercy Road!
We desire to be unified in our pursuit of Christ.

STRATEGIC GENEROSITY

We want to be a generous church! We seek to become a church that gives 50% our financial resources away to help those in need and share our faith around the world!

Reflection:

Reflect on each core value.

What does this mean to me personally?

How can I apply this to my life and in my family?

How can we apply these values in our Outpost?

What would the practical outcomes look like for our group?

KEY VALUE: PASSIONATE WORSHIP

Look for scripture passages on heartfelt praise as a lifestyle and biblical ways to express our love for Him.

(Examples: Psalm 29:1-2; Acts 13:2)

Search scripture passages on receiving God's love, returning love back to Him, and extending God's love to others.

(Examples: Matthew 22:37-39; 1 John)

Find God's Word about the Bible as truth and the its authority over all areas of faith and life.

(Example: 2 Timothy 3:16)

Look for verses on knowing and obeying God's Word out of love for Him.

(Examples: Luke 11:28, John 14:15-25)

Study scriptures on "Listening to Jesus". Study hearing and obeying the Holy Spirit's voice because we know and love Him.

(Examples: John 10: 4, 27-28; Romans 8:12-17)

KEY VALUE: SPIRITUAL APPRENTICESHIP

Meditate on the Great Commission, the last words of Jesus.

(Example: Matthew 28:16-20)

Find scriptures on following Jesus in the equipping and training of His disciples to share all that He taught with others.

(Example: 2 Timothy 2:2)

Search God's Word to find complete, quick, and cheerful obedience to Jesus with the Holy Spirit's empowerment.

(Example: Romans 1:5, Romans 11; Romans 5:5)

Look for scriptures on doing God's will, God's way, by God's Spirit, for God's glory.

(Examples: Proverbs 22:6; Isaiah 30:21; Colossians 1:9-12)

KEY VALUE: INTENTIONAL MISSION

Study verses on being empowered and continuously filled with the Holy Spirit for ministry, on being living witnesses, and on giving Spirit-led testimony.

(Examples: Acts 1:5, 8; Ephesians 3:6; Colossians 1:27-29; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 2 Corinthians 3:2)

Search out God's Word regarding advancing the Kingdom of God in every sphere of life: marriage and family, church, marketplace, media, arts, education, civil government, and social services.

(Examples: Matthew 5:13, Matthew 6:33)

Find scriptures on compassion and justice — especially toward the youth, poor, widows, orphans, and foreigners.

(Examples: Jeremiah 22:16; Matthew 11:5; 25:31-46; Luke 14:13; James 1:27)

Study cross cultural and international missions.

(Examples: Revelation 14:6-7; Acts 1:8 Matthew 28:18-20; John 17:18)

KEY VALUE: UNIFIED COMMUNITY

Look at scriptures on experiencing the heart of the Father through covenant relationships within our own natural and spiritual family. Search for God’s Word on the value of unity, communication, conflict resolution, speaking the truth in love, honoring one another, and expressing godly affection.

(Examples: Acts 4:32-34; 2 Corinthians 6:11-13; 1 Peter 1:22)

Search for scriptures on growing our relational skills through self—study, personal and group equipping, and through regular practice of meeting together.

(Examples: Hebrews 10:22-25; John 17: 20-23)

Find God’s Word on enjoying and celebrating life through Christ.

(Examples: John 6:40; 10:10; Ephesians 3:19; Colossians 2:6-7)

KEY VALUE: STRATEGIC GENEROSITY

Meditate on the extravagant giving demonstrated by our Father in Heaven.

(Examples: Romans 12:8; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15; Galatians 6:7-10)

Study God’s Word on giving of our time, talents, and treasure as prayerfully led by the Holy Spirit.

(Examples; Psalm 31:15; Matthew 25: 14-30; Matthew 6:21)

Search for scriptures on giving to those in need.

(Examples: Leviticus 25:35-37; Deuteronomy 15:7-8; Psalm 41:1-3; Luke 6:37-28)

Meditate on “laying up treasures in heaven”.

(Matthew 6:19-21)

Remind one another of these foundational values as you continue. Your understanding of them will deepen as you read together through “Pathways to Wholeness” that follows.

Pathways To Wholeness



Introduction

We are all broken and in need of healing. Many who will join our Outposts have endured trauma, abuse, neglect, lack of nurture, unhealthy parenting, oppression, betrayal, grief, loss, and other devastations.

Your skills and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit can have profound effects on those you influence. We believe the human heart is “holy ground” and needs tender care in a healthy community.

Jesus uses the word “Shalom” for peace and wholeness. Our hope is that this journey towards Shalom will become part of daily living and impact.

Over the last few decades, science is beginning to catch up with how God has “hardwired” the human brain and soul. Brain neuroscience has confirmed that communities built on relational safety, trust, and joy can be a conduit for the healing of personal trauma and the wounds stored in our limbic systems.

In this section, we will begin to introduce values and practices to help facilitate growth toward wholeness. Modeling vulnerability, practicing permission—giving, helping your Outpost to discover true identity, and utilizing tools like “Golden Memories” allow you as a leader to navigate these issues with care, love, and wisdom.

We pray that you fully engage with this section and continue further personal study! Your efforts to grow in this area will be essential to developing your Outpost into a trusted and safe circle, and this can be a “game changer” for many.

We encourage you also to commit to learning more about relational EQ with the “Life Model Works” curriculum. There are extensive resources here that were birthed during the final days of Dallas Willard’s life that can help bring about the relational revolution our world desperately needs.

Vulnerability and Permission-Giving

Two essential nutrients for the soil of our souls are vulnerability and permission-giving. These are foundations for developing healthy expression of God's Kingdom within your Outpost. Both "Kairos Moments" (which those who have gone through a Mercy Road Huddle will recognize) and "Golden Memories" (which we'll cover in the section) depend on both of these concepts.

An Outpost leader that practices both vulnerability and permission-giving is cultivating an environment where spiritual and emotional health can begin to bloom. Healing, maturation, and a sense of spiritual wholeness can ultimately become the norm.

VULNERABILITY: SUPER CHARGING RELATIONSHIPS

Becoming more vulnerable may seem the opposite of powerful, especially in our western culture that values self-achievement and self-protection. We sometimes bring our worldly attitudes into our Outposts, still associating brokenness with weakness.

However, God's Word makes it clear that He desires humility, honesty, and one who is raw and real. Scripture is packed with these truths, and in fact, Jesus brings His strength through broken vessels, who in the modern-day vernacular are "over themselves."

"Each time He said, 'My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.' So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me."

2 Corinthians 12:9 NLT

"Trust in Him at all times, you people;
Pour out your hearts before Him; God is a refuge for us."

Psalms 62:8 NASB

“Come unto Me, all who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11:28 NASB

“He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of
suffering, and familiar with pain.”

Isaiah 53:3 NASB

As we share weaknesses voluntarily, The Holy Spirit opens our emotions to the human condition. Empathy, identification, compassion, and deeper connection are a result of honest vulnerability.

The opposite is true when one attempts to project that they have it all together, or when leaders try to cover weaknesses. This closes hearts, or at best, keeps them neutral.

Vulnerability is both the starting point and the glue that holds “secure attachments,” which was discussed in the “Relational Love Bonds” section previously. An Outpost that is willing to be vulnerable will build deeper relationships more quickly than an Outpost that remains emotionally guarded.

CAUTION:

We must allow people to develop vulnerability over time. We can model it, but we can’t try to force (or “jam”) vulnerability on someone who is not ready or might not yet feel safe. When the relational bonds in your Outpost start to feel secure, most often those in your group will begin to open up.

DEFINITIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

Vulnerability comes from the Latin word for wound, or “vulnus.” We construct walls that we perceive will protect us as we are wounded throughout our lives, but these barriers also prevent our true nature from being known to others.

Vulnerability is an act of courage.

It taps into your authentic self. Embracing vulnerability means you are willing to break free from hiding behind a facade to appease others.

Jesus came to set all captives free (Isaiah 61:1). While the walls we construct may serve us for a season, they ultimately become a self-imposed prison—becoming barriers to the freedom for which Jesus lived and died.

Therefore, modeling vulnerability is no small matter.

When you model and practice vulnerability, others around you will begin to allow a myriad of feelings to be expressed (the good, the bad, and the painfully ugly) in the presence of trusted friends. When you choose instead to hide or deny true feelings, you are not being honest with yourself, or others.

“Vulnerability is not winning or losing; it’s having the courage to show up and be seen when we have no control over the outcome. Vulnerability is not weakness; it’s our greatest measure of courage.”

(Research Professor and Author Brene Brown in “Rising Strong.”)

You can coach group members towards vulnerability by sharing your own struggles. When you are willing to share disappointment, depression, regrets or shame, this allows others a window into your soul—and builds courage in the group that it is safe to share.

Practical ways to model vulnerability:

Model how to be a safe person and be proactive in building trust

Learn how to listen attentively with full eye contact and engaged body language

Respect one another's stories

Be willing to admit your struggles, weakness, and pain

Learn and study together how to suspend judgement

Discuss boundaries, and learn to set and protect them together

Share your passions and dreams, even the big ones

Allow opportunities for all to share

Practice the following as a leader:

Tell the truth in answer to the question, "How are you?"

Avoid self-focus and speaking more than others speak

Don't be afraid to cry or show other emotions

The atmosphere modeled by the leader is the key to vulnerability. As weaknesses are offered, do not try to fix, counsel, or give scriptures that pertain to the topic.

Unless the person asks for advice or help, don't offer any.

If the member who is being vulnerable desires prayer, remember to pause and ask Jesus, “Lord, how do you want us to pray?” Then, pause again, and listen.

Mercy Road’s belief is that the heart is a sacred place.

We must proceed with care and under the gentle leading of the Holy Spirit.

As hearts are vulnerable and open, lives become more closely connected. These are the type of bonds that allow someone to become securely attached to another. Where this type of love flows, authentic unity can be realized.

There is great heavenly power that flows through your Outpost and eventually out to the watching world when we embrace these truths.

Be safe, be strong, and take courage as you enter through the gates of vulnerability!

“The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry... The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all.”

Psalm 34:15—19 NIV

“...my power is made perfect in weakness...”

2 Corinthians 12:7—10 NIV

Reflection:

After your group has an opportunity to dialogue and pray through the concept of vulnerability, ask these questions for open discussion:

How does vulnerability help relationships form more quickly?
How does lack of vulnerability hurt relationships?
What blocks us from being vulnerable?

PERMISSION-GIVING: HONORING ONE ANOTHER

Rather than assuming that you have the right to dive directly into someone else's thoughts, beliefs, struggles, and heart—practice permission-giving!

Here are example questions:

“Can I share a few thoughts I’ve had regarding _____ that you just said?” OR “I have been praying for you and sense a few things that God may have laid on my heart. Would you like to hear them?”

When you ask these types of question first, you are truly modeling “honor one another...” (Romans 12:10) and leading in a way that helps establish trust and safety in your Outpost. Even when your members have signed a Group Covenant, it’s important to make it a habit of asking permission before offering ideas that impact the other person’s life and heart.

Bill Thrall, who is Vice Chair with TrueFaced Leadership Catalyst and also the former Pastor of Open-Door Fellowship in Phoenix, has shared leadership principles for groups and teams who seek covenant relationships. One of key principles is the commitment to “... submitting to one another’s strengths and protecting one another’s weaknesses.”

As your Outpost is developing, you will be discovering one another’s personalities, gifts, strengths, and callings. You will also be discovering weaknesses, both real and perceived. But the simple truth is this: an individual’s weaknesses must be self-disclosed, not pointed out by you or another in your group.

The process of permission-giving can NEVER be forced or manipulated.

Your Outpost will experience transformation and deepening relational love bonds as you prayerfully lead your group to deeper places of the soul.

Emotionally healthy Outposts will see the fruit—an overflow of love, a cohesion of unity, and an increase in biblical joy. You will be living out a stark contrast from the fallen world, where the negative far outweighs delight.

Jesus's passionate prayer when He was near death was:

“That they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

(John 17:21 NASB 1995)

Golden Memories

“Golden Memories” is a process of healing in the context of community that is safe. This is an interactive method to help bring freedom from distortions, lies, and insecurities that have resulted from pain and trauma.

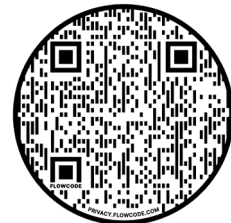
This tool is most appropriate for small gender specific groups within your Outpost. It’s has been designed to help us begin to open our hearts in a non-threatening context.

The golden memories process is used organically as individuals have issues of internal struggle that arise and gives you a framework to learn how to exercise group discernment.

This process is not designed to be routine or forced, but natural and led by the Spirit. Using this practice wisely creates a healthy collective response when these internal struggles surface in your Outpost, especially as they relate to trauma and pain.

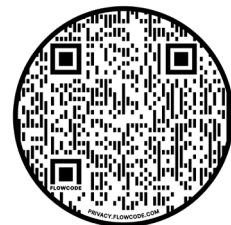
The best resource for this that we have seen is part of the “Life Model Works” video series.

We urge Outpost leaders (or at least one member of the group) to get “Joy Stream” and use the membership to access the Life Model Works “Twelve Gatherings for Greater Joy in Christ”.



For \$9.99 each month, you will have access to all the Life Model Works videos, curriculum, and resources.

We suggest you begin with Gathering 1: Golden Memories, and follow with Gathering 2: Looking for Immanuel’s Presence.



Then, look together at Gatherings 8 through 10, where you will find “Immanuel Healing” Parts 1, 2, and 3.

True Identity

We can walk securely, confidently, and powerfully—able to love with freedom and joy when we know and believe who Father says that we are!

Growing in our understanding of this has a direct influence on our life, our family, our work, our ministry, and our relationships at church and elsewhere.

The words spoken over us, throughout our lives, have had a massive bearing on our perceived identity. These engrafted truths (or lies) have direct relational, mental, social, and behavioral influences over us, and effect the way we see and interact with the world.

Although humankind is flawed and therefore (in most cases) our identity is likewise flawed, Jesus wants to radically transform us into His likeness!

We must trust in what God reveals in the Bible and learn to see ourselves as He sees us!

For many, growing into the healthy vision of self that God desires is not an easy journey. This can be messy, scary, and exhausting. It definitely requires humility, intentionality, honesty, vulnerability, and biblical truth—all in the context of loving relationships.

One important way in which you can grow in this area is to meditate on scriptures that express who we are “in Christ.” (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 3:24; Galatians 3:26; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 1:12; Romans 8:1; and many others.)

Support one another by practicing the following at your Outpost gatherings: offer a heart-felt welcome for each individual, authentically delight in one another, speak genuine words of affirmation, and pray specifically for joy generously expressed within the group. As you adopt these expressions, your Outpost is on the way to creating a healing environment where true identity can be forged and reclaimed!

God can transform your thinking, and even rewire your brain, as we grow in our identity derived from Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and safe community!

He can wash away the lies you have believed about yourself and replace them with His eternal truth! Paul gives insight to the power of God's Word to cleanse in Ephesians 5:26, and many other scriptures speak the truth of who we are in Christ.

"...Just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word..."

Ephesians 5:25-26 (NASB1995)

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

1 Peter 2: 9-10 NKJV

"...He made us accepted in the Beloved."

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins..."

"In Him also we have obtained an inheritance..."

Ephesians 1:6, 7, 11 NKJV

"But as many as received Him (Jesus), to them He gave the right to become children of God."

John 1:12 NIV

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

John 15:5 NKJV

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

Ephesians 2:10 NASB

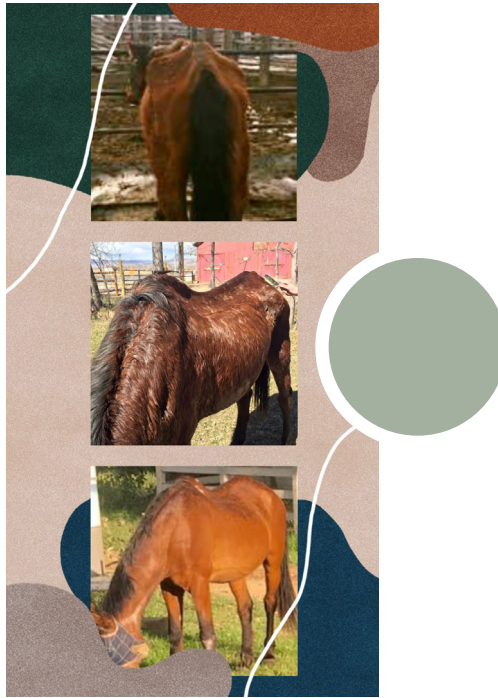
The word “workmanship” in the Greek is “poiema”, which literally means a poem! The beauty here is that God is truly writing each of our stories as a poem, flowing out of us as we are “in Christ”—FOR HIS GLORY!

“In Christ” Exercise

First, list any other Scriptures you can find on being a child, a son, or a daughter of God. Look especially for references from the Epistles (the letters written by the early disciples) and from the Gospels.

Next, write out three or four of your favorite Scriptures on your true identity to share next time you gather with your Outpost team.

Heather's Story: Finding Identity



Y'all, I don't know if you can see it in this picture, but I'm really believing this horse has gone through some kind of miraculous transformation. There is a consistent desire to be close to me and a tenderness that is new for him.

It's almost alarming. But tonight, I can't help but wonder about the deeper meaning here.

The last couple of months I've been walking by him saying, "you're such a good boy, you're so sweet, I love you Boaz," even when he pins his ears and pretends that he wants to eat me.

I just keep saying, "Hey Bo, I love you...", and it's almost as if he's believing those words I've spoken over him. Perhaps he's able to release some of the lies that were spoken over him in his painful past.

He seems to know now: "I'm not bad, I'm not crazy, I'm not dangerous..."

I'm fully known and loved. Not because of what I do for you, but just because of my presence. I am loved just by being." I can do this with animals, even if their behavior is outlandish. I've always been able to sense their pain and understand that they've just been conditioned to react out of fear.

But they are GOOD. I know when I believe in them and love them—no matter the age or condition of their past—they will experience transformation and a life of love experienced to the fullest.

Full transparency... I have NOT mastered this with humans, not even a little bit.

Part of the problem is that I've sought for my identity and belonging in things that are temporary. I've searched for my identity through the world's filter, therefore, the actions from others have the potential to derail me.

I am learning my TRUE IDENTITY is who My Heavenly Dad says I am!

Here, I find rest, peace, and confidence.

Here is the truth: we will never be enough based on the world's standards... so I must be intentional about releasing any need for validation, security, and belonging from a broken and unstable world.

Instead, I'm pressing into who He says I am. Those old garments of lies are being transformed into my "warrior suit", and it's armor I will wear with pride, remembering that all the pain and hardships I've endured in this life are all a part of my training.

As I let Him speak the words that I am chosen, understood, seen, important, protected, worthy, deeply loved, part of his family, not a mistake, wonderfully made, I can release the lies I've believed that have kept me stuck in the rat race, trying to prove to myself, and to the world that I am enough.

Oh, and He was with me through it all, gently coaching me, even when I didn't listen, reminding me to get back up. Stay in the fight. On the days when I feel I'm too weak to carry on, He shows me where my strength comes from.

He looks me in the eyes and reminds me who I really am and who I was created to be. A warrior, a daughter, a princess of God!

No more proving, no more conforming, no more wearing hats that don't fit, just being...

being transformed by the renewing of my mind.

When we begin to live in the truth of who we really are, it allows others to do the same.

So maybe this transformation has been more about the need I've had, for realizing my own identity, and less about Boaz?

(A post from Heather Gamburg, who loves Jesus, rescues horses, and lives her dream life in Colorado.)



Exercise: True Identity

As you read Heather's story, can you relate to your own struggle with your true identity?

Ask Jesus to reveal any lies you have internalized regarding your identity and write them down. Share some of these in small groups and pray for one another specifically. Then, speak truth from Scripture and remind one another how God sees us!

You may also want to watch the "Golden Memories" video from Life Model Works together, as you complete this exercise.

Leadership Development



Summary of the “5Cs”

“According to the grace of God, which was given to me, like a wise master builder, I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.”

1 Corinthians 3: 10-11 NASB1995

We must follow the example of Jesus and be obedient to God’s Word if we seek to lead others at Mercy Road Church.

In the verse above, Paul makes our foundation clear. It is Christ Jesus alone. He’s also clear in his admonition to be careful with the manner in which you build. But all too often, church leaders have not been “wise master builders” and have lacked the knowledge and skills necessary to build a disciple-making culture.

Mercy Road has been committed to making disciples that make disciples since the beginning, and the Outpost Network is training on the same foundation, starting with the “5 Cs” of Leadership: **Christ, Community, Character, Calling, and Competence.**

CHRIST

Jesus wants to be first in every aspect of our lives, so all we do as leaders flows from our level of intimacy with Him. Abiding in Christ, listening to His voice, obeying Him cheerfully and immediately will determine our ability to love and impact others.

Focus on Christ will determine the other “Cs”: our character, the quality of our community, the clarity of our calling and our competence to present the Gospel.

“He is also the head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.”

Colossians 1:18 NASB

Study these scriptures, then share them with your Outpost!

John 15:5, 17:3; Philippians 2:1-5; Hebrews 1:2-3, 12:2-3; 1 John 1:3;
Romans 8:34; Colossians 1:27-29

COMMUNITY

God builds His church relationally. He builds out of His own nature, as He is a family of One—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As Outpost leaders, we seek to lead in the same way, building a community of believers that begins to feel more like family.

“And He gave... for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ...From whom the whole body being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

Ephesians 4: 11-13; 16 NASB

As each one does their part, you can begin to encourage one another to “... love the Lord God with all your heart and all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and foremost commandment.” (Matthew 22:37-38)

Then, you can move together towards loving others; “... you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39)

Study these scriptures, then share them with your Outpost!

Ephesians 2:21-22; Ephesians 3:14-19; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14;
Colossians 2:10-19; John 13:34-35; John 20:19-23;
1 John 3:14-18, 4:12-14

CHARACTER

Character is formed by your intimate relationship with Jesus. By abiding in Him, you discover how to imitate His nature. This is the foundation of your identity as a believer.

Outposts that create a secure environment where relationships are cultivated in biblical love, authenticity, and vulnerability can form strong bonds. In these safe spaces, you can begin to shepherd discussions that both celebrate character strength and protect character weakness, leading to growth and maturity for all.

As you lead by example, and develop this type of atmosphere, your group can even begin to gently deal with the most broken areas of your lives.

Study these scriptures, then share them with your Outpost!

Luke 10:38-42; Proverbs 3:13-17, 3-8, 11-12; Titus 2:6-8;
Ephesians 4:22-24; Galatians 5:22-26; 1 Timothy 4:12

CALLING

A “calling” is a passion or a revelation that the Holy Spirit has placed within you. It is a vision from God that grabs your spirit, heart, and mind and produces a sense of urgency to act.

This God-breathed mission is uniquely yours to embrace. When you do, you will see eternal impact. In an Outpost, calling can become a shared inspiration—motivating the whole group to action.

Study these scriptures, then share them with your Outpost!

Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 2:10, 13-22; Ephesians 3:7-10;
Matthew 9:37-8; 1 Corinthians 3:9-15

COMPETENCE

Competence is the ability and the maturity to engage with God and His Word in a way that inspires and leads others. Learning to discern and navigate the diverse needs of those in your Outpost will require a commitment to carefully listening to Jesus, boldly following the Holy Spirit's lead, and diligently studying scripture.

Competence is a Spirit-empowered gift. But your continued dedication to growing in biblical competence will help you develop bonded community and guide the actualization of your mission as an Outpost.

“So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart
and guided them with his skillful hands.”

Psalm 78:72 NASB

Study these scriptures, then share them with your Outpost!

Proverbs 22:29; Psalm 78:70-72; Colossians 1:9-12;
2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Peter 4:10-11; 1 Corinthians 12:7;
Romans 12:6-8

Evangelism Made Practical



Oikos

Mercy Road Church has prayerfully decided to adopt a biblical concept to reach those far from Jesus and pray for them intentionally. It's called the Oikos Principle.

Oikos in the Greek is an “extended household.”

At any point in time, we are surrounded by a unique group of eight to fifteen people with whom we share important aspects of life. This is our “oikos”. Interaction with this group is the most natural environment for our evangelism and discipleship to take place, just like in the first century. We see this word “oikos” throughout the New Testament, in scriptures describing the first church.

The Oikos Principle:

95% of Christian conversions are primarily generated through current relationships. God has supernaturally and strategically placed an average of eight to fifteen people on the front row of your life! The Oikos Principle emphasizes a life built around sharing the Gospel and discipling to Christ those He has already placed in close proximity.

Ninety—five percent of conversions... this is a big deal.

The Oikos Principle is not a ministry program. It's not an event. It's not a church emphasis—it's a lifestyle. Like a worldview, this principle provides a set of lenses through which you can more intentionally plan your day, organize your life, and strategically build an Outpost.

Many people lack confidence in their ability to share their faith. Effectively leveraging this strategy and using oikos tools can provide you and your group with a deeper sense of purpose—and a unified way to reach out.

It's not just about the initial outreach. We continue these relationships and begin to disciple those in our oikos towards a maturing relationship with Jesus, as God provides opportunity and answered prayers.

The Oikos Principle is found all throughout the New Testament:

Think about the first twelve disciples of Jesus.

They first brought those from their closest circle to Jesus. Andrew brings his brother Simon, in John 1:40-42, and Jesus gives him a new name, Peter. In John 1:45, Phillip finds his friend Nathaniel, and brings him to Jesus too!

Jesus and the disciples operated out of this principle of "extended family" as the primary method of spreading the Gospel in the first century church.

Read the scriptures below, share with your group, and take note of what stands out:

Luke 19:9-10 NIV (Zacchaeus)

"Today salvation has come to this house (oikos)"

Mark 5:19 NIV (The Gerasene Demoniac)

"Go home to your own people (oikos) and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how He has had mercy on you."

Mark 2:14-15 NIV (Levi the tax collector)

"While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house (oikos), many tax collectors and sinners were eating with Him and His disciples, for there were many who followed Him."

John 4:53 NIV (Healing of the nobleman's son)

"He and his whole household (oikos) believed."

Acts 11:14 NIV (Peter at Cornelius's house, starts in Acts 10)

"He will bring you a message through which you and all your household (oikos) will be saved."

OIKOS: FIVE STEPS

Oikos works in five steps, BUT we always want to start with “Listening to Jesus”.

Ask Him specifically how He wants to guide the process, and who He wants on your “list”.

Mercy Road has printed a variety of cards to serve as tools to record your eight to fifteen people. This is a card that you can keep with you, so that those whom Jesus has put on your heart are close at hand, and in the forefront of your mind.

The specifics on each card may vary, but the purpose remains the same—to help us make the most of every opportunity (Colossians 4:5-6.) The general steps of the process are:

LIST

(List your oikos—the eight to fifteen people who are in your sphere of influence for whom you will pray to know God better and to whom you will reach out.)

PRAY

(Pray for your oikos daily to open their hearts to Jesus, and/or to deepen their relationship with Him.)

INVEST

(Build trust with your oikos and deepen relationships by spending quality time.)

INVITE

(Invite your oikos to social events, church, Outposts, etc., looking for opportunities where the Gospel can be shared naturally, and where they can potentially seek Jesus organically.)

PREPARE

(Share with your oikos your story, and the Good News of Jesus as the Spirit leads.)

OIKOS: CATEGORIES

You may want to consider creating four categories for the names that Jesus gives you, so that you can keep in mind each one’s specific needs as you pray for them and build relationships.

Pre-Christians

(Those who have not yet placed their faith in Jesus)

Prodigals

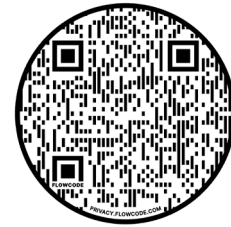
(Believers who are not actively pursuing their faith)

Purposefuls

(Believers who actively pursue their faith)

Potentials

(Those whom God is more often or consistently placing on the “front row” of your life)



OIKOS

The 8-15 in your sphere of influence.

NOTES:

List your oikos:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

Next, make a commitment to pray daily for your oikos. Pray that they would sense God's presence in their lives and that God would draw each one to Himself. Offer yourself to God every day as an instrument in that process.

Organic Conversations

Jesus often used storytelling to reveal God's Kingdom, teaching the disciples and the crowds through parables. As you read through the Gospels, watch for the many times Jesus told stories to help the people understand God's truth and respond to His love.

Telling a story continues to work today—drawing us in and capturing our attention. When a story connects to our real-life experiences, we tend to lean in and focus.

We cannot neglect the element of narrative when we share our faith. When we learn to wrap our personal story within God's Good News, the ultimate expression of love is revealed, and God's grace and forgiveness can be understood by those listening. Our faith journey, expressed with vulnerability, acknowledges that we, too, are broken.

Sharing our faith in Christ, while making it known that we fall short each day, makes it clear that we don't have all the answers and are far from perfect.

This is crucial, because our world today is looking for a faith that is relevant and real. We don't pretend to have it all together, even as Outpost leaders. We can admit that we rely only on the truth that Jesus loves us and works in every moment to transform us into the people He created us to be.

Honesty and humility help move the hearts of others towards Him!

Listening wholeheartedly is also vital if we want to engage in conversations with friends who don't know Jesus. First, we must listen to Jesus, allowing Him to prepare us and then guide us in those moments.

We also must be certain to leave behind our notions of how the process should go—and learn to really listen to our friends. People all around us are longing to be heard. When we simply choose to be fully present with them, they can begin to catch a glimpse of God's heart and compassion.

Consider some simple questions to open discussion and connection. Ask questions about where they live, where they were born, and upbringing. Inquire about their interests, passions, and favorite pastimes.

NOTE: Please be prayerful and mindful of culture and be sensitive to your surroundings as you let the Spirit guide your questions.

If the Holy Spirit leads you to share your faith journey, don't just launch into it, first ask, "would you be open to me sharing some parts of my story with you?"

Make sure to include the broken parts and to share some of your struggles.

Remember, if you are not sensing the Spirit's leading—don't share your story right away. Wait for God's perfect timing. Instead, continue to focus on listening and deepening connection and friendship in casual, authentic conversation.

People long to be heard and to be valued!

"Organic Conversations" Exercise:

Practice and role play authentic conversation. Remember that good talks are like playing "Checkers". Make the first "move" with a question, and then wait and allow others to "move" in their response. Listen carefully and keep the conversation in play with curious questions!

The goal is dialogue, and no matter how much you can relate to what is being shared, always avoid dominating and making it a monologue about your life. Choose words that point to Jesus always!

"Friends don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back." **Philippians 3:13-14 (The Message)**

Person Of Peace

One of the best ways to make evangelism practical is to focus on a key teaching that Jesus shared with His disciples, and to the seventy that He sent out two-by-two. Jesus directed them to look for a “Person of Peace”, as is recorded in Luke 10:1-12 (NIV):

“After this the Lord appointed seventy—two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The Kingdom of God has come near to you.’ But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The Kingdom of God has come near.’

I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.”

“Person of Peace” is taken from verses 5 and 6 to refer to one who:

- Welcomes you (including when they allow you to stay at their house)
- Provides for you (“eating and drinking whatever they provide”)
- Receives from you (“heal the sick” and/or they receive the ministry you provide)

When you experience this kind of receptivity, this allows you to identify an individual as a person of peace and feel confident that God is actively working.

Remember the indications about the kind of person Jesus is sending (and looking for) that we just read in Luke 10:1-12 (NIV). This person will exemplify surrender, mutual submission, responsiveness to God’s grace, and will be known for seeing people and listening to others as Jesus would.

Keeping in mind the instruction of Jesus, we can practice the prayerful discernment of whom He has prepared in advance to be open to the Gospel. We don’t ever need to manufacture activity to be on mission for God, even as a leader, because we believe God is already at work in hearts and minds. Instead, our task is to be on mission with God. As leaders in God’s Kingdom, we seek to be an example of this to our Outpost.

Surrendered to be Sent

The disciples of Jesus were always sent. We must learn to embrace as an Outpost that Jesus does the same with us—to our workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities! The mission of Jesus isn’t a project or strategy, or something we can accomplish with the tools of the world. It’s not about your agenda—or any technique or program that we think we can control.

Surrender is the key.

“... if any of you wants to be My follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow Me.”
(Luke 9:23 NLT)

This reference to “take up your cross daily” literally means death—death to your comfort, schedule, control, ego, fears, all your natural problem-solving skills, and your preconceived ideas of how God works. **Rather, we yield in full dependence on God.**

Therefore, when we are sharing our faith and seeking persons of peace, this surrender is the key to discerning where He is already at work. Then, we are enabled to move in step with His Spirit. Remember, even as they are sent, Jesus tells his disciples to “ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers.” Just as it was for the disciples in the first century, when we operate from a posture of humility and submission, we can be used by God as leaders to make disciples who make disciples.

MUTUAL SUBMISSION

Remember, to be equipped and ready to find a person of peace to “evangelize”, you have to first be one! This may be a radical departure from most of the evangelism training you or those in your Outpost have experienced in the past.

In Luke 10:3-4, we see that we are to go out as “lambs among wolves... carrying no purse”. This makes it clear that once we become a person of peace, we will function in a vulnerable state, even as we seek others.

We are typically trained to “go” as one that has something that others need. This is a posture of superiority (“we have the goods, and you don’t.”)

Jesus flips the script, as His command is to “go” as the one who is needy. This is a posture of reciprocity (“we need to learn from you and receive from you.”)

When a person of peace welcomes you, you may receive food and hospitality, gifts, and maybe even shelter, especially on foreign mission fields. **Will you be ready to receive with an attitude that reflects that you, too, are a person of peace?**

THE GROUND IS LEVEL AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS!

Moving in our own strength is undone by mutual submission. We learn how to operate in a state of need—dependent on God and in submission to the ones we seek to reach.

This pattern of mutual submission can often be seen in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Philippians 2:1-11; Acts 16:11-15; etc.) These scriptures reveal a relationship of reciprocity and humility towards others, which proclaims, “... the Kingdom of God has come near you.” (Luke 10:9 NIV)

How does the revelation of mutual submission affect the way we interact with:

The Poor?

The Mentally Unstable?

The Homeless?

People of Different Ethnicities?

People of Different Backgrounds?

How does the command of Jesus change the way we look at people to whom we are not naturally drawn?

RESPONSIVENESS TO GRACE

God’s Grace is the key to responding “supernaturally”.

As Outpost Leaders, we must seek always to be sensitive to God’s Grace in our lives, listening and responding to Him personally, so that we develop the character and competency to help others do the same. We must remember His Grace is a precious and undeserved gift.

Grace is never a one-size-fits-all formula. Each individual in your group has particular needs and weaknesses (both real and perceived) that will require the joyful extension of the grace we have freely received.

Ongoing training and Bible study in this area is essential.

The practice of extending grace with one another is the foundation of all discipling. As we are willing, the Holy Spirit will enable us to humbly acknowledge God's Grace lavished on us, and then will empower us to serve others in an overflow of this grace.

"But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in act of grace also."

2 Corinthians 8:7 NIV

Take some time with your Outpost to mine the gems of truth from these scriptures:

"... who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity..."

2 Timothy 1:9 NASB

"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."

Ephesians 4:7 NASB

"Therefore let's approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help at the time of our need."

Hebrews 4:16 NASB

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testified about Him and called out, saying, 'This was He of whom I said, 'He who is coming after Me has proved to be my superior, because He existed before Me.'" For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; God the only Son, who is the arms of the Father, He has explained Him."

John 1:14-18 NAS

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our wrongdoings, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the boundless riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith’ and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God’ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

Ephesians 2:4-10

“... which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth...”

Colossians 1:6

“But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the Gospel of God’s grace.”

Acts 20:24

“And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”

2 Corinthians 12:9

LISTENING AND SEEING AS JESUS WOULD

Remember, Steven Covey once said, “Most people do not listen with the intent to understand, they listen with the intent to reply.”

If we’re honest, most of us are more focused on what we might say next, rather than fully listening to one another. But listening wholeheartedly is truly an act of love.

Moreover, in listening, we receive the honor of hearing another’s story. This is holy ground.

As Outpost Leaders, we can model how to be compassionately curious as others in our group share. Our presence needs to communicate always “I see you”; “I hear you”; “I’m with you”; “I’m here for you”; “it’s safe here”.

Remember, this is the posture that God always takes with us. People always felt seen and valued in the presence of Jesus. Following Jesus in the way He looked at and listened to people is central to presenting the message of salvation.

We must learn to yield every area of our life and character to Jesus, until He is truly Lord of all. Then, we will be known as a person of peace, and we will find others, as commanded.

Take some time to reflect personally, and discuss with your Outpost, the following:

Look back on the four elements of being a person of peace. Which one of these is most challenging for you, and why? Which one is the most encouraging, and why?

How do the concepts of mission and evangelism as presented here differ from what you have experienced in the past?

What is one area of your life that must shift or change so that you are practicing and becoming a person of peace?

Have you ever known or had experience with someone that you would consider to be a person of peace? Who are the persons of peace in your life currently?

How is “Listening to Jesus” once again foundational here?

DNA Groups

DNA GROUPS: Disciple-Making, Nurturing, Apostolic Mission

DNA Groups are designed to be the smallest expression of God's Church, going "OUT" in groups of two or three. Think of DNA groups as the "tip of the spear"—penetrating our culture with living witnesses for Jesus.

These are generally the outreach arm of a Micro Church Outpost, but can also be utilized by Outreach and Ministry Outposts. The DNA groups generally meet for meals or coffee weekly, or in another regular rhythm, and are gender specific groups (2-3 men or 2-3 women.)

The purpose of this type of group is inherent in the acronym "DNA". First, you are getting to know other disciples of Jesus and nurturing trusted relationships in which you can help one another learn and grow ("Disciple-Making", "Nurturing".)

Keep in mind you can meet in your neighborhood, at your business, out in nature, or at your favorite restaurant or coffee shop. These are all places where you can move into the next step, which is the "Apostolic Mission" aspect of DNA Groups. This is also where you will see your oikos card come to life!

Once you have established safe and growing relationships within your DNA Group, then you can move together into specific prayer for others who are far from Christ, focusing on how you might work together as a team to reach these individuals for Jesus.

"For where two or three gather in My name, there I am with them."

Matthew 18:20 NIV

“411” stands for Four Questions on One Sheet of Paper in One Hour—and provides a simple way to learn how to present the Gospel. It’s true that most people are not naturally comfortable with sharing their faith. We need practical tools that help us connect in an organic and conversational way.

We encourage you to practice the 411 method during one of your Outpost meetings! Try breaking into pairs so that each person gets the opportunity to practice the method at least two or three times. Use this to help one another to stay focused always on Jesus’ last words:

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”

Matthew 28:18-20 NASB



Please check out
“Modeling 411 Training” on YouTube!

Teaching the Commands of Christ

It's exciting to think about what God will do as you begin to interact with those far from Jesus, supported by one another and some of the tools we have provided so far. Those whom you are reaching out to will begin to respond to the love of Jesus and believe!

Jesus gave us the privilege of co-laboring with Him in the Great Commission. He said,

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all the 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)

As you teach and encourage new believers, remember to do the following:

- Take your time and allow a new believer to respond to Jesus' teaching.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to bring revelation.
- Express real joy as simple discoveries and applications are realized.
- Cultivate a loving, caring, relationship where you are committed to nurturing faith.

Maybe you have never been a spiritual father or mother, but you are the one whom God has appointed for this season to walk with this new believer. Consider it an eternal privilege to study these commands and set goals together. Remember that this process can be used to disciple one another through any of Christ's teachings.

You may want to consider setting up at least a weekly time with any of those you disciple. As you “do life” together, always start with honest conversation about what's happening in your world and how you are feeling.



We recommend that you encourage each person in your Outpost to go through the ROOTED Discipleship Experience.

The ROOTED book is also a great resource to go through with those you are discipling!

The seven rhythms of ROOTED (Daily Devotion, Prayer, Repentance, Sacrificial Generosity, Serve the Community, Share Your Story, and Worship) were first modeled by the early church in Acts 2. These practices were established by God in His Word so that we would know Him more intimately, so commit to these rhythms, and teach them to those God has placed under your influence!

Another great place to start with those you are discipling is to look together at the commands of Christ. All of the teachings of Jesus are life-changing, but in some cases, His words were conveyed as direct commands.

Meditate on each with those you are discipling, discuss real life applications of the Word, hold each other accountable for growth in response to the scripture.

Overall, BE ENCOURAGED that the words of Christ are echoing centuries later, as He is still "... the way, the truth, and the life..." (John 14:6)

In his article, "What Jesus Actually Said", Dan Foster looked some of these direct commands.

Reoccurring themes will be evident as you are study these: love, generosity, reconciliation, restoration, extension of grace, patience, serving the poor, suspending judgement, eliminating prejudice, perseverance, obedience, reverence for God, forgiveness, trusting in the goodness of God. Let's consider a few together as we close out this section of the Leader Guide:

Turn your life around.

The very first word of Jesus in his public life, recorded in Matthew 4:17, was the word "repent," which literally means to turn your life around and go in an opposite direction.

Follow my example.

In Matthew 4:19, Jesus invites people to follow Him and to learn from Him how to win the hearts and minds of others.

Be happy if others put you down.

“If someone mocks you for your faith, then be glad,” says Jesus in Matthew 5:11-12. Jesus knew that all who choose to follow Him will face some kind of opposition.

Shine!

Jesus said, “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16). Become well known for kindness and goodness.

Reconcile with your enemies.

If you remember that you are in conflict with another person, Jesus commands you to go and try to be reconciled with them first. (Matthew 5:23-25). (Please note: it is not possible or safe to physically reconcile with another in certain situations. Always seek wise counsel.)

Do not lust.

In Matthew 5:28-30, Jesus commands us not to lust after others.

Keep your word. Don't even bother making promises, says Jesus in Matthew 5:37. Just become reliable and trustworthy, so that others can count on your word.

Turn the other cheek

Don't retaliate. Don't pay people back for the wrong that they dish out to you. Don't take revenge. (Matthew 5:39)

Go above and beyond

In Matthew 5:41-42, Jesus says even if you get forced to help someone else, do your best to always go above and beyond.

Love your enemies

In Matthew 5:44-46, Jesus tells us to love our enemies. He tells us to pray for them (perhaps because it is more difficult to hate someone if you're praying for them!)

Live generously and graciously

The actual wording of this command, found in Matthew 48 is “Be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect,” but the essence of this command though is to aspire to live with the kind of graciousness and generosity espoused by God towards His creation.

Don’t show off your generosity

In Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus encourages us to give to others quietly and without making a fuss.

Do things that matter eternally

In Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus labels the acquisition of wealth and possessions as ‘short-sighted’ and instead, commands people to invest in things that matter eternally.

Seek God first

In Matthew 6:31-33, Jesus commands us not to be consumed with worry about what we will eat or drink or wear, but to seek God first and to trust him to provide for our needs.

Don’t judge others

Here is the command that many Christians seem to forget from time to time. In Matthew 7:1-3, Jesus is very clear that those who follow Christ are not to judge others.

Don’t reduce holy mysteries to slogans

Jesus actually commands believers not to share their faith with people who do not wish to hear it. We read in Matthew 7:6 (The Message), “Don’t reduce holy mysteries to slogans. In trying to be relevant, you’re only being cute and inviting sacrilege.”

Ask, seek, knock

It is comforting to know that Jesus invites us to come to freely come to God and present our request to Him. (Matthew 7:7-8)

Treat others as you'd like to be treated

Otherwise known as the 'golden rule', perhaps one of the most famous commands of Jesus is found in Matthew 7:12.

Don't look for shortcuts to God

Don't look for shortcuts to God. Following Jesus is vigorous and requires total attention, as we read in Matthew 7:13-14.

Look for character, not charisma

In Matthew 7:15-16, Jesus commands us to be on guard against false teachers and preachers.

Pray for more workers

Jesus commands us to pray for more people to help! (Matthew 9:37-38)

Be wise and inoffensive

In Matthew 10:16, Jesus forewarns his followers that not everyone will be open and receptive to hearing about the Gospel. Therefore, we are commanded to be wise and inoffensive in the way we share out faith.

Don't be afraid

In Matthew 10:28, Jesus commands his followers not to be afraid.

Listen to Jesus

In Matthew 11:15, Jesus simply implores those who are listening to carefully consider what He is saying.

Cast your burdens onto Him

In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus instructs us to lay down our burdens and rest.

Honor your parents

In Matthew 15:4, Jesus instructs us to honor and respect our parents.

Beware of performance-based religion

Jesus was critical of the religious system of the day, which was largely based on rule-

keeping as a means to attain salvation. In Matthew 16:6, Jesus tells us to be nothing like them!

Don't run from suffering

In Luke 9:23-25, Jesus commands us to “Take up our cross,” if we want to be his followers. Don't run from suffering—embrace it!

Be kind to children

At various times in the Gospels, Jesus's disciples are seen to try to keep children away from Jesus, because Jesus was—in their opinion—far too busy and important for kids. Yet, in Matthew 18:10, Jesus commands us not to look down on children, but to welcome them.

Don't be greedy

Jesus warns of this in Luke 12:15.

Forgive others

In Matthew 18:21-22, take note of Jesus' response to Peter.

Serve others

In Matthew 20:26-28, Jesus establishes a counterintuitive principle for attaining greatness.

Don't doubt

Jesus encouraged His disciples with these words even on His way to the Cross (Matthew 21:21-22)

Invite in the outcast

Luke 14:12-14 really shows the heart of Jesus for the poor and marginalized.

Love God

When Jesus was asked to summarize the whole of the law and prophets, he reduced it down to just two simple statements. The first was “Love God.” (Matthew 22:37-38).

Love others

The second half of Jesus summary of the law and prophets is equally concise. “Love others as you love yourself.” (Matthew 22:39-40).

Be ready to go

You never know when your time is up, nor when the world may come to an end. Therefore, Jesus commands us in Matthew 24:42-44 to always be ready to go!

Remember me

Jesus shared one final meal with his closest friends in Matthew 26:26-28 and, as death loomed, His command was simply, “Remember me!”

Pray through temptation

In the last hours Jesus had on earth, He prayed for His disciples. “Pray that you do not give in to temptation.” (Matthew 26:41)

Baptize those who believe

Jesus concludes his ministry by commanding his followers to baptize all who believe in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19)

Let God’s power be your strength

In Luke 24:49, Jesus instructs his disciples to be empowered by the promised Holy Spirit for strength, wisdom, and courage.

Keep My Commandments

Jesus says, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Do we love Him? It’s easy to see why studying the commands of Christ is a wonderful place to focus if you are discipling others and/or seeking to obey His final command in Matthew 28:18-20

“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...’”

Matthew 28:18-20 NIV

As an Outpost leader, you have the honor and privilege of guiding your group towards living on mission together.

All of us can grow toward greater maturity as we influence others. Wise builders work on one level at time. Building relationship requires courage, consistency, intentionality, and perseverance.

As you continue your journey of making disciples, nurturing healthy community, and being about apostolic mission, you will need to dive into different parts of this Leaders Guide in different seasons.

This is not a program. That is why we trust that the Holy Spirit will lead you as you take time to seek Jesus, ask Him, listen to what He says, and then cheerfully obey as He is leading. Living in this kind of dependence produces joy, freedom, love, and fruitful ministry. We hope that the resources in this Leaders Guide will support what God is already doing in your midst.

You are welcome to look at the section that follows, but please know that it has been designed specifically for those who feel called to lead a Micro Church Outpost.

**Remember Jesus does the “heavy lifting” so trust Him
as you lead your Outpost—enjoy the adventure!**

