

CITIZENSLA

EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY CHURCH CURRICULUM

*ADAPTED FROM PETE SCAZERRO'S BOOK
EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY CHURCH*

A photograph of a wooden walkway with railings leading up a hillside, shrouded in mist. The walkway is made of dark wood and has a simple railing design. The background is a soft, hazy landscape with green hills and a pale sky.

EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY CHURCH

CITIZENSLA | FALL 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS



OVERVIEW

GUIDELINES

SETTING EXPECTATIONS AND AGREEMENTS

INVENTORY OF EMOTIONAL/SPIRITUAL MATURITY

PRINCIPLE 1

PRINCIPLE 2

PRINCIPLE 3

PRINCIPLE 4

PRINCIPLE 5

PRINCIPLE 6

PRINCIPLE 7

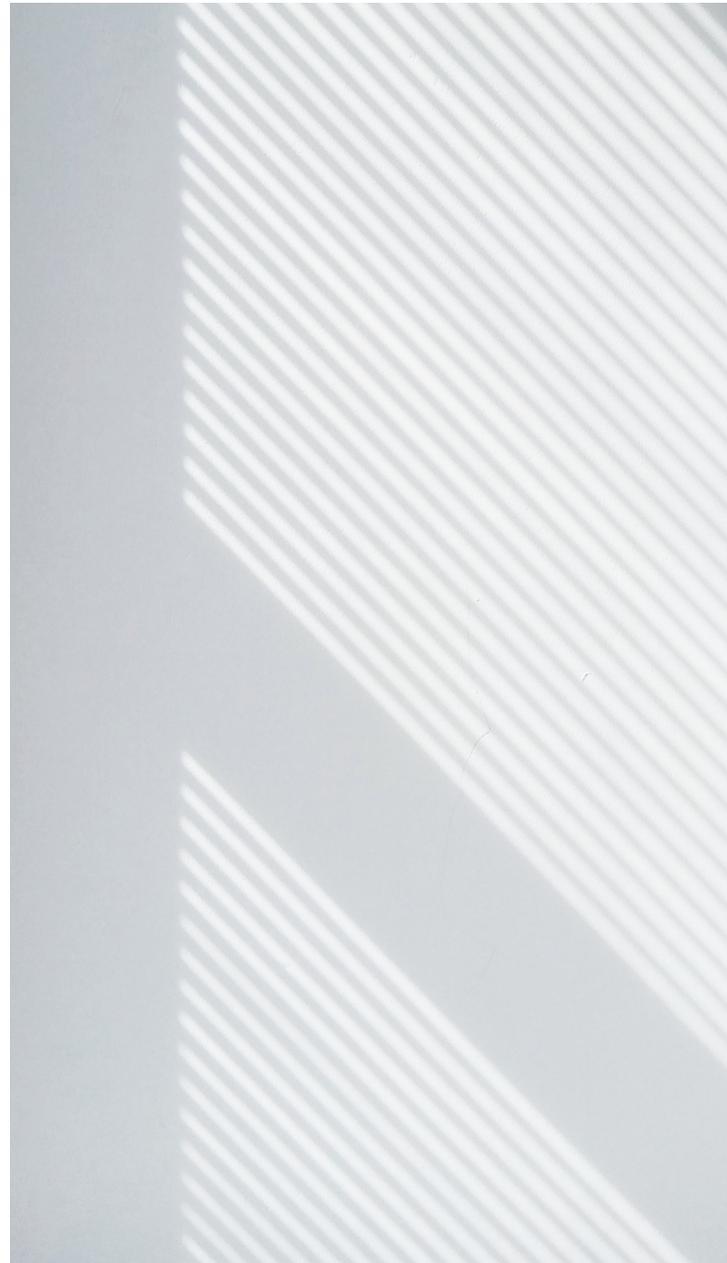
CONCLUSION

Emotionally Healthy Church Series Overview

It's been said before but we are living in some unsettling times. Whether we are aware of it or not, we are experiencing an array of emotions on a daily basis. Some of us are feeling anxious about our job security while others are angry about the issues of justice in our country. Many are experiencing loneliness from social isolation, fearful about what's to come, and frustrated about circumstances beyond our control. This series is not a step by step guide on how to make us emotionally healthy. Rather, it is an opportunity to identify and express our emotions as part of our own discipleship process and growth to ultimately make us more like Christ. We have a God who does not desire for us to simply paint a smile on our face and feign positivity. Rather, He wants us to trust that He can handle our mess, our deepest sorrows, and most elevated joys. We believe in a Savior who came down from Heaven's heights because He wanted us to feel the weight of His words when He says that He understands. He empathizes because He Himself experienced it. Christ felt every emotion and He expressed them openly and honestly and we get to live our lives in accordance to the example He set out for us.

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS

1. Be sensitive to other members of your group and ask God for grace to create a safe, loving, accepting atmosphere.
2. Cultivate a culture of equity in conversations. Know when to step up and when to step back.
3. Seek to listen and understand first.
4. Stay present. Set aside things that may distract you from fully engaging with your group.
5. Freely say "I don't know" when someone asks you a question you can't answer. We are all on a journey of integrating emotional health and biblical spirituality.
6. Speak your truth. Be open about your thoughts and feelings and not just saying what you think others want to hear.
7. Be open to experiencing discomfort and allow yourself grace as you process your emotions.
8. Accept non-closure. Uncertainty can feel unsettling but we want to avoid rushing to quick solutions.
9. Respect confidentiality. Ask the group members in the first meeting to hold in confidence what people share in the group. "Let what you hear here, stay here."



WEEK 1



SETTING EXPECTATIONS AND AGREEMENTS

Welcome back to a new season of community groups! This week is all about acclimating ourselves to meeting as a group on a weekly basis. Feel free to use the first half of the meeting to fellowship and catch up on each other's lives.

Afterwards, spend the latter half focusing on the following:

The start of a new season of community groups is always a good opportunity to level set expectations. After everyone had time to reflect and respond to the questions, share out with the rest of the group.

This new series *Emotionally Healthy Church* will require intentionality on everyone's part. It will ask us to examine our own hearts and share deeply with one another. Take time to co-construct important norms and agreements that will be expected of everyone. I highly encourage groups to read the norms and agreements at the start of every meeting moving forward.

WEEK 1

SETTING EXPECTATIONS AND AGREEMENTS

Take time to reflect and respond to the following questions. These questions will reveal details on what others in your group prioritize and find important. We all have a responsibility to each other, and what is important to one member of the group should be important to the rest. After everyone has finished writing down their responses, share out as a group.

GROUP EXPECTATIONS

1. In your opinion, what are the three most important qualities of a strong community group? Why?
2. What do you expect from your community group?
3. What can this community group expect from you?
4. What is one goal that you want to set for yourself as it relates to learning and growing with your community group?

CREATING NORMS AND AGREEMENTS

Leaders in the group will now offer a sneak preview of what is to come for this upcoming community group series on *Emotionally Healthy Church*. Taking into consideration both the context of this series as well as the responses to the previous questions above, co-construct a set of norms and agreements that will be required of each group member for the duration of this series. Please assign a volunteer to scribe and send out the group's norms and agreements for everyone to see. Leaders will be responsible for revisiting these norms and agreements at the beginning of each meeting moving forward.

WEEK 1 DEVOTION

The book of Psalm is packed with emotions and it is also the longest book of the Bible. It is no coincidence that God has placed the book of Psalm at the very center of all of scripture to remind us not only to worship with our head and hands but with our hearts as well. Spend some time meditating on a passage in Psalm and use it to guide you as you embrace and express your emotions to God this week.

Read the passage.

Psalm 77: 1-9

"I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me. In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; my soul refuses to be comforted. When I remember God, I moan; when I meditate, my spirit faints. *Selah*

You hold my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I consider the days of old, the years long ago. I said, "Let me remember my song in the night; let me meditate in my heart." Then my spirit made a diligent search: "Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable? Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion? *Selah*"

Re-read the passage. This time pay close attention to the emotions Asaph is feeling and expressing.

Write a list of emotions Asaph is expressing to God. Once you are done writing the emotions down, circle any that you have also been feeling recently. Add any other emotions that you have also been feeling this week.

Think about the emotions you've circled above or any other emotion(s) you may be feeling. Why are you feeling those emotions? What is it making you realize? Asaph modeled for us what it means to express emotions in a God honoring way in that he expressed his emotions directly to God. Let's also spend some time writing out our own prayers to God with faith that God is accepting of how we feel and that He is listening.

WEEK 1 DEVOTION

Read the passage

Psalm 77: 10-20

"Then I thought, "To this I will appeal: the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand. I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds."

Your ways, God, are holy. What god is as great as our God? You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples. With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

The waters saw you, God, the waters saw you and writhed; the very depths were convulsed. The clouds poured down water, the heavens resounded with thunder; your arrows flashed back and forth. Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked. Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen.

You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

We see Asaph shifting from subjective emotion to objective truth. He recounts and remembers who God is and what He's done. The gospel story is one that must be recounted, rehearsed, and recalled because we must root our emotions in the truth of Christ's relentless love over us. Spend some time reflecting on God's faithfulness over your own life. Try to recall specific moments and memories that remind you that you are loved by God. Afterwards, read and meditate on the following verses.

"For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." -2 Corinthians 5:21.

"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." -1 John 4:10

When we find our security in God's love and grace, we are able to freely express our emotions in a God honoring way without reservation. Let's remember this week that our emotions are a gift from God and that God grants us the permission to feel and experience our own humanity in order that we may worship Him more fully.

WEEK 2



INVENTORY OF EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL MATURITY

This week we will be spending some time completing the inventory of emotional/spiritual maturity. This tool will give us a window into how our walk with Christ has seeped into our emotional health. Here is a word of advice taken from Peter Scazzero to prepare us for this experience:

"It is natural to feel uneasy or uncomfortable about some of the questions. Try to be as vulnerable and open as possible. Remember that the inventory will reveal nothing about you that is news to God. Take a moment to pray that God will guide your responses and to remember that you can afford to be honest because he loves you dearly without condition."

Once the inventory is complete, take some time to reflect. Answering these questions can feel exposing, but remember that God covers us with His grace and that the end goal is not for us to wither in shame but to be transformed more into His likeness. After everyone has had a chance to complete the inventory and reflect, feel free to share out your thoughts and reflections with the group.

EMOTIONAL/SPIRITUAL HEALTH INVENTORY

Please answer these questions as honestly as possible. Use the scoring method as indicated.

NOT VERY TRUE
SOMETIMES TRUE
MOSTLY TRUE
VERY TRUE

PART A: GENERAL FORMATION AND DISCIPLESHIP

- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I FEEL CONFIDENT OF MY ADOPTION AS GOD'S SON/DAUGHTER AND RARELY, IF EVER, QUESTION HIS ACCEPTANCE OF ME. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. I LOVE TO WORSHIP GOD BY MYSELF AS WELL AS WITH OTHERS. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. I SPEND REGULAR QUALITY TIME IN THE WORD OF GOD AND IN PRAYER. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. I SENSE THE UNIQUE WAYS GOD HAS GIFTED ME INDIVIDUALLY AND AM ACTIVELY USING MY SPIRITUAL GIFTS FOR HIS SERVICE. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. I AM A VITAL PARTICIPANT IN A COMMUNITY WITH OTHER BELIEVERS. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. IT IS CLEAR THAT MY MONEY, GIFTS, TIME, AND ABILITIES ARE COMPLETELY AT GOD'S DISPOSAL AND NOT MY OWN. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. I CONSISTENTLY INTEGRATE MY FAITH IN THE MARKETPLACE AND THE WORLD. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

TOTAL:

PART B: EMOTIONAL COMPONENTS OF DISCIPLESHIP

PRINCIPLE 1: LOOK BENEATH THE SURFACE

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. IT'S EASY FOR ME TO IDENTIFY WHAT I AM FEELING INSIDE (LUKE 19:41-44; JOHN 11:33-35) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. I AM WILLING TO EXPLORE PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN OR UNACCEPTABLE PARTS OF MYSELF, ALLOWING CHRIST TO TRANSFORM ME MORE FULLY (ROM. 7:21-25; COL. 3:5-17) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. I ENJOY BEING ALONE IN QUIET REFLECTION WITH GOD AND MYSELF (MARK 1:35; LUKE 6:12) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. I CAN SHARE FREELY ABOUT MY EMOTIONS, SEXUALITY, JOY, AND PAIN (PS. 22; PROV. 5:18-19; LUKE 10:21) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

EMOTIONAL/SPIRITUAL HEALTH INVENTORY

Please answer these questions as honestly as possible. Use the scoring method as indicated.

	NOT VERY TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE	MOSTLY TRUE	VERY TRUE
5. I AM ABLE TO EXPERIENCE AND DEAL WITH ANGER IN A WAY THAT LEADS TO GROWTH IN OTHERS AND MYSELF (EPH. 4:25-32)	1	2	3	4
6. I AM HONEST WITH MYSELF (AND A FEW SIGNIFICANT OTHERS) ABOUT THE FEELINGS, BELIEFS, DOUBTS, PAINS, AND HURTS BENEATH THE SURFACE OF MY LIFE (PS. 73; 88; JER. 20:7-18)	1	2	3	4
				TOTAL:

PART B: EMOTIONAL COMPONENTS OF DISCIPLESHIP

PRINCIPLE 2: BREAK THE POWER OF THE PAST

7. I RESOLVE CONFLICT IN A CLEAR, DIRECT, AND RESPECTFUL WAY, NOT WHAT I MIGHT HAVE LEARNED GROWING UP IN MY FAMILY, SUCH AS PAINFUL PUTDOWNS, AVOIDANCE, ESCALATING TENSIONS, OR GOING TO A THIRD PARTY RATHER THAN TO THE PERSON DIRECTLY (MATT. 18:15-18)	1	2	3	4
8. I AM INTENTIONAL AT WORKING THROUGH THE IMPACT OF SIGNIFICANT "EARTHQUAKE" EVENTS THAT SHAPED MY PRESENT, SUCH AS THE DEATH OF A FAMILY MEMBER, AN UNEXPECTED PREGNANCY, DIVORCE, ADDICTION, OR MAJOR FINANCIAL DISASTER (GEN. 50:20; PS. 51)	1	2	3	4
9. I AM ABLE TO THANK GOD FOR ALL MY PAST LIFE EXPERIENCES, SEEING HOW HE HAS USED THEM TO UNIQUELY SHAPE ME INTO WHO I AM (GEN. 50:20; ROM. 8:28-30)	1	2	3	4
10. I CAN SEE HOW CERTAIN "GENERATIONAL SINS" HAVE BEEN PASSED DOWN TO ME THROUGH MY FAMILY HISTORY, INCLUDING CHARACTER FLAWS, LIES, SECRETS, WAYS OF COPING WITH PAIN, AND UNHEALTHY TENDENCIES IN RELATING TO OTHERS (EX. 20:5; CF. GEN. 20:2; 26:7; 27:19; 37:1-33)	1	2	3	4
11. I DON'T NEED APPROVAL FROM OTHERS TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT MYSELF (PROV. 29:25; GAL 1:10)	1	2	3	4
12. I TAKE RESPONSIBILITY AND OWNERSHIP FOR MY PAST LIFE RATHER THAN BLAME OTHERS (JOHN 5:5-7)	1	2	3	4
				TOTAL:

EMOTIONAL/SPIRITUAL HEALTH INVENTORY

Please answer these questions as honestly as possible. Use the scoring method as indicated.

NOT VERY TRUE
SOMETIMES TRUE
MOSTLY TRUE
VERY TRUE

PART B: EMOTIONAL COMPONENTS OF DISCIPLESHIP

PRINCIPLE 3: LIVE IN BROKENNESS AND VULNERABILITY

13. I OFTEN ADMIT WHEN I'M WRONG, READILY ASKING FORGIVENESS FROM OTHERS (MATT. 5:23-24)	1	2	3	4
14. I AM ABLE TO SPEAK FREELY ABOUT MY WEAKNESSES, FAILURES, AND MISTAKES (2 COR. 12: 7-12)	1	2	3	4
15. OTHERS WOULD EASILY DESCRIBE ME AS APPROACHABLE, GENTLE, OPEN, AND TRANSPARENT (GAL 5:22-23; 1 COR. 13:1-6)	1	2	3	4
16. THOSE CLOSE TO ME WOULD SAY THAT I AM NOT EASILY OFFENDED OR HURT (MATT 5:39-42; 1 COR. 13:5)	1	2	3	4
17. I AM CONSISTENTLY OPEN TO HEARING AND APPLYING CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM AND FEEDBACK THAT OTHERS MIGHT HAVE FOR ME (PROV. 10:17; 17:10; 25:12)	1	2	3	4
18. I AM RARELY JUDGMENTAL OR CRITICAL OF OTHERS (MATT 7:1-5)	1	2	3	4
19. OTHERS WOULD SAY THAT I AM SLOW TO SPEAK, QUICK TO LISTEN, AND GOOD AT SEEING THINGS FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE (JAMES 1:19-20)	1	2	3	4
				TOTAL:

PART B: EMOTIONAL COMPONENTS OF DISCIPLESHIP

PRINCIPLE 4: RECEIVE THE GIFT OF LIMITS

20. I'VE NEVER BEEN ACCUSED OF "TRYING TO DO IT ALL" OR OF BITING OFF MORE THAN I COULD CHEW (MATT. 4:1-11)	1	2	3	4
21. I AM REGULARLY ABLE TO SAY NO TO REQUESTS AND OPPORTUNITIES RATHER THAN RISK OVEREXTENDING MYSELF (MARK 6:30-32)	1	2	3	4
22. I RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENT SITUATIONS WHERE MY UNIQUE, GOD-GIVEN PERSONALITY CAN BE EITHER A HELP OR HINDRANCE IN RESPONDING APPROPRIATELY (PS. 139; ROM 12:3; 1 PETER 4:10)	1	2	3	4

EMOTIONAL/SPIRITUAL HEALTH INVENTORY

Please answer these questions as honestly as possible. Use the scoring method as indicated.

	NOT VERY TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE	MOSTLY TRUE	VERY TRUE
23. IT'S EASY FOR ME TO DISTINGUISH THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHEN TO HELP CARRY SOMEONE ELSE'S BURDEN (GAL 6:2) AND WHEN TO LET IT GO SO THEY CAN CARRY THEIR OWN BURDEN (GAL 6:5)	1	2	3	4
24. I HAVE A GOOD SENSE OF MY EMOTIONAL, RELATIONAL, PHYSICAL, AND SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES, INTENTIONALLY PULLING BACK TO REST AND FILL MY "GAS TANK" AGAIN (MARK 1:21-39)	1	2	3	4
25. THOSE CLOSE TO ME WOULD SAY THAT I AM GOOD AT BALANCING FAMILY, REST, WORK, AND PLAY IN A BIBLICAL WAY (EX 20:8)	1	2	3	4
				TOTAL:

PART B: EMOTIONAL COMPONENTS OF DISCIPLESHIP

PRINCIPLE 5: EMBRACE GRIEVING AND LOSS

26. I OPENLY ADMIT MY LOSSES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS (PS. 3; 5).	1	2	3	4
27. WHEN I GO THROUGH A DISAPPOINTMENT OR A LOSS, I REFLECT ON HOW I'M FEELING RATHER THAN PRETEND THAT NOTHING IS WRONG (2 SAM. 1:4, 17-27; PS. 51: 1-17)	1	2	3	4
28. I TAKE TIME TO GRIEVE MY LOSSES AS DAVID (PS. 69) AND JESUS DID (MATT. 26:38; JOHN 11:35; 12:27)	1	2	3	4
29. PEOPLE WHO ARE IN GREAT PAIN AND SORROW TEND TO SEEK ME OUT BECAUSE IT'S CLEAR TO THEM THAT I AM IN TOUCH WITH THE LOSSES AND SORROWS IN MY OWN LIFE (2 COR. 1:3-7)	1	2	3	4
30. I AM ABLE TO CRY AND EXPERIENCE DEPRESSION OR SADNESS, EXPLORE THE REASONS BEHIND IT, AND ALLOW GOD TO WORK IN ME THROUGH IT (PS. 42; MATT 26:36-46)	1	2	3	4

TOTAL:

EMOTIONAL/SPIRITUAL HEALTH INVENTORY

Please answer these questions as honestly as possible. Use the scoring method as indicated.

NOT VERY TRUE
SOMETIMES TRUE
MOSTLY TRUE
VERY TRUE

PART B: EMOTIONAL COMPONENTS OF DISCIPLESHIP

PRINCIPLE 6: MAKE INCARNATION YOUR MODEL FOR LOVING WELL

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 31. I AM REGULARLY ABLE TO ENTER INTO OTHER PEOPLE'S WORLDS AND FEELINGS, CONNECTING DEEPLY WITH THEM AND TAKING TIME TO IMAGINE WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO LIVE IN THEIR SHOES (JOHN 1:1-14; 2 COR. 8:9; PHI. 2:3-5) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 32. PEOPLE CLOSE TO ME WOULD DESCRIBE ME AS A RESPONSIVE LISTENER (PROV. 10:19; 29:11; JAMES 1:19) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 33. WHEN I CONFRONT SOMEONE WHO HAS HURT OR WRONGED ME, I SPEAK MORE IN THE FIRST PERSON ("I" AND "ME") ABOUT HOW I AM FEELING RATHER THAN SPEAK IN BLAMING TONES ("YOU" OR "THEY") ABOUT WHAT WAS DONE (PROV. 25:11; EPH. 4:29-32) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 34. I HAVE LITTLE INTEREST IN JUDGING OTHER PEOPLE OR QUICKLY GIVING OPINIONS ABOUT THEM (MATT. 7:1-5) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 35. PEOPLE WOULD DESCRIBE ME AS SOMEONE WHO MAKES "LOVING WELL" MY NUMBER ONE AIM (JOHN 13:34-35; 1 COR. 13) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

TOTAL:

PART B: EMOTIONAL COMPONENTS OF DISCIPLESHIP

PRINCIPLE 7: SLOW DOWN TO LEAD WITH INTEGRITY

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 36. I SPEND SUFFICIENT TIME ALONE WITH GOD TO SUSTAIN MY WORK FOR GOD. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 37. I REGULARLY TAKE A 24-HOUR PERIOD EACH WEEK FOR SABBATH-KEEPING-TO STOP, TO REST, TO DELIGHT, AND TO CONTEMPLATE GOD. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 38. THOSE CLOSEST TO ME WOULD SAY THAT MY MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS TAKE PRIORITY OVER WORK, HOBBIES, CHURCH MINISTRY, AND OTHERS. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

EMOTIONAL/SPIRITUAL HEALTH INVENTORY

Please answer these questions as honestly as possible. Use the scoring method as indicated.

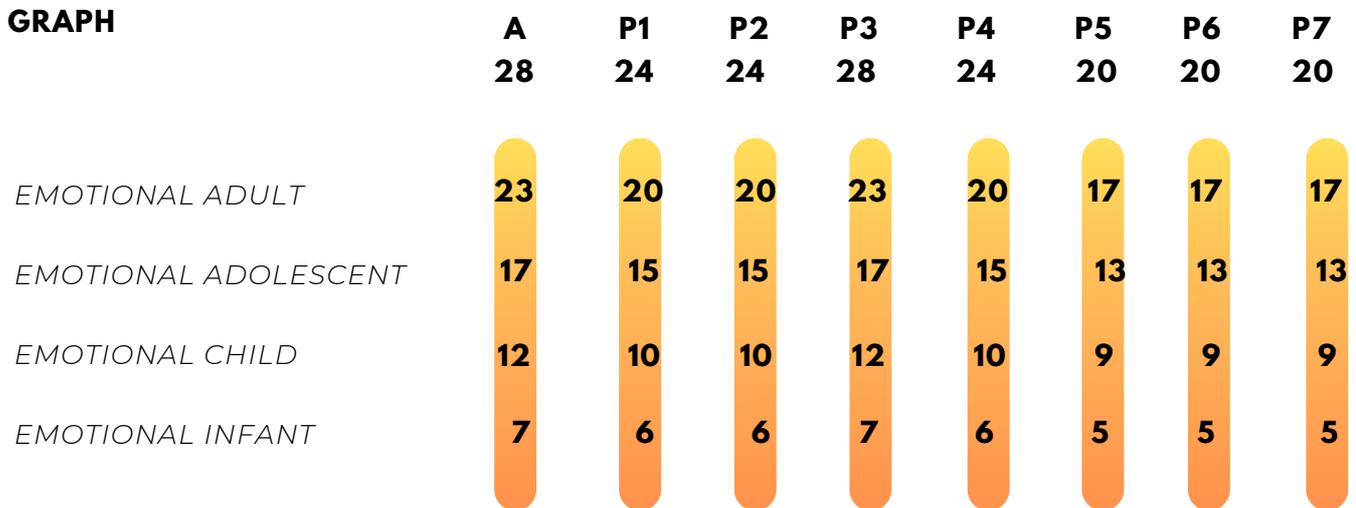
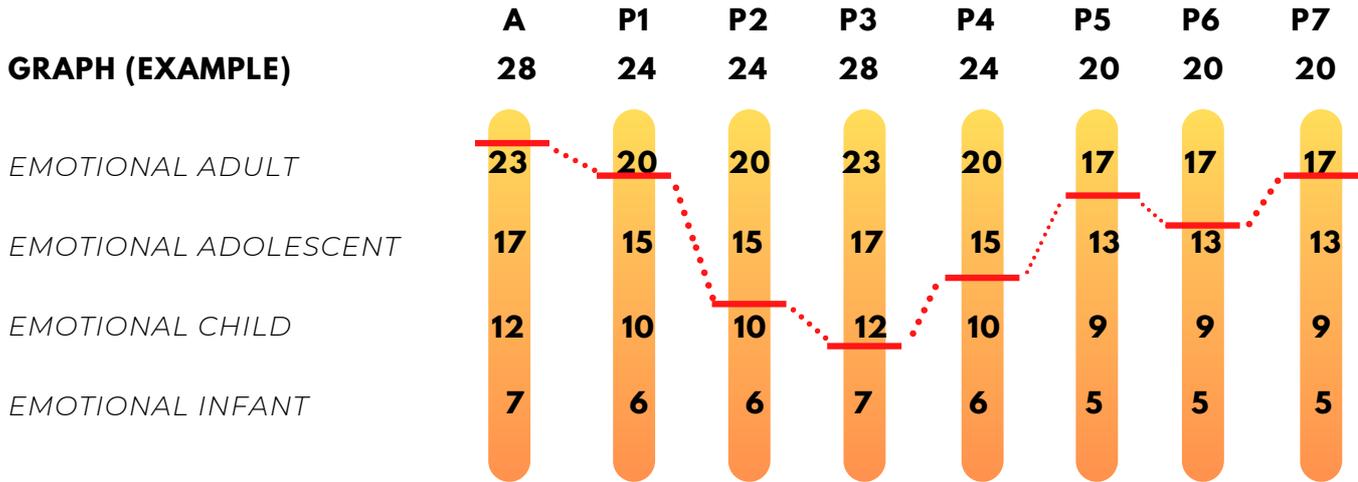
	NOT VERY TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE	MOSTLY TRUE	VERY TRUE
39. I AM NOT AFRAID TO ASK DIFFICULT, UNCOMFORTABLE QUESTIONS, TO MYSELF OR TO OTHERS, WHEN NEEDED.	1	2	3	4
40. I DO NOT DIVIDE MY LEADERSHIP INTO SACRED/SECULAR CATEGORIES. I TREAT THE EXECUTIVE/PLANNING FUNCTIONS OF LEADERSHIP AS MEANINGFUL AS PRAYER AND OTHER SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES.	1	2	3	4
				TOTAL:

INVENTORY RESULTS

- Add your answers to get the total for that group. write your totals.
- Next, plot your answers and connect the dots to create a graph on the next page (see example).
- Finally, review the interpretations of your level of emotional health in each area.

PART A	QUESTIONS	TOTAL
GENERAL FORMATION AND DISCIPLINE	1-7	_____/28
PART B		
PRINCIPLE 1 LOOK BENEATH THE SURFACE	1-6	_____/24
PRINCIPLE 2 BREAK THE POWER OF THE PAST	7-12	_____/24
PRINCIPLE 3 LIVE IN BROKENNESS AND VULNERABILITY	13-19	_____/28
PRINCIPLE 4 RECEIVE THE GIFT OF LIMITS	20-25	_____/24
PRINCIPLE 5 EMBRACE GRIEVING AND LOSS	26-30	_____/20
PRINCIPLE 6 MAKE INCARNATION YOUR MODEL FOR LOVING WELL	31-35	_____/20
PRINCIPLE 7 SLOW DOWN TO LEAD WITH INTEGRITY	36-40	_____/20

INVENTORY RESULTS GRAPH



INTERPRETATION GUIDE: LEVELS OF EMOTIONAL MATURITY

EMOTIONAL INFANTS

I look for other people to take care of me emotionally and spiritually. I often have difficulty in describing and experiencing my feelings in healthy ways and rarely enter the emotional world of others. I am consistently driven by a need for instant gratification, often using others as objects to meet my needs. People sometimes perceive me as inconsiderate and insensitive. I am uncomfortable with silence or being alone. When trials, hardships, or difficulties come, I want to quit God and the christian life. I sometimes experience God at church and when I am with other christians, but rarely when I am at work or home.

EMOTIONAL CHILDREN

When life is going my way, I am content. However, as soon as disappointment or stress enter the picture, I quickly unravel inside. I often take things personally, interpreting disagreements or criticism as a personal offense. When I don't get my way, I often complain, throw an emotional tantrum, withdraw, manipulate, drag my feet, become sarcastic, or take revenge. I often end up living off the spirituality of other people because I am so overloaded and distracted. My prayer life is primarily talking to God, telling him what to do and how to fix my problems. Prayer is a duty, not a delight.

EMOTIONAL ADOLESCENTS

I don't like it when others question me. I often make quick judgments and interpretations of people's behavior. I withhold forgiveness to those who sin against me, avoiding or cutting them off when they do something to hurt me. I subconsciously keep records on the love I give out. I have trouble really listening to another person's pain, disappointments, or needs without becoming preoccupied with myself. I sometimes find myself too busy to spend adequate time nourishing my spiritual life. I attend church and serve others but enjoy few delights in christ. My christian life is still primarily about doing, not being with him. Prayer continues to be mostly me talking with little silence, solitude, or listening to God.

EMOTIONAL ADULTS

I respect and love others without having to change them or become judgmental. I value people for who they are, not for what they can give me or how they behave. I take responsibility for my own thoughts, feelings, goals, and actions. I can state my own beliefs and values to those who disagree with me-without becoming adversarial. I am able to accurately self-assess my limits, strengths, and weaknesses. I am deeply convinced that I am absolutely loved by christ and, as a result, do not look to others to tell me I'm okay. I am able to integrate doing for God and being with him (Mary and Martha). My christian life has moved beyond simply serving christ to loving him and enjoying communion with him.

SELF-REFLECTION

Take some time to process what you've learned about yourself through the inventory of emotional and spiritual maturity tool. Consider the following questions:

1. How did you feel as you assessed yourself? Was it easy? Challenging? Comfortable? Uncomfortable? Think about how you felt and why you might have felt that way as you went through each part of the inventory.
2. Take some time to observe your graph. What patterns do you notice? What does this reveal about yourself?
3. After taking the inventory and reflecting, what level of emotional maturity do you feel you are at overall? Why do you feel as though you are at this level of emotional maturity right now?

Share your reflections and thoughts with your group when you are ready.

WEEK 2 DEVOTION



When we think of Jesus, we wouldn't necessarily use the term emotional to describe who Jesus is. However, a closer look into Scripture would actually reveal that Jesus expressed His emotions honestly and authentically. Consider the broad range of emotions Jesus experienced:

- He shed tears. (Luke 19:41)
- He was filled with joy (Luke 10:21)
- He grieved and felt sorrow. (Mark 14:34; Luke 7:13)
- He was angry. (Mark 3:5)
- He showed astonishment and wonder. (Mark 6:6; Luke 7:9)
- He felt distress (Mark 3:5; Luke 12:50)

Go through this list once more and read the verses associated with the emotions Jesus felt. What are some emotions Jesus experienced that don't fit so well with your ideas of what Jesus is like? Why do you think it might be hard to see Jesus in this way? Take some time to consider how you might respond to these emotions when they come up in your own life.

Allow God to let the reality of Jesus' vibrant emotional life sink in. Ask God to grant you the grace to embrace the fullness of your humanity and to share in the freedom of Jesus to experience your emotions and feelings.

WEEK 3



PRINCIPLE 1: LOOK BENEATH THE SURFACE

We can argue that our culture, by and large, has made us believe that we need to show the very best of ourselves to the world. Whether it's our picture perfect instagram feeds or even sharing in our community groups, many of us have bought into this idea that we must curate our lives in a neatly packaged way in order to be accepted and loved by others. We share just the right amount of vulnerability and we calculate in our minds what is enough to make ourselves appear to be "real" with others. But what happens when those closest to us call us out on our bluff? We get defensive or lash out more times than we'd like to admit. Many of us have actually tricked ourselves to believe that we are self-aware and that we are doing the hard work of looking inward. The reality, though, is that just like how only a small portion of an iceberg is visible above the surface many of us are also only aware of ourselves at the surface level. Unknowingly, even the smallest of decisions we make are impacted by the deeper layers of our unconscious thoughts, motivations, and impulses that we have yet to uncover.

For this week's meeting, let's invite Christ to bring to our awareness the deep-seated forces and motivations that are hindering us from authentic change. It will feel unnatural and uncomfortable at times, but there is something we can learn about ourselves if we sit in our discomfort. And while one community group meeting or even one series is not going to change us overnight, we can be a group of brothers and sisters that God can use to help us honestly examine what's happening beneath the surface. The gospel reveals that we are all broken and in desperate need of His grace. The more aware you are of the deepest parts of yourself, the less judgmental you will become of others. Many of us desire and work towards becoming better sons, daughters, wives, husbands, fathers, mothers, and friends to those we love. But we cannot deeply impact others and insert ourselves into their world if we haven't bothered to enter our own. So let's take this journey inward, together. And through this process, our hope is that we allow the gospel to seep deep into our hearts and that as the Holy Spirit works within us we can learn to love God, others, and even ourselves better.

WEEK 3

WARM-UP

Patterns in our lives and relationships are often a sign that we're acting out from deep places in our iceberg. They usually reveal a "bug" in our emotional programming, something that plays out over and over again in our lives. If you or a close loved one notice a "pattern of unhealth" emerging in your life, that is usually a good sign that something's amiss in your internal wiring.

Try your best to complete the following statements: Don't think too hard about it but rather try to identify your typical gut reactions or responses.

"When I am under stress, I often find myself _____."

(Ex: Fighting, angry, lashing out, blaming others, isolating, distracting myself etc)

"When someone confronts me about something I did or offends me in anyway I usually _____."

(Ex: Withdraw, insult them back, get passive aggressive, hold it against them, give an excuse, reflect, etc)

"My _____ (spouse, friend, sibling, parents etc) and I repeatedly argue about _____." (Ex: tone of voice, lack of work/life balance, harsh words, inequity with household/parental duties, emotionally unavailable)

"One of my biggest pet peeves is when _____."

(Ex: I feel like someone is wasting my time, someone dismisses my comment, I feel misunderstood)

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

In John 4:1-26 we see the famous encounter between Jesus and a Samaritan woman where Jesus reveals that He is interested in our internal health and draws out our issues that are lurking beneath the surface. He goes beyond the fixed patterns of behavior and looks straight into our hearts. The Samaritan woman is found at the well by herself in order to avoid running into anyone to avoid the pain of her shame. Jesus doesn't avoid her pain, He moves toward it because He knows that often times in the discomfort and anguish of our pain, we develop a hunger for change. Jesus recognizes the Samaritan woman's spiritual thirst for acceptance and her attempt to try to fulfill this desire in men. Although she attempts to keep the conversation at surface level by talking about her physical thirst, in His grace He exposes her to this truth. No matter how much she tries to deflect or change the subject, Jesus loved her enough to not only help her identify her greatest pain and why she feels so hurt by it but to ultimately offer Himself as the living water by which she will never thirst again.

EXERCISE

It takes the grace of God to get to the bottom of our iceberg. Thankfully, there are "disciplines of reflection" to help us in walking in that grace. One of these is the "Why?" or "What's going on?" questions. As we notice patterns in our feelings, situations, and relationships that emerge in our lives, God desires that we ask ourselves the "Why?" question in the safety of his presence.

Reflect and share about a recent personal situation where you felt either anger, frustration, fear, shame, bitterness, hate, grief, or jealousy. Try to think of a situation that you felt deeply in your core. Use the questions below as a starting point to get at "What's going on?" Keep in mind that you can experience a range of emotions within this one situation.

- Rage/Anger: "How was I hurt?"
- Frustration: "What did I feel helpless about?"
- Shame: "What was I hiding?"
- Resentment: "What did I expect or hope for?"
- Depression: "What did I lose?"
- Jealousy: "Where did I feel inadequate?"

DEBRIEF + REFLECTION

1. What connections do you notice between your repeated behavioral patterns from the warm-up and the situation you shared about with the group?
2. What do you think God is helping you to realize about yourself?

GOSPEL RESPONSE

As we begin the work of uncovering the deepest parts of ourselves, we can be left feeling hopeless, insecure, and ashamed. The beauty of the gospel though is that in our utter brokenness Jesus looks at us and still deems us as worthy. He demonstrates the greatest love by offering Himself on the cross even while fully knowing our wretchedness in order that His righteousness can be called our own in the eyes of the Father. The gospel then gives us the courage to not run away or avoid our emotions, but to rather see them as a gift from God to make us more like Him. One practical way we can do this is to check in with ourselves especially when we are feeling a strong or heightened emotion. Here's one example:

Why did I get mad at my spouse? I think I lashed out and overreacted because he made me late. Ultimately, I'm not mad that he made me late. I'm mad that he made me look bad in front of others and I realize that I have a tendency to preserve my image and uphold everyone's expectations of me even at the cost of putting my husband down. Jesus, help me to remember that I am fully accepted by you and that I do not need to look to others to find my worth.

WEEK 3 DEVOTION

One of the ways we can begin the process of paying attention to our emotions is to listen to our physical body. What might your body be telling you about how you're feeling right now? Take this time to pause in silence before God to listen to Him.

Read Psalm 139:1-10

"You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.
You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.
Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
If I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast."

Read the passage again. This time read a little slower. Find a word or phrase that catches your eye or moves your heart. Repeat it one, two, or three times.

"You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.
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If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast."

Write out your thoughts, feelings, desires, or needs from your meditation.

WEEK 4



PRINCIPLE 2: BREAK THE POWER OF THE PAST

As we peel back the layers and start looking deeper past the surface of our icebergs, we begin to realize that much of our past and the families we grew up in shape and influence the people we are today. In the Bible and in our own lives, we see examples of both blessings and curses that have lasted through generations.

Some may say that they are not going to blame shift their parents and families for all their problems but fail to see how the influence of their past manifests in various aspects of their lives. Others might say that they came from generally stable and loving families which often makes it harder to acknowledge how their past affects their current spiritual growth.

A significant part of discipleship must include an honest look into both the positive and negative affects of our families and other influences in our lives. How much or how little we engage in this work directly correlates to our awareness and ability to break destructive patterns and negative generational legacies that hinder our ability to live in genuine freedom and joy. Some may argue that they have already dealt with their past and have moved on from it. However, discipleship is a process and as we undergo this process today and onward we will begin to realize that we will never fully grasp the depth of our icebergs. We must revisit the past when we feel stuck and discover new things about ourselves as we face different circumstances in our journey with Christ. Thankfully, although we have a propensity to certain behaviors, we have an opportunity to be "reparented" through our spiritual family. Family is the most significant metaphor used in Scripture to describe the church and we come into this new family, with all our wounds and brokenness, to experience healing and growth. Then, as wounded healers, we are to go out and heal others.

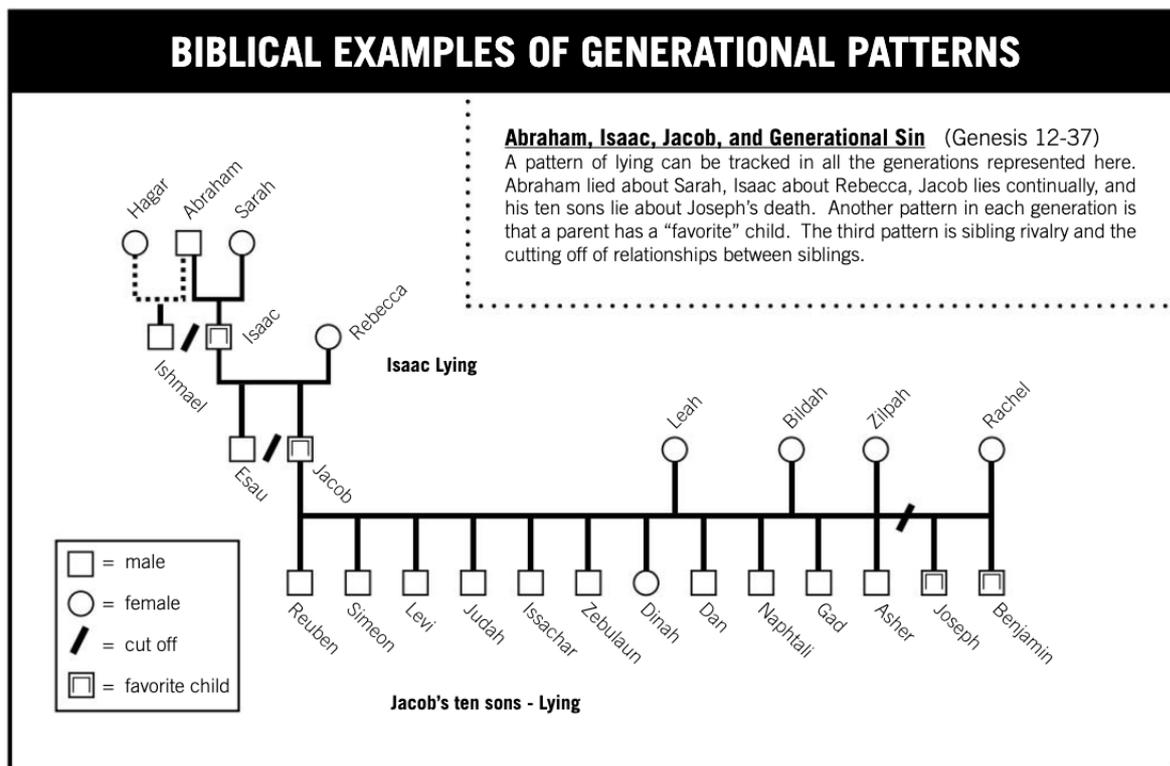
WEEK 4

WARM-UP

Think about the following questions. Feel free to spend some time writing your response in your journal. Share out with the group when you feel ready.

- What parts of your childhood did you love and would want to continue on in your own family or relationships?
- What parts of your childhood were hurtful that you would not want to continue into your own family or relationships?

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE



Normally when we think about Abraham we think about the blessings that were passed down through the father of faith. However, in this biblical example, we can see how Abraham has also passed down generational patterns of sin. This fact is clear in scripture but is often glossed over in the church. We see the pattern of deception, favoring a particular child, and sibling rivalry. Abraham lies twice about Sarah being his wife. Rebecca and Isaac's marriage is marked by lies and trickery. Jacob's very name means "deceiver." We also see how Abraham favored Ishmael, Isaac favored Esau, and Jacob favors Joseph and Benjamin. Lastly, we can see how the pattern of favored children led to sibling rivalry and family tensions. By the time we get to Joseph, four generations later, we can trace back to his family origins to see how his life has been shaped by decisions that were made hundreds of years prior to his existence.

EXERCISE

Take some time to think about the following questions. Write down your responses in your journal understanding that these questions are an opportunity for us to get beneath the surface and discover how our past might be impacting our present. These questions represent both our family history as well as major influences or events from our past.

- Describe each family member with two or three adjectives (parents, caretakers, grandparents, siblings).
- What was your parents' marriage like? Were there any particular gender roles?
- How well did your family do in talking about feelings?
- What did faith look like in your home?
- Were there any heroes or heroines in both your immediate and extended families? Scapegoats? Favorite child? Black sheep?
- Were there traumatic losses in the past or present, both in our own personal lives or in our families, such as sudden death, prolonged illnesses, stillbirths/miscarriages, bankruptcy, or divorce?

DEBRIEF + REFLECTION

1. What one or two patterns can you identify of how your family or major life influences impacted who you are today?
2. In what area(s) might you be shaping your life according to your past instead of the gospel?

GOSPEL RESPONSE

The major problem about breaking the power of the past is that we do not possess the ability to break free from our past. The gospel reveals that we do not have what it takes to put an end to generational patterns of sin. If, for example, someone's past is marked by a broken relationship with his father, his understanding of fatherhood could unconsciously be applied to his relationship to God. If his father was absent and disengaged, he may come to believe that God is not present and does not care about his life. But breaking the power of the past means to be reminded of the gospel and allow the Spirit to work in our hearts to see God as a different Father who will never leave, forsake, or abandon us. We see a God who did not love from a distance, but chose to enter this world and be present to our sufferings and trials. We see a God who loved us so much that He sent His Son to die on our behalf. In Scripture, Jesus makes it clear that being Christian means being born again and we can only be born again through Him. Peter Scazzero writes, "New roots are needed for new fruit. All we do is modify the same tree when we make resolutions and commitments to pray more, go to church more consistently, or resolve to stop behavior. The root needs to be pulled up. A new tree is needed. Jesus declares that only by a direct intervention of God can you or I be changed." Let us surrender to Christ. He alone has the power to heal and transform our hearts.

WEEK 4 DEVOTION

Read Hebrews 10:19-25

"Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Read the passage again. This time, personalize the passage by prayerfully inserting your own name and reading it as if it were addressed to you. Meditate on the words as they are spoken to you.

"Therefore, _____, since you have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for you through the curtain, that is, his body, and since you have a great priest over the house of God, may you draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having your heart sprinkled to cleanse you from a guilty conscience and having your body washed with pure water. May you hold unwaveringly to the hope you profess, for he who promised is faithful. And may you consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

What is your response to the reading? Write down your honest reply. Be aware that God may continue to lead you from what has been spoken to you in Scripture. Respond to that leading and allow the conversation to flow naturally.

WEEK 5

PRINCIPLE 3: LIVE IN BROKENNESS AND VULNERABILITY

There are a lot of tools out there that help us to identify our strengths and talents. We take strengths finder tests and career assessments to see how our giftings can shape the choices we make. But what if God has also specifically crafted out our weaknesses and the very parts of ourselves that we try to conceal? God not only desires to heal our brokenness but to also continue to use our brokenness as a means to help us grow and mature. The great paradox is that the more we are aware of our weaknesses, the stronger our faith becomes. The more we are driven to our knees, the more we acknowledge that we are in desperate need of a savior.

Scripture does not gloss over people's weaknesses. Moses stuttered and was a murderer. David was an adulterer, murderer, and abused power. Noah got drunk. Hosea's wife was a prostitute. Apostle Paul was a persecutor and hot tempered. This is not to say that we should condone our sinful nature. However, we see an ongoing pattern in Scripture of God using people who do not try to lead out of their own strengths or gifts. What we do notice about these "heroes of faith" in the Bible is that they were all deeply aware of their flaws and possessed a teachable spirit. Each of their examples shows us that the more they were in touch with their brokenness, the more they were able to understand the extent of God's grace and love over their lives. It also made them better leaders. As we become more in touch with our limitations and vulnerabilities, not only will the gospel move us in profound ways, it will help us become better leaders, spouses, co-workers, friends etc. People become drawn to us as safe spaces similarly to how people were drawn to Christ. Deep inside everyone understands the universal truth that we are all imperfect. Imperfection is part of what makes us human. Living our lives in our frailties means that no matter where we are we carry with ourselves the awareness and humility that we are far from perfect, and in that place we can offer grace not judgment, love and not condemnation.

WEEK 5

WARM-UP

Think about the relationships in your life. Being open and honest is hard work and it's especially hard when we feel judged, criticized, or back into a corner. Which relationships do you feel safe enough to readily admit your mistakes, accept correction, and talk about your struggles. What made those relationships safe spaces for you? Would you also describe yourself as someone who is a safe space to others? Write your thoughts down in your journal and share with the group when you are ready.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

Let's read The Message translation of 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10 where Paul shares about the thorn in his flesh:

"Because of the extravagance of those revelations, and so I wouldn't get a big head, I was given the *gift of a handicap* to keep me in constant touch with my limitations. Satan's angel did his best to get me down; what he in fact did was push me to my knees. No danger then of walking around high and mighty! At first I didn't think of it as a gift, and begged God to remove it. Three times I did that, and then he told me, My grace is enough; it's all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness. Once I heard that, I was glad to let it happen. *I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift.* It was a case of Christ's strength moving in on my weakness. Now I take limitations in stride, and with good cheer, these limitations that cut me down to size—abuse, accidents, opposition, bad breaks. I just let Christ take over! And so the weaker I get, the stronger I become."

Apostle Paul, one of the most influential figures of the Christian faith, believed that his weakness was a gift and he learned to appreciate the gift. Scholars are unsure of whether or not Paul was referring to his physical disabilities, constant opposition, or even his own hot-headed temperament. Regardless, Apostle Paul was often discouraged and hurt by this thorn. Apostle Paul, however, understood that Christ's power was made perfect in his weakness and therefore he not only acknowledged but boasted in his weakness. Paul's theology came out of a conviction that if God was going to use him for his kingdom, he wasn't going to do it through a spiritually polished and puffed-up version of himself, but rather through a broken, limited, and human one. Living in brokenness and vulnerability simply means honestly accepting the fact that I'm not as emotionally put-together or spiritually mature as I would like to think I am. It is embracing "the good, the bad, and the ugly" within myself.

EXERCISE

Using the list below, evaluate the extent to which you live in your brokenness and vulnerability by circling the answer that tends to describe you. As you think through each item on the list, think about how you are in specific contexts. How are you in your home? Work? Friendships? Relationships? Church?

Proud + Defensive

- I am guarded and protective about my imperfections and flaws.
- I am defensive.
- I naturally focus first on the flaws, mistakes, and sins of others.
- I give my opinion a lot, even when I am not asked.
- I don't get close to people.
- I like to control most situations.
- I have to be right in order to feel strong and good.
- I blame others.
- When I am offended, I write people off.
- I give answers and explanations to those in pain, hoping to fix or change them.
- I have to prove I am right when wronged.
- I am demanding.
- I am highly self-conscious and concerned about how others perceive me.

Broken + Vulnerable

- I am transparent and weak; I disclose myself to appropriate others.
- I am approachable and open to input.
- I am aware of my own brokenness. I have compassion and am slow to judge.
- I am slow to speak and quick to listen to others.
- I have close and honest relationships.
- I can let go and give people my trust.
- I understand that God's strength reveals itself in admitting mistakes.
- I take responsibility for myself.
- When offended, I ask questions to explore what happened.
- I am present with people in their pain, am comfortable with saying "I don't know."
- I can let things go.
- I assert myself respectfully and kindly.
- I am more aware of God and others than the impression I am making.

DEBRIEF + REFLECTION

1. What is one thing in your life right now that you're having a hard time admitting to?
2. In the areas where you live out of brokenness and vulnerability, how did God build that into your character?

GOSPEL RESPONSE

God meets us in our failures and He's there when we are confronted with the truth of who we really are. He is there when we are able to see reality for what it is, not what we want it to be. The truth of the gospel is that we are more flawed, broken, and sinful than we think we are but we are even more loved, accepted, and adored by a God who declares us worthy through the blood of His son. The beauty of the gospel is that in the abyss of our own mess God springs new life and hope. As followers of Christ, our light shines most brightly in our vulnerabilities and one of the greatest gifts we can give is to encourage others to come out of their own hiding so that they may also experience the transformative power of His grace.

WEEK 5 DEVOTION

The book of Psalms teaches us that in our relationships with God, there is nothing to hide. We can bring all of our authentic selves before Him. The book of Psalms give us permission to share every part of ourselves to God knowing in faith that He is with us.

Read Psalm 51: 10-17

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you.
Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise.
You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise."

Read Psalm 51: 10-17 again. This time, become aware of God's loving presence as you read again. What in God's Word has caught your heart's attention? Is there a command to be obeyed, a comfort to be savored? Talk to God about the Scripture you've just read and yield yourself to God and enjoy His presence.

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so taht sinners will turn back to you.
Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise.
You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise."

WEEK 6



PRINCIPLE 4: RECEIVE THE GIFT OF LIMITS

We live in an interesting culture where people walk around with self-care t-shirts but are also simultaneously obsessed with productivity and the need to prove themselves. For example, nowadays many work places claim to advocate for work life balance but would anyone actually ever tell their bosses that they cannot take on a project because they feel bombarded with work? As a result, many of us are overworked, overextended, and overwhelmed. We try to live a life God never intended for us. God never asked us to fill every need, overwork ourselves to the bone, and help others at the expense of our own emotional and spiritual well being. Understanding our limits and respecting our boundaries is one of the most important character qualities of being a faithful follower of Christ for the long haul.

God calls us to do life and work from a place of rest. He desires for us to live in the cadence of rest and work, activity and contemplation. Limits are gifts from God that allow us to live our lives more fully and joyfully. Knowing our limits takes an immense amount of self-awareness and those who can appropriately say no are faithful stewards of their God-given talents. They completely trust in the sovereignty of God and understand that the world's needs are greater than our personal supply. An emotionally and spiritually mature disciple will carefully discern which limits God is asking them to break through by faith and which other limits can be received as God's invitation for them to surrender and rest.

While everyone has limits, limits will look different person to person. Some limits, such as certain life stages, are temporary while others, such as our natural temperament, stay with us our entire lives. Some come from our internal selves and some come from outside. While our culture resists the idea of limits, it is critical for us to do the hard work of reflecting, praying, and noticing our own unique limits. It is only then that we can embrace them and live our lives within our means.

WEEK 6

WARM-UP

Everyone, at some point or another, struggles with the discipline of limits and boundaries. Imagine four different gas tanks within yourself. Rate where you are in the following tanks by marking an X. Share one reason why one or more of your tanks is near empty.

Spiritual Tank	Relational Tank	Physical Tank	Emotional Tank
Full	Full	Full	Full
Empty	Empty	Empty	Empty

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

There is no greater example of someone in Scripture who modeled limits and boundaries none other than Jesus himself. Jesus exemplified living a life within the Father's limits. He embraced his humanity and graciously received all the limitations that came with it. He ate, slept, rested, and carved out time of solitude with God. Jesus also honored the limits given by God for his ministry here on earth. He did not heal every sick person nor did He build a megachurch. He did not travel to the ends of the earth to preach the gospel. He chose only twelve disciples.

When crowds asked Jesus to stay, he would not hesitate to leave even if that meant disappointing others' expectations. Jesus lived a life that was faithful to who He was. If Jesus, our Savior and Messiah, understood his limits and saw boundaries as a gift from God, why do we feel as though things won't get accomplished unless we complete them? In John 17:4 Jesus says, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." Jesus set limits for himself even if that meant witnessing unmet needs. Jesus humbly obeyed the Father and we are called to do the same.

EXERCISE

On a scale of 1 - 4 (1 = not true, 2 = sometimes true, 3 = mostly true, 4= very true), rate yourself on the following:

- _____ too little time and too much to do
- _____ constantly feeling pressured or restless
- _____ endlessly rushing from deadline to deadline
- _____ breaking promises of quality time with friends and family
- _____ never feeling "finished" with work
- _____ resenting some of your commitments and projects
- _____ feeling bitter towards some who you feel have not protected your time
- _____ don't remember the last time you spent time alone
- _____ often feeling anxious or rushed
- _____ feeling tension in my body
- _____ rushing and driving too fast
- _____ mind feels cluttered and cannot stop racing
- _____ have a hard time being fully present with people
- _____ find yourself being irritable about the simple tasks of life
- _____ skimming over time with God

DEBRIEF + REFLECTION

1. How does understanding or not understanding your limits impact your joy in God, in your close relationships, and in your walk with Christ?
2. Why do you think you are able to respect your limits? Why do you think you have a hard time respecting your limits?
3. At this moment in your life, list everything that takes up the majority of your time. What is one thing that you can say no to or set clearer boundaries?

GOSPEL RESPONSE

A culture that highly idolizes productivity will inevitably define your worth by your performance and ability to get something done. The gospel reveals that no matter what we try to do, even the best of ourselves is still not enough for us to earn our own salvation. The good news, though, is that our salvation rests in the finished work of Christ. In Christ, we are no longer defined by what we can or cannot do. We do not need to prove ourselves to God nor are we even capable of trying to earn His favor by our own strength. God loves us, not because we have something to offer Him, but because we are His precious children. We are redeemed and saved by grace and grace alone. In this grace, God invites us to not fight against our limitations but rather accept them as His gift and hand upon our lives.

WEEK 6 DEVOTION



Prayer: Examen

In his spiritual exercises, St. Ignatius Loyola urged that all be taught the Examen, a daily prayerful reflection on our responses to the events of the day. The purpose of this reflection was to see God's presence and to discern God's direction for us. Ignatius believed that the key to a healthy spirituality was to find God in all things and to work constantly to cooperate with God's will. Our responses to daily events fall into two categories: our consolations (what connects us with God, others, and ourselves) and desolations (what disconnects us). Ignatius believed that God would speak to us through these two feelings.

Purpose:

- To encourage us to notice God's grace throughout the day
- To acknowledge sad or painful feelings and hear how God is speaking to us through them
- To tell the truth about who we truly are and what we need, rather than who we think we should be or what we think we need
- To become aware of seemingly insignificant moments that ultimately can give direction for our lives.

Format

1. Ask God to bring to your awareness the moment today for which you are most grateful.
 - a. If you could relive one moment, which one would it be?
 - b. When were you most able to give and receive love today?
 - c. Ask yourself what was said and done in that moment that made it so good.
 - d. Breathe in the gratitude you felt and receive life again from that moment.
2. Ask God to bring to your awareness the moment today for which you are least grateful.
 - a. When were you least able to give and receive love?
 - b. Ask yourself what was said and done in that moment that made it so difficult.
 - c. Relive the feelings without trying to change or fix it in any way.
 - d. Take deep breaths and let God's love fill you just as you are.
3. Give thanks for whatever you have experienced. If possible, share as much as possible of these two moments with a friend. It is also helpful to record your thoughts in a journal. Rereading these notes will help you see God's grace at work in your life even when things seemed impossible.

WEEK 7



PRINCIPLE 5: EMBRACE GRIEVING AND LOSS

Grieving well is an essential aspect of discipleship. Scripture shows that God himself grieved: "The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain" (Gen. 6:6). Jesus grieved over the death of His friend. We see an entire book of the Bible called Lamentations, numerous songs of grief and loss in Psalms, a man's journey with loss in the book of Job, and countless more examples of grief and loss in Scripture. God understands that as His image-bearers, learning to grieve is part of what it means to mature in Christ.

Often times, we perceive the process of grieving as an interruption or an obstacle we need to overcome rather than seeing it as part of maturing our faith. Loss is the norm of life, not the exception. This year we have seen images of tragedy on the news over and over again. These devastations are more often reported and analyzed in media with little to no lament. It strips the humanity away from the tragedy. Furthermore, we often dismiss other "smaller" losses as trivial and unimportant but for many of us it's these "smaller" losses that weigh us down and take up space slowly over time. Consequently, when looking back we aren't able to pinpoint why we feel so heavy and suffocated inside. We minimize our setbacks and downplay our disappointments. We distract or bury ourselves in other things as a way to escape from reality. But this is ultimately unbiblical and a rejection to fully engage with our own humanity.

The good news is that God uses our grief and loss as a way to help us become more like Him. The more we are able to grieve our losses, the more we are able to deepen our relationship with Him and show authentic love and empathy towards others. When we resist and reject seasons of grief and sadness in our lives, we lose the opportunities to fully live. As we grieve, we transform. The layers of our counterfeit self are shed allowing us to show compassion and love towards others.

WEEK 7

WARM-UP

Take some time to reflect. How did your family of origin deal with losses and setbacks growing up? How do you think that may have influenced how you deal with loss and grief today? Write about it in your journal and share with the group when you are ready.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

David is well known for being a man after God's own heart and perhaps this characterization is closely related to the way he paid attention to his grief and loss. The book of Psalms reveals that David spoke and sang about his sadness, disappointment, and sorrows throughout the course of his life. In 2 Samuel 1:17-27 we can see that David is devastated after receiving news regarding the death of King Saul and his son Jonathan, David's best friend.

"David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan, and he ordered that the people of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar):

'A gazelle lies slain on your heights, Israel. How the mighty have fallen! Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice. Mountains of Gilboa, may you have neither dew nor rain, may no showers fall on your terraced fields. For there the shield of the mighty was despised, the shield of Saul-no longer rubbed with oil. From the blood of the slain, from the flesh of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, the sword of Saul did not return unsatisfied. Saul and Jonathan-in life they were loved and admired, and in death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. Daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold. How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights. I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women. How the mighty have fallen! The weapons of war have perished!'"

It seems as though David is forcing the people to stop what they are doing, pay attention to the grief, and express the sorrow that they feel. He wants his people to stay connected to reality and not run away from their pain. He does not rush the process, he embraces it fully. David understands that grieving is indispensable and that our souls deepen when we grieve before moving on.

EXERCISE

Our culture resists and avoids grieving. We prefer to get smarter, richer, healthier, happier, and so on. Losses are seen as setbacks interrupting us from a more fulfilled life. Currently, many of us are living in a season of change and have had to shift and adjust our lives accordingly. Today's exercise is an invitation to uncover the "smaller" seemingly "insignificant" losses that go unnoticed but when paid attention to, can reveal a lot about the current condition of our hearts.

Share your answers to two or three of the following statements:

"I miss _____."

"Although I feel happy/thankful about _____ I also feel _____ because _____."

"When I was younger, I wish I had spent more time _____."

"I've never known what it's like to _____."

"I feel a certain amount of regret regarding the way I _____."

DEBRIEF + REFLECTION

1. What are some losses that are being uncovered? How do you feel you are doing with processing these losses?
2. What do you think grieving well during this season of your life looks like for you?

GOSPEL RESPONSE

In spite of the many demands and pressures of His ministry, Jesus always took time to grieve his losses and the losses of others. He didn't try to spin hardships into something positive nor did He try to cover up how He truly felt. He taught us how to deal with our losses honestly and prayerfully. When His friend Lazarus died, Jesus didn't tell others to get a grip or scold them for lacking faith. Rather, Jesus wept alongside them fully knowing that He would resurrect Lazarus from the dead. It is no coincidence that Jesus' immense compassion for others is directly tied to His characterization as a "man of sorrows" (Isaiah 53:3). Jesus allowed the grief of the world to enter into the depths of His heart. But Jesus ultimately grieved a loss that none of us could truly understand. On the cross, Jesus experienced the greatest loss of having the Father turn His face away in utter rejection. On one hand, Jesus gives us permission to grieve and express grief but because of his work on the cross no matter how unbearable our circumstances might feel we can always grieve with hope. There is hope in the resurrection. Jesus conquered death, darkness, and brokenness. When we grieve there is a sense of loss but in the gospel we have hope that the losses will lead us into new resurrections.

WEEK 7 DEVOTION

Take a few deep breaths. When you are ready, read this passage from Psalm 55:

"Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; hear me and answer me.
My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen on me.
Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me.
I said, 'Oh, that I had the wings of a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest.
I would flee far away and stay in the desert;
I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm.'..."

Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you;
he will never let the righteous be shaken."

When we take the time to grieve well and pay attention to the pain we feel, we experience new changes. Read through some of the changes that may happen through this process and as you pray and work through your own grief today, ask God to allow your grief to transform you in these ways.

- We will have a greater capacity to wait on God and surrender to his will. Grieving breaks something in our fearful self-will that wants to run the universe for God.
- We are kinder and more compassionate. Sadness softens our defense and people find us safe. Absorbing our own allows us to enter the pain of others'.
- We are less covetous, less idolatrous. Life is stripped of its pretense and nonessentials. We are more apt to rid ourselves of the unimportant things in life that others so desperately want.
- We are liberated from having to impress others. We can follow God's plan with a new freedom because we are not as motivated to please people.
- We are able to live more comfortably with uncertainty when it comes to God and His plans.
- We are characterized by a greater humility and brokenness.
- We enjoy a new, vivid appreciation of the sacredness in all of life.
- We have fewer fears and a greater willingness to take risks.
- We sense the reality of heaven in a new way, understanding more fully that we are only aliens and sojourners on earth.
- We have a greater sensitivity for the poor, the widow, the orphan, the marginalized, and the wounded. We can better empathize.
- We are more at home with ourselves and with God.

WEEK 8



PRINCIPLE 6: MAKE INCARNATION YOUR MODEL FOR LOVING WELL

From taking a deep look inside, to exploring our past history, to finding strength in our brokenness, to receiving our gift of limits, to embracing grieving and loss, God's intention is to transform us in order that we might love well. The mark of the Spirit working in our hearts is not by the gifts or successful results we produce but by the way we love. The kind of love God requires us to give is supernatural and it requires the supernatural work of grace in our hearts.

Through the life of Jesus, we see three dynamics of incarnation to love as Jesus loved: entering another's world, holding on to yourself, and hanging between two worlds. We enter another person's world when we learn to listen and to be present with them in the moment. People who love well and enter another person's world make themselves available and fully present. They listen without judgment, validate even when they might not agree, and they seek to understand. Carnation also takes place when we hold onto ourselves. We empathize but we don't lose ourselves in the process. We also learn what it means to hang in between our own lives and be faithful to who God uniquely made us to be while entering another person's world.

As we love others in this way, God changes us and makes us more like His Son. We learn to be an alternative community and experience the kingdom of God here on Earth. We no longer try to "fix" people or arrange the world as we see fit. We build relationships centered around loving others well as Jesus loved us. Living an incarnate life allows us to witness a divine kind of love that is not possible through our own doing.

WEEK 8

WARM-UP

There is a quote by David Augsburger that says, "Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable." As you are assessing, put yourself in the shoes of your spouse, closest friend, or family member and think about how they would rate you as a listener. Check all the statements you can affirm. After, take some time to reflect and process how you listen to others.

- _____ 1. I do not presume to know what another person is trying to communicate.
- _____ 2. I listen more than I speak.
- _____ 3. When people are angry with me, I am able to listen to their side without getting upset.
- _____ 4. I listen not only to what people say but also for their nonverbal cues: body language, tone of voice, and the like.
- _____ 5. I give people my undivided attention when they are talking to me.
- _____ 6. I am able to reflect back and validate another person's feelings with empathy.
- _____ 7. I am aware of my primary defensive mechanisms when I am under stress, such as placating, blaming, problem-solving prematurely, or becoming distracted.
- _____ 8. I am aware of how the family in which I was raised has influenced my present listening style.
- _____ 9. I don't interrupt or listen for openings to get my point across when someone else is speaking.
- _____ 10. I am aware, when listening, of my own personal "ticks" that cause me to get angry, upset, fearful, or nervous.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

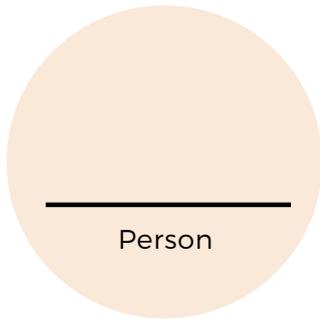
One great example of incarnate love is when Jesus heals the man with leprosy. Let's read that story together:

"When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, 'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.' *Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.* 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy."

Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. The power of this story is not just in Jesus physically healing this man with leprosy. To be a leper in this historical and cultural context is to be shunned, a low-life, and completely isolated from any physical, social, or emotional connection. Christ saw through this man and knew that it wasn't enough to be healed of his physical ailment. He could have easily healed the man by his words alone or with a snap of his fingers. But Jesus knew that there would be no greater way for this man feel the weight of God's love over his life than someone who was willing to touch him and remind him that he is worthy of love and acceptance. Jesus knew that to love this man well and to enter his world meant to reach out his hand and experience a physical connection again.

EXERCISE

Think of someone in your life who you can model Christ's love to in this season of your life. What does it look like to you to love this person well? What would it mean to die to your own preferences and conveniences in order to show Christ's incarnate love to them?



What do you know about this person?

What does it mean to love this person?

DEBRIEF + REFLECTION

1. While doing the exercise, what have you learned about the way you love people in your life?
2. What has this exercise showed you about the way you would like to be loved?

GOSPEL RESPONSE

Even though we know that we are to use incarnation as a model to love others well, at the end of the day we still won't be able to truly incarnate. We are incapable of loving perfectly. Yet even in our imperfect love, Christ loves us perfectly. He modeled incarnating love when he took on flesh, entered our world, and walked in our shoes. He knew we needed his physical presence. We needed his healing touch, warmth, and embrace. And out of his great love for us, he crossed two worlds from heaven to earth to live among us. He placed our sins and imperfections on his shoulders, even if that meant being disconnected from his perfect love and union with the Father, so that we can be loved by a Holy God. Now, we too must also cross into other people's worlds and seek to understand life through their eyes. God still is incarnate today and He can be seen, felt, and heard through the power of His Spirit working through His body, the church.

WEEK 8 DEVOTION



Intercessory Prayer

Simply put, intercessory prayer is prayer for others. An intercessor is one who takes the place of another or pleads another's case. One study Bible defines intercession as "Holy, believing, persevering prayer whereby someone pleads with God on behalf of another or others who desperately need God's intervention." This role of mediator in prayer was prevalent in the Old Testament, in the cases of Abraham, Moses, David, Samuel, Hezekiah, Elijah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel who interceded on behalf of their people. Christ is pictured in the New Testament as the ultimate intercessor. And because of this, all Christian prayer becomes intercession since it is offered to God through and by Christ. Because of Jesus' mediation, we can now intercede in prayer on behalf of other Christians or for the lost, asking God to grant their requests according to His will.

Read James 5:13-16

"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

Take some time to write in your journal and write a few specific names or groups of people who are tugging at your heart. Think about why these specific people are on your mind. Take some time to pray or write out your prayers to God.

WEEK 8 APPLICATION

One of the ways that we can enter another person's world and love them with Christ's love is through listening, validating, and exploring. Ask someone in your life, "What is one thing that has impacted you this week and how did you feel about it?" or consider using these reflective listening tools when in conflict with someone. Engaging in these processes is hard work and takes incredible humility. Think about the following guidelines and afterwards, reflect about how you felt by writing about it in your journal.

Incarnational Listening

When you are the speaker..

1. Speak using "I" statements (rather than "you" statements). In other words, talk about *your own* thoughts, feelings, and desires.
2. Keep your statements brief.
3. Stop to let the other person paraphrase what you've said.
4. Include feelings in your statements.
5. Be honest, clear, direct, and respectful.

As the listener...

1. Give the speaker your full attention (don't think about your rebuttal).
2. Step into the speaker's shoes (feel what they are feeling; then get back out).
3. Avoid judging or interpreting.
4. Reflect back as accurately as you can what you heard them say (paraphrase).
5. When you think they are done ask, "Is there more?"
6. When they are done ask them, "Of everything you shared, what is the most important thing you want me to remember?"

Validation

Validation is not necessarily agreeing with the other person but it can sound like:

- "I can see how you would see it that way."
- "From your perspective that makes sense."
- "I can understand that."
- "That makes sense."

Exploring

Exploring is seeking to understand and genuinely mean it. The goal is to set aside your desire to respond, defend, or correct and be attentive to the other person and what they are going through. It can sound like:

- "Tell me more about that."
- "Can you help me understand?"
- "How did you draw the conclusion?"

WEEK 9



PRINCIPLE 7: SLOW DOWN TO LEAD WITH INTEGRITY

In a city like Los Angeles, the norm for many is to be busy, overscheduled, moving on from activity to activity. If it isn't our jam packed work schedules, it's our inability to say no to hangouts and social events. We know that we should take time to rest but we push it to the back burner thinking that it can happen at a later time. Our key to freedom is a rediscovery of Sabbath keeping as a central spiritual formation practice. Sabbath keeping is about accepting God's invitation to stop, rest, delight, and contemplate Him for a 24 hour period each week.

When we do not prioritize intentional, set-apart time with God we will inevitably be drifted away by the endless distractions and voices. If our work for God does not come out of an overflow from our relationship with God, our work will ultimately be contaminated by our need to validate ourselves through our performance. For some of us, being overly active gives us an excuse to not put in the hard work and effort required to live a life of solitude with God. But when we continue to bury the shadows and strongholds that grip our lives, we will inevitably project them towards the very people we love and cherish. Left unchecked, unrelenting duty can destroy our relationship with Christ and those we love. Slowing down to lead with integrity is a countercultural act of rebellion in our world today. It is a declaration of faith that we ultimately surrender to God in trust rather than live under the cloud of our own delusion that things won't happen unless we do it ourselves. We mutter the words, "I can't take a break because if I do then nothing will get done." Stepping away from the endless demands to be with God, to delight in Him, and to be present in our spiritual journey takes courage and humility. Unless we take time to rest, we cannot enjoy and delight in His presence. It may be difficult to do, but it is worth the cost and we are here to remind one another of this truth.

WEEK 9

WARM-UP

Perhaps in this day and age of instant access, one of the things we've melded together is the urgent vs. the important. When we take a moment to assess, what we may find is that some of the seemingly urgent things to do aren't actually important. A good example of this is Mary and Martha. Martha was distracted from serving, which she thought was important. But Jesus reminds Martha that her sister Mary has chosen what is better, to enjoy His presence. One of the ways we can reflect on what we really believe is important, not just what we think is urgent, is how we spend our time and energy. Take time to write out what you think is most important in your life. Then, map out your week. Go through your day's activities. How do you spend your time? Where does most of your full attention and energy go? Is the majority of your time and energy spent on matters that you deem are most important to your life? Why or why not?

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

Scripture reminds us of the gift of Sabbath. Let's read Isaiah 58:13-14:

"If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, *then you will find your joy in the Lord*, and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Our creator is keenly aware of what we need and invites us to get in the rhythm of habitual stop, rest, delight, and contemplation. In the Bible it is clear that Sabbath is not an option, it is essential to spiritual growth. When is the last time we built into our schedules a slot of time to do nothing but rest? What are we doing to nurture our souls? Some may argue that whatever is unmeasurable is unproductive and yet even from the very beginning of scripture we see a God who works from a place of rest. Sabbath is a bold step of faith into freedom. It allows us to not be defined by our work, others' expectations of ourselves, or our need to prove our worth. To incorporate Sabbath as a key spiritual formation practice that forces us to remember that God is sovereign and He is the one who provides for our every need.

EXERCISE

Scazzero breaks down the practice of keeping Sabbath into four essential parts: stop, rest, delight, and contemplate. The way in which we incorporate these four aspects of keeping Sabbath will look different from person to person depending on one's personality, life stage, preferences and so on. Take some time to think about what stopping, resting, delighting, and contemplating will look like in your life.

Stop: How can you insert intentional time to pause?

Rest: How do you recharge?

Delight: What brings you joy and reminds you of God's goodness?

Contemplate: How do you meditate and reflect on God?

DEBRIEF + REFLECTION

1. What challenges keep you from slowing down your life to be with God and caring for yourself in a healthy manner as Jesus did?
2. Which of the 4 aspects of Sabbath keeping do you struggle with the most? What is one way you can incorporate that particular aspect into your daily routine starting this week?

GOSPEL RESPONSE

From the very beginning, we see a relationship between work and rest. God, in His perfection, inserted rest in the creation story to model for us what a healthy rhythm of life is like. But when sin entered the world, this perfect balance deteriorated. As Tim Keller writes, "But the relationship between work and rest operates at a deeper level as well. All of us are haunted by the work under the work- that need to prove and save ourselves, to gain a sense of worth and identity. But if we can experience gospel-rest in our hearts, if we can be free from the need to earn our salvation through our work, we will have a deep reservoir of refreshment that continually rejuvenates us, restores our perspective, and renews our passion." Our salvation is not found in what we can do for God but in the finished work of Christ. We are freed of the bondages of approval, expectation, or materialism and can enjoy our lives and the freedom that is found in the gospel. Sabbath, rest, and slowing down points to a hope that we have in the world that is to come.

WEEK 9 DEVOTION



Take a few deep breaths and close your eyes if needed. Spend some time in solitude and silence. When you feel ready, read Psalm 62: 5-8.

"Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.
My salvation and my honor depend on God;
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.
Trust in him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge."

Reflect on one or two simple decisions you can make toward taking a first step to slow down your life and create a rhythm of work and rest. What does rest look like to you? Take some time to implement this today and come back to this devotion to reflect on your time of rest.

Journal your reflections. What is something you realized in your time of rest? Was there something you learned about God, yourself, or others? Afterwards, read Psalm 62:5-8 once again.

"Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.
My salvation and my honor depend on God;
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.
Trust in him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge."

CONCLUSION



By now, hopefully our eyes have been open to a new way of looking into our emotional and spiritual health. This guide and these practices are simply tools in our tool kit to help us unfold a lifelong process of living a fruitful and abundant life with God and with neighbor. We have experienced how true discipleship, spiritual growth and maturity is challenging and takes intentionality. It requires us to look at ourselves for who we really are and put to death the destructive thoughts and behaviors that put a strain in our relationship with Christ. This process of spiritual growth and our journeying through this life with Christ while living in a broken world is messy. It requires a type of surrender that can leave us feeling completely bare. However, facing the truth of our reality and reminding ourselves of the ultimate truth of the gospel bears new life and a renewed sense of freedom. We have a God who knows us intimately and loves us unconditionally. He meets us in our lowest lows and rejoices in our highest highs. He also surrounds us with a community that manifests His love for us and reminds us that we are never left to do this work on our own. Although this series is coming to an end, let's continue to ask God to grant us the courage and strength to take the steps He sets before us trusting that the path ultimately leads us to Him.