



BECOMING

THE PEOPLE OF GOD



CENTRAL
PENINSULA
CHURCH

SESSION 1: THE INVITATION IS APPRENTICESHIP

Main Text:

Mark 12:28-34
Proverbs 4:23

Take Home Exercise:

Habit Audit

OPENING EXERCISE (5 Minutes)

Lead your group through the below exercise:

Gather together as a community group in a comfortable setting, around a table, on a couch, on the living room floor, etc. Have someone lead a prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to guide this opening time of silence together and your time together as a group. Why start with silence? In our overcrowded, busy world, silence (even if only for a few minutes) cuts through the noise and allows space to calm your mind and heart before God.

Spend a minute or two in silence together. Instruct your group, “As you sit in silence, invite the Holy Spirit to quiet your heart and mind from distractions. Ask God if there is anything he would like to share with you during this time.”

Close this group time of silence with a prayer of gratitude, thanking God for the opportunity to be together.

OPENING DISCUSSION (15 Minutes)

After spending a few minutes catching up, watch and discuss this overview video.

[Watch the Overview Video with Kevin Sneed at cpc.org/resources.](https://cpc.org/resources)

- What are your hopes for this community group as we journey together?

Read this Overview

What we envision when thinking about discipleship will dramatically shape how we go about being disciples of Jesus. The announcement of the availability of the Kingdom of God was immediately followed by the call to “follow” him. It was an invitation to be present to Jesus and, over time, learn to participate with him in the work he was about. Put simply, to learn a life oriented around the Kingdom of God.

This is the first invitation of Jesus—to be disciples. Not to take a theology class, not to pass a test of doctrine, but to simply follow him, to become a disciple of Jesus. A good modern equivalent to the term disciple is the term apprentice. As followers of Jesus, we are entering into a life of apprenticeship to Jesus, learning to live a life oriented around the Kingdom of God.

Read and discuss the following quote together.

“As Jesus’s disciple, I am his apprentice in kingdom living. I am learning from him how to lead my life in the kingdom of the heavens as he would lead my life if he were I...Being his apprentice is, therefore, not a matter of special ‘religious’ activities but an orientation and quality of my entire existence...Living as Jesus’s disciple, I am learning from him how to lead my life in the kingdom of the heavens everywhere I am, in every activity I engage in.”
Dallas Willard, *Renewing the Christian Mind*, 280-281

- What comes to mind when you hear the word apprentice?
- How does the idea that a disciple is an apprentice shape or re-shape your understanding of what it means to follow Jesus?
- Think back to the first sermon in the series. What are the two goals of an apprentice of Jesus? (Answer: Presence to Jesus and Participation with Jesus) How do we go about accomplishing these goals today?

STUDY TOGETHER (20 Minutes)

Lead the below study and discussion for your group. You can either read it in its entirety or put it in your own words.

The life of an apprentice of Jesus is about being transformed from the inside out. It is opening our lives up to the work of the Holy Spirit and allowing our inner life (our character) to be slowly transformed into the inner life of Jesus. This is what the New Testament often calls “Christlikeness.” It is about learning to love Jesus with every dimension of our being.

In Mark 12, Jesus is questioned about what is the most important commandment of all the commandments. His answer is a profound explanation for the life of an apprentice of Jesus. Have someone read Mark 12:28-34 aloud to the group.

Jesus’ response to the man was to learn how to love God with every dimension of our being (this is a literal comment, not a comment of hyperbole). To take the command of Jesus seriously in Mark 12, we must take on a way of life that enables the whole of who we are to transform our innermost loves. To do so, we must understand how each dimension of our lives (heart, soul, mind, strength, and neighbor) operates in the life of an apprentice to Jesus and how the Spirit intends to transform our loves.

Watch this brief video explaining how we go about opening our lives up to the work of the Spirit to transform our loves.

Watch The Dimensions of the Human Self Video with Kevin Sneed at cpc.org/resources.

What we love is not a matter of random happenstance but is cultivated by the habits and rhythms of our daily lives. This process happens whether we are aware or unaware. To transform what we love, we must partner with the Holy Spirit to transform



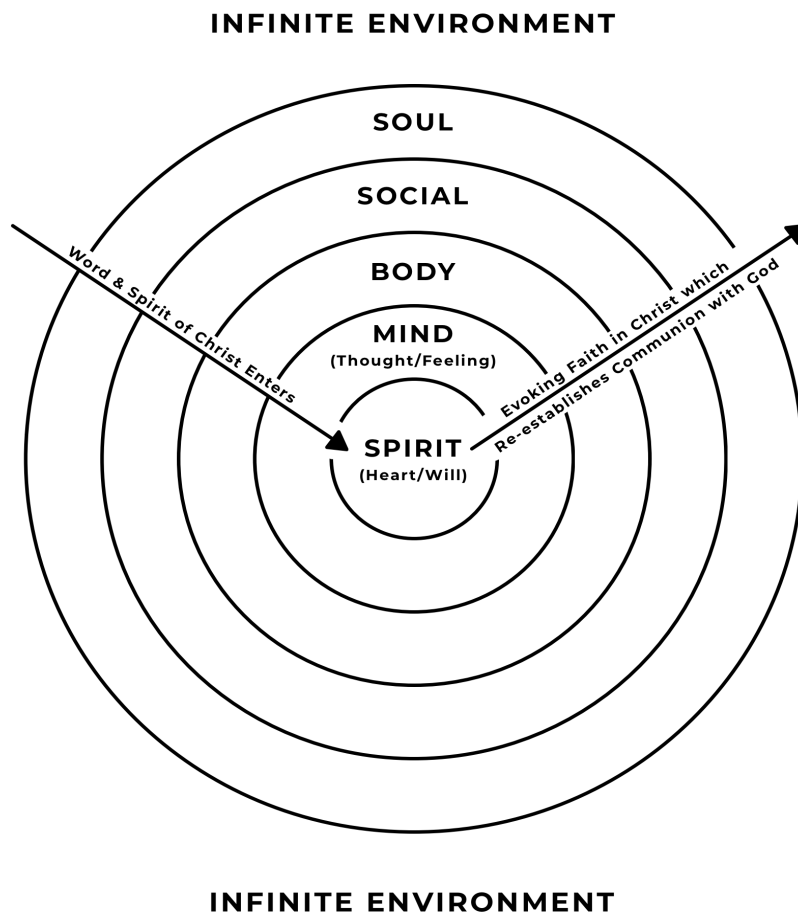
our inward loves, which cannot be done by direct effort. While I cannot change my loves by direct effort, I can change the patterns of my life to allow the Holy Spirit access to my heart and bring about transformation. Our work in apprenticeship is learning to arrange the dimensions of our life in a way that enables the Holy Spirit to freely enter our lives and slowly transform who we are from the inside out.

Consider this example. A sailboat floating in the middle of an ocean cannot move without wind. It also cannot move without the sails set to catch the wind. The captain of the boat cannot make the wind blow (nor is it their job to make the wind), but they can prepare the sails to catch the wind. Our hearts are the boat; the Holy Spirit is the wind, and the elements of the boat (sails, rudder, etc.) are the dimensions of our lives. Our task is the same as the captain's, to organize the dimensions of the sailboat (set the sails, aim the rudder, etc.) to catch the wind when it blows. But the wind shouldn't be considered a random act, for as certain as the wind blows, so too we can be certain the Holy Spirit will also move.

As a group, revisit Willard's diagram of "The Dimensions of the Human Self" from the video you watched (see diagram below). As you review the diagram, what would it look like for you to organize and prepare the dimensions of the self as a way of creating space for the Spirit to transform your heart?

For example, we create space for the Holy Spirit in our social dimension by living intentionally into Christian community (like this group), which enables the Holy Spirit to flow more freely and opens our heart up to the Spirit's work. We create space in our minds through the habit of silence and solitude with God. As we sit in silence, we force ourselves to slow down and direct our thoughts and feelings toward God. This habit, over time, creates space for the Spirit to guide, instruct, and transform our spirit (heart/will).

- How does this diagram deepen or challenge your understanding of spiritual formation?



Taken from Dallas Willard's *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*

- What might it look like to intentionally create space in the various dimensions of your life so you can be open to the transformative work of the Holy Spirit?

Augustine famously said, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you.” The author of Proverbs reminds us, “*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it*” (Proverbs 4:23). Our lives are oriented and motivated by our loves and longings—our wants, desires, and a vision of the “good life.” These are shaped, formed, and embedded into us through our everyday habits, whether those habits are intentional or unintentional. Put differently, the things we do regularly, do something to us.

- Consider the rhythms and habits of your typical day (intentional and unintentional). How do those habits shape who you are now, and who you are becoming?
- Giving yourself immense grace, consider again the rhythms and habits of your typical day. How do these habits shape you more (or less) into Christlikeness?

Between now and your group’s next gathering, you will have the opportunity to take a deep look at the regular habits and rhythms shaping who you are. See page six for instructions on what each group member will do before you gather again.

CLOSING EXERCISE (10 Minutes) | *LECTIO DIVINA* (optional)

To close, spend the next ten minutes allowing the Spirit to speak to and guide you as you open God’s Word together through *Lectio Divina*, a traditional Christian practice of scripture reading, meditation, and prayer.

Lectio Divina, or “divine reading,” enables us to intentionally create space for engaging with God’s Word in a slow, deep, and prayerful way. The goal of *Lectio Divina* is not to interpret the text but to prayerfully meet God in the text. There are generally four steps, or movements, to *Lectio Divina*: reading (*lectio*), meditation (*meditatio*), prayer (*oratio*), and contemplation (*contemplatio*).

Slowly move through each of the four steps (detailed below) as you engage with **Mark 10:17-31** as a group. Before you do, spend a moment in prayer, inviting and allowing the Holy Spirit to speak into your lives.

Read (*Lectio*) - 4 Minutes

Select three people from the group to take a turn in slowly reading Mark 10:17-31 aloud. As the text is read twice, the other group members can close their eyes, or they may choose to follow along as they listen. Pay close attention to what words and ideas draw your attention in unique ways.

Meditate (*Meditatio*) - 2 Minutes

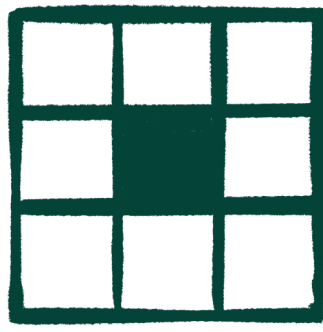
Sit quietly for two minutes with the text in front of you. Take this time to think about and reflect on the passage. Which words or phrases resonate with your heart, your season of life, or your current experience at this moment? Are there any images that come to mind? Who might you find yourself identifying with in this passage? Ask God why these particular words or phrases stood out to you.

Pray (*Oratio*) - 2 Minutes

Spend time together in prayer. Dialogue with God about your experience of reading this passage, and spend time praying through and thanking God for the words, phrases, and images He brought to mind.

Contemplate (*Contemplatio*) - 2 Minutes

Invite the third person to read the text aloud one more time. Then spend two more minutes in silence



to rest in God's presence and listen for his voice.

Debrief this experience with Lectio Divina together as a group.

- What stood out to you as you heard and reflected on this passage of scripture?
- How might the Holy Spirit have guided you and spoken to you during this time?
- What might he be revealing about your loves and longings?

TAKE-HOME EXERCISE

Read through the below exercise that each individual will do before your next gathering. Work through any questions people may have on what they are to do. Again it is about practice (not perfection). Give yourselves grace.

To reorient the loves and longings of our hearts toward Jesus, we need first to become aware of the habits, intentional or unintentional, that are currently forming us. Then we can consider how we might replace those habits with habits that will allow us to create space for the work of the Spirit.

Below is a practice that everyone in your group can try out before the next meeting. Spend a few minutes reading the instructions aloud with the group and discuss any questions that may arise:

Between now and our next gathering, you will perform a **habit audit**. The goal is to better understand your regular rhythms and patterns throughout your day and then ask questions about how those habits are forming you.

The basic concept is simple. Carry a small notebook with you, or open a new note on your phone and create a running log of all the ways you spend your time throughout the day. Take particular note of the things to which you commit time and energy.

Entries into this sort of log could look something like the following:

- 30 minutes making and enjoying my coffee
- 25 minutes on social media
- 1 hour working out
- 2.5 hours watching TV
- 45 minutes of reading

This can be done throughout the day or in reflection at the end of your day. Without judgment, try to capture the habits and rhythms that shape a regular week. Be as precise as you want to be without overburdening yourself. The purpose of this habit audit is to gain a good perspective on the regular habits and rhythms of your days.

At our next gathering, we will debrief, make observations, and prayerfully consider ways to integrate change as we move forward together as a group.

CLOSE IN PRAYER (2 minutes)

Together, slowly read the below prayer. Invite God to reveal, through the habit audit, the ways your loves and longings have been forming your deepest loves. Close by thanking God for your time together, and pray for each other's upcoming week.

"Gracious and Holy Father, please give me: intellect to understand you, reason to discern you, diligence to seek you, wisdom to find you, a spirit to know you, a heart to meditate upon you, ears to hear you, eyes to see you, a tongue to proclaim you, a way of life pleasing to you, patience to wait for you, and perseverance to look for you. Grant me a perfect end, your holy presence, a blessed resurrection, and life everlasting. Amen." Benedict of Nursia, Book of Common Prayer

SESSION 2: ORGANIZING THE LIFE OF AN APPRENTICE

Main Text:

Luke 6:43-49

Take Home Exercise:

Prayer of Examen

OPENING EXERCISE (5 Minutes)

Lead your group through the below exercise.

Gather together as a community group in a comfortable setting, around a table, on a couch, on the living room floor, etc. Have someone lead a prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to guide this opening time of silence together and your time together as a group. Why start with silence? In our overcrowded, busy world, silence (even if only for a few minutes) cuts through the noise and allows space to calm our mind and heart before God.

Spend a minute or two in silence together. Instruct your group, “As you sit in silence, invite the Holy Spirit to quiet your heart and mind from distractions. Ask God if there is anything he would like to share with you during this time.”

Close this group time of silence with a prayer of gratitude, thanking God for the opportunity to be together.

OPENING DISCUSSION (20 Minutes)

Spend a few minutes debriefing the take-home exercise from your last gathering.

Last week you were encouraged to intentionally notice and record or “audit” the ways you spend your time throughout the day. Review the entries in your habit journal since the last time you gathered, and take some time as a group to debrief your experience with the habit audit. Encourage your group members to give themselves and one another immense grace as you discuss the following questions:

- What habits and rhythms do you spend the most time and energy on?
- What habits have been shaping you unintentionally that you were not aware of? What habits encouraged you?
- What do your current daily/weekly rhythms reveal about what is important to you?
- Do you sense God inviting you to change or swap out any particular habit(s)?

Spend a few minutes debriefing the teachings from the past few weeks.

- In week three of our series, Dan taught about the nature and importance of spiritual formation in community. How do you consider this community group to be a community centered around spiritual formation?

- In what ways does community help in the process of spiritual formation? In what ways has this community helped in your spiritual formation?

Discuss the following quote together:

“Corporate spirituality is life in the body of Christ, not as a metaphor but the living reality of the presence of Christ in the community of faith. As individual cells of the body of Christ, we each have unique gifts of temperament preference, personality, and character that exist for the welfare of the entire body. We are to be the means of God’s grace to the other cells in the body and in turn receive from our companion cells what God graces to us through them.” M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey*, 181

- How have you experienced the uniqueness of others or the diversity in the body of Christ as a gift?

- What might it look like for you to be a “means of God’s grace to the other cells in the body”? What might it look like to position yourself to receive this from others?

STUDY TOGETHER (20 Minutes)

Lead the below study and discussion for your group. You can either read it in its entirety, or put it in your own words.

As we begin the study today, watch this video to review what a disciple/apprentice of Jesus is.

Watch The Mathetes Video with Brandon Pasion at cpc.org/resources.

To be a disciple of Jesus is to apprentice under his guidance, learning to become the kind of person whose inner character is slowly becoming like the inner character of Jesus. Out of this internal transformation we begin to live our own lives in the same way Jesus would live our lives if he were us.

The idea that our lives flow from our inward character is what Jesus often taught. Have someone read Luke 6:43-49 aloud to the group.

At the end of Luke’s account of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus draws upon two interconnected metaphors to help us understand life as an apprentice to Jesus. The first is the relation between a tree and its fruit, and the second is between builders and the foundation they build upon. Let’s consider each in turn.

An apple tree does nothing but produce apples. It cannot produce figs or grapes because it is not that kind of tree. The invitation is for us to consider what fruit is produced by the essence of our lives, which helps us understand who we are becoming. In verse 45, Jesus elaborates the meaning of this metaphor, “A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart...” We live from our hearts. Or said differently, out of the overflow of our hearts, our life flows. This is why the task of the apprentice of Jesus is to go about the transformative work of aligning our inner life with Christ’s inner life. Or, in Paul’s words, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20a).



The apprentice of Jesus is the one who organizes their life around

partnering with the Holy Spirit in transforming his/her inner life into Christ's. To do this, we center around the practices in the teachings of Jesus. Here Jesus' second metaphor helps. The person who puts his teachings into practice is the one who builds their house on a firm foundation; in this way, they can weather the storms that come by rooting themselves into the foundation of Jesus.

- Jesus essentially says that we are what we say and do even when it's hard to admit. Are there ways in your apprenticeship to Jesus that you lean on your intentions instead of your actions? Why is this so dangerous or inappropriate?

The things we do, form us. In some sense, we are the collection of a thousand decisions, habits, and rhythms that shape our lives. As we deepen our apprenticeship to Jesus, we begin to understand how to shape those decisions, habits, and rhythms in ways that will bring us closer into conformity to Christ. Therefore, the old cliché question, "What would Jesus do?" is a good one. However, a better question for us to consider is, "What would Jesus do if he were me?" If Jesus had my job, personality, skill set, family history, etc., how would Jesus lead my life?

Our apprenticeship is not calling us to live Jesus' life; he already lived that life and did a good job. But rather to live our very lives with the character of Jesus guiding our living. We can only do this through a transformation of our inward disposition into Christlikeness by organizing our lives as Jesus would organize our life if he were us.

- What does it mean/look like to hear Jesus' words and put them into practice?
- Practice implies that we won't be perfect in carrying out Jesus' commands. But it also implies that growth is possible. Have you ever considered the idea of "practicing" Jesus' teachings? What encouragement and challenge do you take from Jesus calling us to put his teachings into practice?

One of the historic ways the church has learned to organize its life around following Jesus is through the use of a "rule of life." Watch this video about a rule of life and discuss the questions below.

Watch the Rule Of Life Video with Rachel Almeida at cpc.org/resources.

As evidenced by the habit audit, we each already have a rule of life. In other words, we all have a way we currently live and order our lives, intentionally or unintentionally, that is reflected in our daily choices, rhythms, and routines. Jesus' invitation to apprenticeship is an invitation to reorganize the whole of our lives around him. To remain in Jesus and keep him at the center of all that we do, we must intentionally order our ordinary days around connection to him. If we desire to be like Jesus, and if our habits are shaping us into the kind of people we are becoming, we need a deliberate plan, or rule of life, for our growth in Christlikeness.

A rule of life is a set of habits we seek to integrate personally and communally into the rhythm of our regular lives to consciously organize our lives around the transformative work of the Holy Spirit. These habits create space for us to be present to God and allow the Spirit to guide us and bring change in our lives. A rule of life is to an apprentice of Jesus what a trellis or lattice is to a vine. The trellis does not bring about growth; it simply lifts the vine off of the ground so the vine can flourish and bear fruit. In the same way, a rule of life is simply a tool that frees us to flourish in our relationship with Jesus.

- What positive or negative connotations does the word rule have for you?
- How does the process of intentionally crafting a rule of life seem to you—exciting, overwhelming, constricting, or something else?
- What are the "have to's" in this current season of life that impact how you structure your schedule (e.g., caring for children or aging parents, work, commitments, etc.)?
- What might God be inviting you into in this season of life?

- What habits or rhythms, currently or in the past, have helped you to be present with God? How might you incorporate these into your rule of life?

CLOSING EXERCISE (10 Minutes) - PRAYER OF EXAMEN (Optional)

Lead your group through the below exercise. Feel free to read it straight through as a guide or change it into your own words for your group setting.

To close, create some space, ten minutes or so, for God to speak into your lives and remind you of how he was present during this last week by practicing the Prayer of Examen. The Prayer of Examen, also known as the “examination of consciousness,” is an exercise of active remembering. It is a spiritual habit that enables us to become increasingly aware of God’s presence and the Holy Spirit’s movement in our daily lives. The goal of the Examen is for us to become more aware of our mental state, body responses, habits, and heart posture and bring these, both the beautiful and the challenging, into our ongoing dialogue with God.

As a group, you will use four movements of the Prayer of Examen (Replay, Rejoice, Repent, and Resolve) to reflect on the past week. This exercise has been adapted from Practicing the Way (practicingtheway.org).

Before you begin, give your group time to settle and set aside distractions. Then offer this time to God in prayer, inviting him to guide this practice. Slowly walk through each of the four steps as a group. Remember and encourage your group that this is merely a guide, not a prescription. The purpose of this time is to increase awareness and sensitivity, not to finish or accomplish a task.

Replay - What happened this week? (2 Minutes)

Think back over your last week. Allow the days to play back in your mind as if they are scenes from a movie. Actively think through the events from the week, the interactions with people, moments of stress, and grace. Allow your mind to wander the situations you’ve been in and to notice details. Avoid justifying or rationalizing; the intent is to observe and remember.

Rejoice - Where did I experience grace this week? Where was I particularly aware of God’s presence? (2 Minutes)

Begin to review those moments from your week again but through the lens of recognizing God’s movement and presence.

Which feeling, in particular, was activated most strongly? Give a name to those particular feelings: joy, depression, anger, delight, contentment, hope, shame, regret, confusion, disgust, compassion, doubt, gratitude, etc.

The main goal of movement two is noticing your strongest affective reactions to particular things and wondering with God about those reactions.

“Why did I feel that so strongly?”

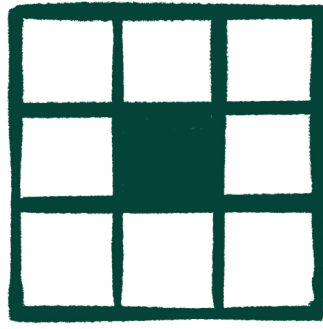
“Does this strong reaction reveal my faith in God or a lack of it?”

As a group, briefly share how God “showed up” during this week and how you experienced his grace.

Repent - Where did I feel emotional pain this week? Where did I sin? (2 Minutes)

Take one of those strong emotive experiences from your week and offer it to God. Be honest with Jesus about what “caused” this strong affective response, and try to accurately name which particular feeling you felt.

If you cannot identify a cause, ask God to reveal what may be the source. Be open to confronting your shadow side and your culpability.



Take some time to share one of the strong affections you experienced this past week.

Resolve - How might I live differently this week, if need be? (2 Minutes)

Finally, ask God to help change those patterns or experiences that brought pain and sin in your life. You may need to seek forgiveness, ask for direction, share a concern, express gratitude, or resolve to make changes and move forward. Allow your observations to guide your responses. Communicate with God about how you want to live differently.

TAKE-HOME EXERCISE (5 Minutes)

The Take-Home exercise this week is the Prayer of Examen that you just completed as a group. Talk through the instructions on how to use this prayer and work through any questions people may have on what they are to do. Remind your group that this prayer is just a tool to commune with God, don't get too caught up in details.

Below are the same instructions for the shared exercise for the Prayer of Examen. The goal this week is to use this same exercise in your time with Jesus.

At the start or end of your day, depending on what best fits your preference, schedule, and season of life, spend five or ten minutes practicing the Prayer of Examen. Try this three or four times a week, or even daily, over the next two weeks. The goal of this practice is to become more aware of God's presence in our lives and be open and attentive to the ways that the Spirit might guide us and invite us to adopt a more intentional rule of life.

The four movements described below are the same ones we just prayed through as a group but have been slightly adapted so you can reflect on one day, or 24-hour period, instead of a whole week. Pray through each movement at your own pace, feeling the freedom to spend more time, or even the whole time, in a particular movement as needed.

Replay - What happened today? (1-2 Minutes)

Think back over the last day. Allow the last 24 hours to playback in your mind as if they are scenes from a movie. Actively think through the events from the day, the interactions with people, moments of stress, and grace. Allow your mind to wander over the situations you've been in and to notice the details. Avoid justifying or rationalizing; the intent is to observe and remember.

Rejoice - Where did I experience grace today? Where was I particularly aware of God's presence? (1-3 Minutes)

Begin to review those moments from your day again but through the lens of recognizing God's movement and presence.

Which feeling, in particular, was activated most strongly? Give a name to those particular feelings: joy, depression, anger, delight, contentment, hope, shame, regret, confusion, disgust, compassion, doubt, gratitude, etc. Spend time wondering with God about those reactions:

"Why did I feel that so strongly?"

"Does this strong reaction reveal my faith in God or a lack of it?"

Repent - Where did I feel emotional pain today? Where did I sin? (1-2 Minutes)

Take one of those strong emotive experiences from your day and offer it to God. Be honest with Jesus about what "caused" this strong affective response, and try to name accurately which particular feeling you felt.

If you cannot identify a cause, ask God to reveal what may be the source. Be open to confronting your shadow side and your culpability.

Resolve - How might I live differently today if need be? (1-3 Minutes)

Finally, ask God to help change those patterns or experiences that brought pain and sin in your life.

You may need to seek forgiveness, ask for direction, share a concern, express gratitude, or resolve to make changes and move forward. Allow your observations to guide your responses. Communicate with God about how you want to live differently.

CLOSE IN PRAYER (2 Minutes)

As you close, have one person in the group slowly read through The Message translation of Matthew 11:28-30 aloud.

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

Invite God to continue to speak to you and guide you this week as you remain in him and rest in him. Ask him to help you intentionally carve out time and space to be with him and enjoy his presence this week. Thank God for the time together, and pray for each other's upcoming week.