



SOJOURN SPRING BRANCH

# PRAYER GROUP PRIMER



A Four Session Primer  
To Start a Prayer Group

# PRAYER GROUP PRIMER

*A Prayer Group is a three person gender-specific group within the Neighborhood Parish who gets together twice a month to confess sin to one another by way of prayer, confession, and assurance.*

## **Ideally:**

-Prayer Groups are highly encouraged for the spiritual growth of each member of Sojourn.

Prayer Groups are made up of 3-5 men/women. They are gender-specific. For accountability purposes, they are made up of at least 3 members.

Prayer Groups meet for 60-90 minutes each time they get together.

Prayer Groups meet twice a month. Prayer Groups do not replace covenant members' expectation to participate in their weekly parish gathering.

Prayer Groups can meet in a home, coffee shop, park, church building, etc.

Prayer Groups can meet before their members' workday, right after the workday, a late night, a weekend breakfast, a weekend lunch, dinner, etc.

Prayer Groups spend time 1) praying, 2) confessing, and 3) assuring.

Prayer Groups are reserved for parish members, while our parish gatherings are for anyone to attend.

Prayer Groups will rest from officially meeting in June and December.

# **SESSION 1**

## **AN INTRODUCTION TO PRAYER GROUPS**

Over these next four Prayer Group Gatherings, you will be going through this primer together with your Prayer Group. As you do so, you will learn the purpose, structure, rhythms, and values of Prayer Groups. Please read through this document aloud together and participate in the discussion questions as they arise. It is the prayer of your pastor that this group becomes a blessing to our covenant members as we grow together in our love for Christ and one another.

### **What Are Prayer Groups?**

Prayer Groups are where the people who make Sojourn Spring Branch connect deeply with one another to see God bring about renewal, humility, assurance, and revival in all aspects of our lives. After all, we serve a God who is in the business of making all things new and reviving us to live abundant lives in Him. Prayer Groups are where we intimately engage with God's work in our own lives, our brothers' and sisters' lives, and prepare to engage with our neighborhood.

In essence, Prayer Groups are smaller groups within Neighborhood Parishes which exist to see the renewing power of God's gospel saturate our lives, our church, and our neighborhood through the three primary rhythms: Share, Listen, and Apply.

WE SHARE, LISTEN, AND APPLY  
BY PRAYING, CONFESSING,  
AND ASSURING ONE  
ANOTHER.

## **In Prayer Groups, we will:**

**Share** | Share the details of our lives as a form of confession in trust and vulnerability, being assured with the pardon God gives by His Holy Spirit in the light of brotherhood and sisterhood.

**Listen** | Listen actively and lovingly to the stories, confessions, and expressed needs of our brothers or sisters. We will listen with love and patience as God brings about revival in their lives.

**Apply** | Apply the Gospel to one another's lives faithfully in accordance with the Scriptures so that we might all participate more fully in God's renewal of all things.

## **Why Are Prayer Groups Necessary at Sojourn Spring Branch?**

At Sojourn Spring Branch, our mission statement is simple: *We exist to reconcile our neighbors to God and one another.*

In other words, God, in His mission of reconciliation is renewing all things, and we are obediently and joyfully joining him in that work (Rev 21:5; 2 Cor 5:17-21). We want to see our neighbors saved and renewed by the grace of God. We want to see our city renewed through a revival. We want to see renewal in relationships, systems, structures, companies, families, hearts, minds, and living rooms. We desire to see assured children of God confidently and with humility, pray to the God who renews and revives. So, we hope to spend time with a few people every few weeks to pray together.

Our vision for fulfilling this mission is also simple:

*We will make disciples, multiply parishes, and plant churches.*

Sojourn's vision is all about multiplication because God's people have always been about multiplication (Gen 1:28). We desire to be a church made up of disciples who make disciples. We want to be a church made up of neighborhood parishes which produce more neighborhood parishes. And, we ultimately want to be a church which plants more churches.

With multiplication always in our sight, the Church is unquestionably called to be a people who focus much of their time, energy, and devotion outwardly. We are to engage thoughtfully with our neighbors and our culture so that the good news of Christ might be made known (Jn 17:15-19).

Even so, the Bible is overwhelming in its call for God's people to take time to look inwardly in self-reflection and familial care (Eph 5:1-21). The Scriptures call us to confess sin to one another, share our needs, encourage one another, pray for one another, walk in unity and love with one another, and challenge one another (James 5:13-20). We are called to watch out for one another's souls, expose our brother's or sister's sin, and to exhort one another to remain faithful in all aspects of our lives. Moreover, the Bible continually warns the people of God not to forget or forsake the gospel that they have believed in (Gal 1:6-9; Heb 3:12-19).

So, Prayer Groups exist to give Covenant Members a time and a space to pour deeply into one another and to examine themselves in light of God's Word. Prayer Groups will provide us with more freedom to be flexible and outsider-focused in our weekly Parish Gatherings. We will also become more effective in ministry as we grow in holiness, knowledge, and maturity.

This does not mean that we will never have a deep conversation or that we will not have scripture reading in Parish Gatherings. It simply means that we will not be relying on the Parish Gathering as a one-stop shop for outreach, evangelism, confession, repentance, prayer, study, and sharing. We will refocus on the rhythms of Eating, Sharing, and Praying together at weekly Parish Gatherings with a specific bent toward hospitality and our guests.

Therefore, we will commit to the historical, Biblical, and healthy rhythms of God's Church through Sharing our lives, Listening to one another, and Applying the Word of God to ourselves and each other. Prayer Groups will provide a space and a time to give attention to those aspects of our life together. As we commit to the vision of Prayer Groups, we will grow. And, as we grow, we will increasingly find joy in Christ, and more faithfully share Him with others. The

result will be the goal we established at the beginning: *disciples will be made, more parishes will be multiplied, and more churches will be planted by God's grace.*

### **What is the Hope For Prayer Groups?**

- \* Prayer Groups are a relational outlet which helps the Christian to glorify God through a life of ministry, pursuing holiness, and enjoying the good news of God through His Word.
- \* Prayer Groups are a place in which the Christian's sins are confessed honestly and proclaimed as forgiven through the work of Christ.
- \* Prayer Groups are a place in which the Christian is talking about God's Word, and the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, and reading Scripture.
- \* Prayer Groups are a place in which the Christian is growing in an ability to communicate the love of God to others through the explicit gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ.

In sum: Prayer Groups should foster love for God and neighbor, which will lead to lives marked by obedience and disciple-making.

PRAYER GROUPS SHOULD  
FOSTER **LOVE FOR GOD AND  
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MAKING.**

## **How Will Prayer Groups Be Organized?**

1. How many people will be in a Prayer Group?

3-5 Parishioners of the same gender.

2. How Frequently will Prayer Groups Gather?

Twice per month, or every other week. Times and locations are up to the discretion and agreement of each group. (Take in consideration your parish gathering day and time and other rhythms our church has like First Wednesday Prayer.)

3. How long should a Prayer Group Gathering last?

Generally, between 60 and 90 minutes. We want to value one another's time and schedules without rushing a vital rhythm and process.

4. What if our Prayer Group grows larger than five people?

Just as we plan for multiplication in growing neighborhood parishes to make room for more newcomers, and to reach more of our neighborhood, so should we plan for multiplication with our Prayer Groups.

## **Prayer Group Values**

Just as the three rhythms of Prayer Groups (Share, Listen, Apply) define what we will do, three primary values will mold how we will engage with Prayer Groups. These Values are listed and described below:

### **1. Simple, but not Shallow.**

We want Prayer Groups to have a profound simplicity, most clearly expressed in the three simple rhythms. However, we do not equate the simplicity of sharing, listening, and applying with shallow relationships. Committing to these rhythms will lead to relational depth with one another and with God through his Word and his people.

### **2. Efficient, but Unhurried.**

Prayer Group Gatherings aren't the venue for discussing sports, movies, and new music, even though those are all delightful things to consider. We must

value one another's time and give our attention to God's work of revival through prayer. Nor will we hurry one another. Growth is a process, and processes take time. So, we will be good stewards of our time together while simultaneously being selfless with our time.

### **3. Safe, but Uncompromising.**

Prayer Groups must be a safe place to be vulnerable and honest. But, they are not a place in which we respond to our brother's or sister's sin with compromising attitudes. While sin should always be met with grace. To do so, we must commit to applying God's Word faithfully. Further, some confessions and situations will have to be shared with others outside the Prayer Group for revival to take place. This must always be handled delicately and communicated clearly.

### **Discuss (5 minutes)**

Take some time to discuss what your hopes are for your Prayer Group by asking these questions:

1. How do you think the three values listed above will help us focus on revival?
2. What are some ways that you are hoping to grow through this focused action of prayer?
3. How will the Prayer Group help us to make disciples?

### **Group Assignment (5 minutes)**

Take 5 minutes to find a regular time and location that works for everyone in the group so that your Prayer Group can have consistency in gathering. Consistency in gatherings and individual attendance are paramount to seeing God use the rhythms of Sharing, Listening, and Applying in our hopes of experiencing revival.

### **Pray (20 mins)**

Every time a Prayer Group meets, they will start by praying in a focused way. This consists of being silent before the Lord, reading a Bible passage, meditating on it, praying the passage, contemplating what God says through His word, and committing to live out the text.



This ancient spiritual devotion is known as Lectio Divina, where we see the Scriptures as holy and we read them in such a way that we meditate and contemplate on them. The following are the labels in Latin that each movement has: Silencio, Lectio, Meditatio, Oratio, Contemplatio, and Incarnatio.

Spend the last 20 minutes doing Lectio Divina on Psalm 1 with this framework. The Coordinator leads this part for the Prayer Group by timing it and transitioning to each section:

*Silencio (1 min) || “Prepare yourself to read this text devotionally. From control to receptivity, from information to formation, from observation to obedience, silence yourself before the Lord.”*

*Lectio (2 mins) || “Let’s read Psalm 1 aloud slowly at least twice.”*

*Meditatio (5 mins) || “Going back to silence, think carefully on the text. What are some words or phrases that are being highlighted for you? Please share when you’re ready.”*

*Oratio (5 mins) || “Take turns praying the text aloud and talk to God about those words or phrases that are being highlighted for you.”*

*Contemplatio (2 min) || “In a posture of humility, rest in the words and phrases God speaks to you.”*

*Incarnatio (5 mins) || “Briefly share who you will go from being to doing, how you will go from identity to activity, from working out what you have read, meditated and prayed on.”*

# SESSION 2

## SHARE

This week we will spend an extended period discussing the first of three Prayer Group rhythms: Sharing.

### **Why is “Sharing” a Rhythm Worth Adopting?**

***Sharing is a part of who we are.***

We say it all the time: The Church is a people to belong to, rather than an event to attend. The Church is a family on mission; God’s family on God’s mission. Healthy families share what is going on in their lives. They share their joys and their sorrows. They celebrate milestones together and they suffer together. Healthy families confront sin together and practice vulnerability in the interest of relational unity, growth as a family, and personal edification. People on mission will be more effective when they are united and healthy. Though it often seems trite and cliché, there is a reason championship-winning teams always talk about culture, trust, and team chemistry. Similarly, God wants his Church to trust one another, care for each other, develop a culture of holiness, and work together with chemistry to show His glory to a watching world. Jesus desires his people to be united so that they can put God’s unity on display (John 17).

### ***God’s Word Teaches Us To Share.***

The Bible is clear in its call for the Church to be a people who share their lives.

Proverbs 28:13 says, “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.”

James 5:15-16 says, “And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

Galatians 6:1-2 says, "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you to be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

Colossians 3:12-17 says, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

More Scriptures that point to the value of Prayer Groups, which will be marked by sharing: Romans 16:17-20, 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 2 Corinthians 13:1-10, Galatians 1:6, Ephesians 6:10-20, Philippians 4:1, 2 Thessalonians 2:15, Hebrews 6:4-6, 1 Peter 5:12, 2 Peter 3:8-11, Jude vv. 17-23.

## **What Should We Share?**

### ***Primary Categories of Sharing***

Deciding what to share can be a difficult thing to do, but consider the values that we have established already. As your brothers and sisters in your Prayer Group are also your brothers and sisters in your parish, they will likely know what you did over the weekend, your summer vacation plans, and the funny story you heard at work. Yet, we are focused on revival, so where do you need to experience revival? What sort of things have you experienced that display a hunger for revival?

### **Consider your health in its fullness.**

Are you physically well? Emotionally well? Mentally well? Are your relationships healthy? If you're married, is your marriage and your relationships with your children healthy? If you're single, are you handling dating or singleness well? Talk about those things.

### **Consider your holiness and spiritual life.**

Have you walked in disobedience that needs to be confessed? Have you experienced temptation that needs to be brought into the light? Have you been walking in the disciplines of reading your Bible, praying, and fasting? Have you experienced doubt or questions about your faith or something through which you've been working? Talk about those things.

### **Consider your ministry.**

Have you been engaging in relationships in ways that exemplify the love of Christ? Have you had opportunities to share the gospel with anyone recently? Are you building relationships with unbelievers? For whom have you been praying? Have you been serving anybody or any organization in ways that are pointing others to God's love? Have you been opening your home and your life to unbelievers? Talk about those things.

### **Life Questions.**

Are there any decisions you are in the process of making in which you should include the group? Are there any significant updates in your life?

Hopefully, some of these questions help you prepare to share before the Prayer Group begins. Being prepared to share before a Prayer Group is a great way to value efficiency and be unhurried.

### **Anonymity and Sharing Outside of a Prayer Group**

Christians are a people who don't value privacy and anonymity. Life is to be shared. Sin is to be brought to light. Burdens are to be shared. Doubts are to be discussed. One of our values is that Prayer Groups are to be "Safe, but Uncompromising." So, your Prayer Groups should be a safe space to share hard

things, dark things, scary things, and even embarrassing things. However, discernment is necessary. How things are shared is important, especially sharing in which others are involved. You should feel safe to share difficult situations in your marriage or friendships. But, you shouldn't share in a way that intentionally dishonors your spouse or your friend.

Sometimes the appropriate and loving response to what you've shared will necessitate the Prayer Group taking that information to a Parish Leader or an Elder. If your marriage is in peril, the Elders should know about it so they can have the opportunity to love, care for, and counsel you and your spouse. If you share that there has been abuse in a relationship, your Prayer Groups should bring that to the Elders at minimum, and if appropriate, notify the authorities. If you are depressed, especially in such a way that is causing suicidal thoughts, your Prayer Group may have to share that with the proper authorities to prioritize your safety and your soul. While none of this should be surprising, we must understand that having a safe space to share your life is not the same thing as totally uncompromising confidentiality.

With that being said, the Prayer Group must use serious discernment and pray for wisdom to know when something needs to be taken outside the walls of the Prayer Group. This should be handled delicately and lovingly, knowing that most confessions of sin, hardships, and other life situations should be kept in confidence. We must understand the difference between inviting a parish leader, elder, or even local law enforcement agency into a severe case and sinfully gossiping about what we've heard. There is no place for gossip in God's church. It is divisive, evil, and unloving (Romans 1:28-32).

## **Commitment**

Everyone in the Prayer Group should speak the following commitment to the group:

*"I commit to being honest with you when I share. I will not hide my sin in the darkness, nor will I suffer in solitude, but I will invite you into my life. I will trust you, and I will be a trustworthy confidant when you share. I will not gossip. I love you all."*

## Prayer

The coordinator leads this part for the Prayer Group:

The Bible says, "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." (James 5:15-16) Consider the 21 Questions below as a starting point. Confess a sin you've committed to one another while everyone listens actively and lovingly.

After each person shares, Group members may say:

*"Thank you for sharing \_\_\_\_\_. Lord, have mercy upon \_\_\_\_\_."*

Without giving feedback and counsel at this moment, assure them with these words:

*"Remember that the Bible says, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'" (1 John 1:9)*

or

*"When you look to Jesus for your salvation, the forgiveness of sins is given in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*

When all sins have been confessed to one another, pray together aloud:

*"Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen."*

*-Prayer of Confession, Book of Common Prayer*

## 21 QUESTIONS

1. *Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?*
2. *Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?*
3. *Do I confidentially pass onto another what was told me in confidence?*
4. *Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?*
5. *Have I looked at explicit material, masturbated, or harbored unhealthy sexual thoughts?*
6. *Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?*
7. *Did the Bible live in me this week? Did I give it time to speak to me everyday?*
8. *Am I enjoying prayer?*
9. *When did I last speak to someone about my faith?*
10. *Do I pray about the money I spend?*
11. *Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?*
12. *Do I disobey God in anything?*
13. *Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?*
14. *Am I defeated in any part of my life?*
15. *Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful?*
16. *How do I spend my spare time?*
17. *Am I proud?*
18. *Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisee who despised the publican?*
19. *Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold resentment toward or disregard?*
20. *Do I grumble and complain constantly?*
21. *Is Christ real to me?*

# SESSION 3

## LISTEN

### Listening Is A Godly Discipline

The second rhythm of Prayer Groups may seem like the easiest and the most obvious. However, listening may be the most challenging part of what we will be doing in our Prayer Group gatherings. It is hard to listen actively and lovingly. It is hard to listen without trying to think of a response to what somebody is saying while they are saying it. It is hard to listen without being distracted by other things. Listening well requires discipline, focus, and love.

James 1:19-25 says, “Know this, my brothers [and sisters]: let every person be *quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger*; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But, be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.”

The text above is a text about Christian living. It is a text about being renewed by the word of God and allowing his law to bring about transformation. Moreover, it begins with listening. If we want God’s Word to renew us, we must be quick to listen.

Listening is also loving. This is most clearly displayed in the profound reality that God listens to his people. When Israel was in slavery and groaned, God listened (Exodus 2:24). If God — whose thoughts and ways are so far above ours in every way (Isaiah 55:8-9) — listens to us when we speak to him, shouldn’t we also listen to one another? One of the primary ways in which we can truly love one



another is by listening to one another with the hopes of understanding one another.

## **How Can We Become Good Listeners?**

### ***Discuss (5 minutes)***

What are some practical things that you believe will help you to be a better listener in the Prayer Group?

Listening is a discipline and a skill. It is easy to think that being a good or bad listener is just a natural characteristic of any given individual. But, God's people are all called to be listeners just like they are all called to be lovers of their neighbors and disciple-makers. So, let's consider some practical ways to grow as listeners.

### **Good listeners are patient and understanding.**

We shouldn't be thinking about what we want to say or ask while somebody is sharing. We should be focused on trying to understand not only the details of what is being shared, but also the person who is sharing.

This generally means that we should generally wait until someone has finished sharing before asking for clarification. As we allow people to share without hurrying them, interrupting them, or interrogating them, we are giving them the freedom to express themselves more clearly. If you have a question while someone is sharing, file it away, or write it down. But, don't interrupt.

Furthermore, listening isn't about showing someone your world and your experiences. It is about getting to know their world and their experiences. This is especially true when somebody is suffering (see: Job). Rather than making listening about us, we should focus our energy on really seeking to understand our brother or sister. Responses like, "That sounds really difficult," and, "I'm sorry to hear that," are often much more loving than comments of relatability. Even asking someone to help you understand by providing more detail is more loving than assuming that their experience is like yours.

## **Good listeners ask perceptive questions.**

Prayer Groups value depth ("Simple, but not Shallow"), and to that end, we will seek a deep understanding of one another and deep vulnerability through the way that we listen and respond to sharing. Good listeners ask perceptive questions; questions that try to get to the root of issues; questions which seek to reveal motivations; questions which will lead toward genuine confession and revival. While we want to ask perceptive questions, we also want to read one another charitably. In other words, we want to be perceptive without being presumptuous.

This means that when we hear someone talking about a complicated relationship, we may sense that they have grown bitter or angry even if they haven't said so. In this case, we might ask, "What have your feelings toward that person been since the incident?" That is a perceptive question. However, it would be presumptuous to ask a leading question, such as, "And, that made you angry, didn't it?"

We should choose to trust our Prayer Groups, and therefore, we should ask questions which allow the person who has shared to respond honestly without coercion or manipulation.

At the core of this principle is that good questions lead to more understanding, which will allow for more application of God's Word, and therefore experience revival. Below, you will find a list of the types of questions that may be helpful to consider:

**1. What?** Ask people to define their terms. "What did you mean when you said...?"

How? Ask people to clarify what they mean with concrete, real-life examples. "How did that situation unfold? Give us some more detail."

**2. Where and When?** Ask people to provide more information about the details and the order of events. "Where were you when this happened? When did this happen?"

**3. How Often?** Ask people to describe the frequency of their struggles. Ask them about themes and patterns. "How often do you do this?" Alternatively, "Was this the first time you've sinned in that way?"

**4. Why?** Ask people to explain why they responded as they did in a given situation. Ask the person to share their reasons. "Why did you make that choice? Why do you think that was a temptation for you? Why did that situation make you feel that way?"

### **Discuss (5 minutes)**

Take a moment to talk about how you think being a good listener is essential to what we are trying to accomplish as a Prayer Group.

### **Prayer**

See next page.

## Prayer

The coordinator leads this part for the Prayer Group:

The Bible says, "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." (James 5:15-16) Consider the 21 Questions (on page 14) as a starting point. Confess a sin you've committed to one another while everyone listens actively and lovingly.

After each person shares, Group members may say:

*"Thank you for sharing \_\_\_\_\_. Lord, have mercy upon \_\_\_\_\_."*

Without giving feedback and counsel at this moment, assure them with these words:

*"Remember that the Bible says, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'" (1 John 1:9)*

or

*"When you look to Jesus for your salvation, the forgiveness of sins is given in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*

When all sins have been confessed to one another, pray together aloud:

*"Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen."*

*-Prayer of Confession, Book of Common Prayer*

# SESSION 4

## APPLY

While sharing and listening are essential practices in their own right, we cannot wholly experience revival if we do not take time to apply God's Word to what we have shared and heard.

If we look at Deuteronomy, we will see that the primary message of that book is: Obey the Lord, and trust in his Word. There are two primary reasons that obedience to God's Law is considered so important in the Bible. First, God is the ultimate being and the final authority. He is glorious and worthy of our obedience. So, we should obey God simply because he is the God of the Universe, and he should not be questioned. The second reason to obey is that those who obey God experience joy, peace, and blessing. Deuteronomy (and the whole Bible) tells us that when we obey God, things will go well for us. This isn't to say that God shows us more love when we obey, or that he dislikes us when we disobey. That would be opposed to the principals of the Gospel of Jesus. But, it is to say this: God has created us to walk in accordance with the ways that he has called us to live, such that when we obey, we flourish.

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God created us to walk in a relationship with him. He created us to obey him. He created us such that we are healthier, more joyful, and prepared to flourish when we trust him and his ways. This is why disobeying God leads to anxiety, guilt, relational consequences, and other undesirable outcomes.

*Joshua 1:8-9 reads: "This Book of the Law (which refers to the revealed Word of God) shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."*

Therefore, when we take time to apply God's Word to one another based upon what is shared, we should do so knowing that it is for that person's joy. If we are called to love one another, there is no more loving thing that we can do than respond to the confession of sin, emotional hardship, relational difficulties, and decision-making with God's living and active Word.

## **How do we apply God's Word?**

### ***Read the Following Passages***

*1 Thessalonians 5:9-11: "For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up..."*

*Ephesians 4:1-3; 15: "I... urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace... speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ..."*

*Colossians 3:12-16: "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other;*

*the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive. Above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom...*"

### **Discuss (5 minutes)**

Based upon these passages, what sort of guiding principles should be as we apply God's Word to one another?

### **Principles for Application**

PRINCIPLE 1:  
THE CONFESSION OF SIN  
SHOULD ALWAYS LEAD TO  
THE ASSURANCE OF  
PARDON.

1 John 1:9 reads, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

God's word is clear on this, and so we should be quick to speak the grace of God over our brothers and sisters who confess their sin. We should remind them that they are forgiven as they put their faith in Christ and turn from their sin toward God's righteousness.

Example: *"Thank you for sharing that, John. I want you to know that you are forgiven based upon Christ's work for you, and you are free to walk in the new life he has given you through his Spirit."*

PRINCIPLE 2:  
CONFESSION OF SIN  
SHOULD ALWAYS LEAD TO A  
DISCUSSION OF A WAY  
FORWARD IN OBEDIENCE.

Ephesians 2:8-10 reads, *“For by grace you have been saved through Faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”*

The grace of God is that he has blessed us with life and honor and dignity through the works and righteousness of Jesus even though we deserve death and condemnation. This grace was blood-bought; God's grace is costly. God's grace doesn't lend itself to be cheapened or presumed upon, though we are often tempted to do both of those things.

It is easy to respond to our sin, or the sins of a brother or sister, by offering the good news of forgiveness utterly devoid of the call to obedience and new life. God has not forgiven and saved us so that we can tell ourselves something nice when we feel that we have failed morally. He has saved us so that we can live lives which honor him, glorify him; lives in which we experience the fullness of joy in being made new by the God of all things.

So, when sin is confessed, we will always be quick to point people to the good news of forgiveness through Christ. But, we will also lead them toward a godly way forward in obedience. After all, God saved us for good works, and he has made us alive to God and slaves of righteousness. It isn't enough to know that we are forgiven. We must also live as those who have been forgiven and as those who are being renewed.



### PRINCIPLE 3:

GOD'S WORD SPEAKS TO  
EVERYTHING IN LIFE, EVEN IF  
IT DOESN'T SPEAK ABOUT  
EVERYTHING IN LIFE.

Even so, sometimes we may not know how to respond to what a brother or sister has shared. Having the humility to listen without responding with an answer can be a beautiful gift. This is especially true when somebody shares their suffering and emotional struggles. God's Word calls us to "weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15)," not, "tell those who are weeping to cheer up and find their happiness in Jesus."

God's Word may not speak specifically to how someone in your Prayer Group should approach their job search, but it does tell us that God will give wisdom to his people who ask for it (James 1:5). So, rather than telling that friend which job to apply for, maybe spend some time praying together for wisdom.

PRINCIPLE 4:  
WE READ GOD'S WORD IN  
ORDER TO APPLY IT.

This is maybe the most important principle of them all. God has given us the treasure of himself revealed to us in the Scriptures. He has called us to devote ourselves to knowing it.

For this reason, Prayer Groups will spend a portion of every gathering reading God's Word and discussing how it can be applied to our lives. These readings will come from the Lectio Divina passages. Having read the passage in our time of Lectio Divina, we will simply reference the text together to have a discussion based upon the following questions:

- 1. What does this text teach us about who God is?*
- 2. How can you apply what this text says to your life?*

**Discuss (5 minutes)**

Do you feel ready to Share, Listen, and Apply in the ways that we have discussed over the past four sessions?

**Pray**

Pray together for your Prayer Group, asking God to move powerfully in all of your lives as you begin this process of diving deeply into the discipline of brotherhood and sisterhood.

## Prayer Group Gathering Schedule

Finally, let's take a look at the following outline for how our Prayer Group Gatherings will look when we start gathering without the primer next time. The framework below is the ideal schedule for the Prayer Group Gathering:

### **PRAYER GROUP GATHERING SCHEDULE**

*Meet up. - 10 mins*

*Allow time for members to arrive and catch up.*

*Pray the Lectio Divina passage. - 20 minutes*

*Select a Bible Passage from the handout and pray.*

*Confess your sins to one another. - 20 minutes*

*Consider the 21 questions as a starting point and confess your sins while the Prayer Group listens actively and lovingly.*

*Assure one another of God's forgiveness. - 20 minutes*

*Assure each member with Scripture and apply it with an application of that assurance.*

*Close out the Prayer Group with a prayer.*

Congratulations! You are ready to start gathering together as a Prayer Group. The next time you meet as a Prayer Group you will use the Prayer Group Handout as your Guide.