

Module B | *Biblical Community*

How do we know, love and worship Jesus in the context of community?

Month 5 | *Community with God*

Material Overview:

Week 1: Bible Study

Material Focus: Desiring God's Word
Scripture Passages: Psalm 19, Psalm 119

Week 2: Family Meal

Family meal, discussion, and prayer
Foster intimacy with God through His Word

Week 3: Equipping

Material Focus: How to hear from God in His Word
Learn The Word Hand illustration

Week 4: In Action

Praying Scripture: Psalm 19

Desiring God's Word

Before You Study

- Read Psalm 19 and Psalm 119:89-105
 - Spend time considering the significance of the God's Word.
- Why is it important to read the Bible?

What is community with God?

This month focuses on biblical community, or more specifically - our personal community with God. As we will see in Module B, as believers, we have community directly with the God of the universe and with other believers. Community happens in the context of our spiritual formation, relationships with others, and mission toward others. We are called to encourage, love, and build one another up in the Gospel. We are also called to actively love and invite outsiders into our community. However, none of this happens without first having personal and individual community with God.

This week focuses on the importance of fostering a desire for God's Word in your heart. An important part of our community as believers is our direct communication with God through His Word. As Christians, we can draw close and commune with Jesus through His Scriptures.

So why is God's Word important and why should we desire it?

God reveals Himself through Scripture. The Bible is the inspired Word of God. This means that every word in the Bible comes directly from God. We would not know who God is or understand the Gospel without His word. What an amazing blessing that we are able to draw close to the God of the universe through the Bible (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Scripture actively speaks into every area of our lives. The Bible teaches us how to confess sin, how to treat the poor, how to mourn, how to pray, and so much more. We are actually given guidance on how to navigate life in the Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16).

Scripture helps us fight sin and temptation. The only offensive weapon given to believers in the Armor of God is the Sword of the

Spirit, the Bible (Ephesians 6).

The Bible is present to fill our hearts and minds with the truth of God, provide conviction and encouragement, and actively fight sin.

In short, to desire God's Word is to desire community with God.

What does the Bible say?

1. **Read Psalm 19:1-6.** What should man know about God based on the nature around us? When has God used creation to reveal Himself to you?

2. **Read Psalm 19:7-10.** How is God revealed through the Scriptures? What has God told us about Himself in Scripture? Why is God's Word something to be desired?

3. **Read Psalm 19:11-14.** How does God's Word help us? What should be our response when God reveals Himself to us through His Word?

How do I apply what I learned?

Spend some time discussing these questions:

1. Do you desire to be in community with God through His Word? Is God's Word "more to be desired than gold" and "sweeter than honey" to you?

2. In what areas do you need to confess passivity, bitterness, or a lack of love for the Word of God. Spend some time confessing that to another person and to God.

Reading the Bible can feel like a chore sometimes. We know that it is beneficial for us, but at times it feels like something we check off of a list. How can we actually work to foster a true desire to be in the Word of God? This certainly doesn't fix it all, but here are three steps to take to get started!

Give your time

Psalm 119:97 - God's Word is David's meditation all day long.

The Hebrew word for "meditation" here refers to an object of "musing, study, or prayer." In biblical meditation, we are filling our minds to think

deeply on a verse, a passage, or a theme. This takes time to do. However, when we dig deeper, we begin to read the Bible in greater depth. We focus on every word, nuance, tone, and emotion. Meditation on Scripture takes time and energy, but our eventual grasp is deeper and more robust.

Give your ear

Psalm 119:98 - David's insight came through careful listening to God's Word.

When we listen carefully to God's Word, it is with us even when we aren't reading it. When we give our ear to the Word, we both remember it and live it out. God's Word is living and active, and through it God speaks to our particular times, circumstances, and struggles.

Give your heart

Psalm 119:101-104 - David allowed God's Word to change his will, desires, and actions.

We must look to Scripture to hold back our feet from sin, to hold fast to God's laws, and to equip us to reject every false way. To give your heart to the Scriptures is not just to memorize and learn for the sake of knowledge, but to willingly submit in obedience to them. We can joyfully surrender our heart to God, knowing that He is worthy.

"When you don't desire God's Word"- Shar Walker (TGC)

Praying Truth

Take time to pray with your City Group.

Praise. Praise God that He chose to reveal Himself to us and make His glory known to us!

Admit. Confess times when you have not treasured time with Him and time in His Holy Word.

Request. Ask that Jesus would give you a love for His Word. Pray that He would reveal Himself to you in greater ways, and that His Word would become "sweeter than honey" to you.

Thank. Thank Jesus for His grace and for being the perfect substitute for our sins and making it possible for us to commune with God.

Helpful Resources
Citylight Resource: "How to Study the Bible" (City Groups- Resources)

Article: “When you don’t desire God’s Word” - Shar Walker (The Gospel Coalition)

Week 2 | The Family Meal

Experiencing the Family

The Gospel brings us into God’s family. As believers, we are more than a Bible study or a support group, we are a family! Families share life as they gather around tables and enjoy meals together. That’s why this week your City Group will be sharing a meal together.

Meals were at the very core of Jesus’ ministry as he often ate with His disciples, sinners and unbelievers, and many other friends along the way (Matthew. 9:9-17, 26:20-30; Luke 10:38-42). The early church did more than just gather at the temple for preaching, they met in homes to eat with one another, encourage one another, and point one another back to Jesus.

“They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.” (Acts 2:46)

Why are Tables so Important?

Meals remind us of God’s Provision. God is gracious to provide us with food, but ultimately we want to remember that Jesus is God’s ultimate provision. He is the bread of life who saves sinners (John 6:35).

Meals remind us of our Humanity. You may be strong or weak, young or old, rich or poor, but eating together reminds us that we are all humans who get hungry and need food.

Meals create space for Community. God has not left us alone. He gives us a community to belong to. The dinner table is a space to share stories, joys, pains, and hopes with other believers (Romans 12:15).

Coaching for Family Meals

- Communicate with the group at least one week in advance that you are doing a Family Meal.
- Pick a main dish or theme (i.e. taco night) and invite group members to bring a side to share.
- The host should prepare by making sure there is enough seating for everyone.
- Remind the group why family meals are important and introduce the Connection Questions for the night.
- And remember to have fun! Laughter and fun help build deep friendships.

Connecting Around the Table

Share a meal together. As you eat, walk through these questions together.

1. How do you foster intimacy in your time with the Lord?
2. Do you believe that the Word of God is alive and active?

Week 3 | Equipping

The Word Hand

As a “lamp unto [our] feet and a light unto [our] path (Psalm 119:105), the Word of God is more than simply a set of guidelines or recommendations. It gives us the foundation for how we live, move, and shape every aspect of our lives (2 Timothy 3:15-17). The Word Hand illustration is a simple way to break down five methods of taking in God’s Word. Just as you need all five fingers of your hand to firmly grasp onto something, we also must apply all five methods to firmly grasp scripture. Try to hold onto a book with four, three, or two fingers, and your grasp gets less firm and the book will easily slip away. The same goes with our grasp on Scripture.

Hearing - Romans 10:17

Hearing the Word taught by godly pastors and teachers provides fresh insight into the Scriptures to challenge and expand your own understanding, as well as stimulating your own appetite for its truth.

Reading - Revelation 1:3

Reading the Bible is often the way that God most directly speaks to us. Many people find it helpful to use a daily reading program or other method that takes a systematic approach to drawing lessons from the Bible.

Studying - Acts 17:11

Earnestly studying the Scriptures allows God’s Word to speak directly to our hearts—to correct, encourage, and edify us. Writing down your discoveries will help you organize and remember them.

Memorizing - Psalm 119:9, 11

Memorizing God’s Word trains us to use the Sword of the Spirit when we are faced with temptations and opposition by Satan. By holding passages from the Bible in our minds we are also able to have them

readily available for witnessing or in encouraging others with a “word in season” (2 Timothy 4:2).

Meditating - Psalm 1:2-3

Meditation is the thumb of the Word Hand, because when used in conjunction with each of the other methods, the Spirit begins to deeply move in our hearts and speak to our souls. Only as we meditate on God’s Word—thinking of its meaning and application in our lives—will we discover its transforming power at work within us.

“The Word Hand” by The Navigators

How are we practicing this?

Good news! We are putting each of these methods into practice this month!

Hear -- Week 4 (“Prayer in the Psalms” Sermon in “Resources”)

Read -- Week 1 (Scripture reading in “Before you Study”)

Study -- Week 1 (Bible Study)

Memorize -- Week 3 (Psalm 19:14)

Meditate -- Week 4 (Praying the Psalms)

Spend some time...

1. Reading through the worksheet together and discussing how each method is important in our relationship with the Lord.
2. Which one of these methods of interacting with God’s Word do you practice the most?
3. Which one do you tend to neglect? How can you more regularly incorporate it into your life?
4. Brainstorming together how you could incorporate all of these into your individual time with the Lord on a weekly basis.
5. Memorizing Psalm 19:14 as a group.

Week 4 | In Action

Praying the Psalms

Why should we pray the Psalms?

Praying the Psalms gives biblically-faithful prayers

The Bible will guide your prayers, helping you to speak to God with words that have come from the mind and heart of God. This also means you'll be praying more in accordance with the will of God. Can you have any greater assurance that you're praying the will of God than when you're praying the Word of God?

Praying the Psalms gives God-centered prayers

When you use a God-focused guide like the psalms to prompt your prayers, you'll pray less selfishly and with more attention to the ways, the will, and the attributes of God. Prayer becomes less about what you want God to do for you—though that's always a part of biblical praying—and more about the concerns of God and His Kingdom.

Praying the Psalms reorients our disordered affections

We are a mass of disordered affections. We desire what we ought to hate, and we care little for what we ought to deeply desire. The Psalms shape our affections so that we love what God says is right and deeply desire the blessings He promises us in the Gospel.

Praying the Psalms gives us intimacy in our relationship with God

Praying the Psalms is God's antidote to coldness of heart in our walk with Christ. We know that we should find the truths of the Gospel and the person of Jesus thrilling and heart-warming, but the reality is we sometimes feel so cold, dull, and empty. The Psalms are a significant part of the provision God has given to us for just this purpose.

Praying the Psalms can help us have more focus in prayer

When you say the same old things in prayer every day, it's easy for your mind to wander. You find yourself praying auto-pilot prayers—repeating words without thinking about either them or the God to whom you offer them. But when you pray the Bible, your mind

has a place to focus, and when your thoughts do begin to wander, you have a place to return to—the next verse.

Praying the Psalms helps us see prayer as a real conversation with a real Person

Prayer is talking with a Person, the Person of God Himself. Prayer is not a monologue spoken in the direction of God. The Bible is the means by which God participates in the conversation, for the Bible is God speaking. God speaks in the Bible, and you respond to His speaking in prayer.

“Why you should be praying the Psalms” - Donald Whitney (9Marks)
“7 Reasons you should pray the Psalms” - Christopher Ash (TGC)

How do we pray Scripture?

In his book “Praying the Bible”, Donald Whitney, describes the process of praying Scripture as follows: “To pray the Bible, you simply go through the passage line by line, talking to God about whatever comes to mind as you read the text” (p. 33). By using the text as a guide, you never run out of things to pray and you never pray the same prayer twice! The Psalms are particularly helpful for this approach because they were originally inspired to be sung back to God and because they cover the full range of human emotions and show us how to respond. As Whitney points out, “God has inspired a psalm for every sigh of the soul” (p. 54).

In the preface to his “Commentary on the Psalms”, John Calvin calls the Psalms an “anatomy of all the parts of the soul” because “there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror.”

The resource given below to give you an idea of what praying Scripture could look like. However, feel the freedom to mix things up and try different methods to find what works for you!

Let's Practice!

- As a group, spend some time reading through the above sections: “Why should we pray the Psalms?” and “How do we pray Scripture?” Discuss what you read together.
- Spread out and spend the next 20 minutes individually praying through Psalm 19. Go verse by verse and talk to God about whatever comes to mind as you read. This should be an uninterrupted time to develop intimacy with God.
- Gather back together as a group and share about your prayer time and what God brought to your mind.

Helpful Resources

Book: “Praying the Bible” by Donald Whitney

Sermon: “Prayer in the Psalms: Discovering How to Pray” by Tim Keller

Article: “7 Reasons you should pray the Psalms” - Christopher Ash (The Gospel Coalition)

Article: “Why you should be praying the Psalms” - Donald Whitney (9Marks)

Article: “How to pray a Psalm” - Justin Taylor (The Gospel Coalition)

Illustration for Praying Scripture

Here is a practical example from “Praying the Bible” by Don Whitney using Psalm 23

You read the first verse—“The Lord is my shepherd”—and you pray something like this:

“Lord, I thank you that you are my shepherd. You’re a good shepherd. You have shepherded me all my life. And, great Shepherd, please shepherd my family today: guard them from the ways of the world; guide them into the ways of God. Lead them not into temptation; deliver them from evil. O great Shepherd, I pray for my children; cause them to be your sheep. May they love you as their shepherd,

as I do. And, Lord, please shepherd me in the decision that's before me about my future. Do I make that move, that change, or not? I also pray for our under-shepherds at the church. Please shepherd them as they shepherd us."

And you continue praying anything else that comes to mind as you consider the words, "The Lord is my shepherd." Then when nothing else comes to mind, you go to the next line: "I shall not want." And perhaps you pray:

"Lord, I thank you that I've never really been in want. I haven't missed too many meals. All that I am and all that I have has come from you. But I know it pleases you that I bring my desires to you, so would you provide the finances that we need for those bills, for school, for that car?"

Maybe you know someone who is in want, and you pray for God's provision for him or her. Or you remember some of our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world, and you pray for their concerns.

After you've finished, you look at the next verse: "He makes me lie down in green pastures" (v. 2a). And, frankly, when you read the words "lie down," maybe what comes to mind is simply, "Lord, I would be grateful if you would make it possible for me to lie down and take a nap today."

Possibly the term "green pastures" makes you think of the feeding of God's flock in the green pastures of his Word, and it prompts you to pray for a Bible teaching ministry you lead, or for a teacher or pastor who feeds you with the Word of God. When was the last time you did that? Maybe you have never done that, but praying through this psalm caused you to do so.

Next you read, "He leads me beside still waters" (v. 2b). And maybe you begin to plead, "Yes, Lord, do lead me in that decision I have to make about my future. I want to do what you want, O Lord, but I don't know what that is. Please lead me into your will in this matter. And lead me beside still waters in this. Please quiet the anxious waters in my soul about this situation. Let me experience your peace. May the turbulence in

my heart be stilled by trust in you and your sovereignty over all things and over all people.”

Following that, you read these words from verse 3, “He restores my soul.” That prompts you to pray along the lines of:

“My Shepherd, I come to you so spiritually dry today. Please restore my soul; restore to me the joy of your salvation. And I pray you will restore the soul of that person from work/school/down the street with whom I’m hoping to share the gospel. Please restore his soul from darkness to light, from death to life.”

You can continue praying in this way until either (1) you run out of time, or (2) you run out of psalm. And if you run out of psalm before you run out of time, you simply turn the page and go to another psalm. By so doing, you never run out of anything to say, and, best of all, you never again say the same old things about the same old things.

So basically what you are doing is taking words that originated in the heart and mind of God and circulating them through your heart and mind back to God. By this means his words become the wings of your prayers.

“How to pray a Psalm” - Justin Taylor (The Gospel Coalition)

Module B | *Biblical Community*

How do we know, love and worship Jesus in the context of community?

Month 6 | ***Community in the Family of God***

Material Overview:

Week 1: Bible Study

Material Focus: Confession, Prayer, and Repentance

Scripture Passages: Psalm 51; 1 John 1:5-9; 2 Corinthians 7:10

Week 2: Family Meal

Family meal, discussion and prayer

Discussing how to grow as a spiritual family

Week 3: Equipping

Material Focus: What are Huddles?

Group will split into men and women to discuss Huddles

Week 4: In Action

Practice Huddles

Confession, Prayer, and Repentance

Before You Study

- Read Psalm 51; 1 John 1:5-9; 2 Corinthians 7:10
- Spend some time pondering why this is crucial for the Church's health

What is Confession, Prayer, and Repentance?

God designed us to be in community with Him and also in community with Jesus' bride, the Church. This month, we'll look at what biblical community in the family of God looks like, where we see it in Scripture, why this is a necessary part of a Christian's walk with the Lord, and how to practically apply it.

Through interacting with God's Word and being in community with Him, two things typically happen; the first is the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin, and the second is personal worship. Through community in the family of God, brothers and sisters come alongside us to 1) confess, pray, and repent of our sin and 2) worship our King corporately.

So what is confession, prayer, and repentance?

Confession – Confession is when we grieve over our sin and it propels us to intentionally admit our struggles and sin before others, so that they can point us back to Christ and pray for us.

Prayer – Prayer is when we come before God and plead with Him to work mightily in our hearts to change our desires from wanting to sin into desires of repentance and obedience.

Repentance – Repentance is when we turn away from our sin and toward God on a daily basis. Galatians 5 says that the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit. In order to receive the desires of the Spirit, we must put to death the desires of the flesh and live for God.

Read 2 Corinthians 7:10. Worldly grief is grief simply because we experience the negative consequences of our sin, like the loss of reputation or a broken relationship. We only grieve because of losing something the world offers us; It does not bring about true repentance. However, godly grief is when we feel true sorrow because we have grieved God's heart by

willingly sinning against Him through our thoughts and actions. We will still experience the negative consequences of our sin, but our motivation for repentance comes from a desire to return to the Lord and obey Him.

As Christians, we must regularly ask ourselves, “Do I live a life of true confession, prayer, and repentance based on the eternal hope found in the Gospel? Or am I simply engaging in spiritual activities to give me a sense of momentary hope through self-righteousness?”

What does the Bible say?

Psalm 51 takes us through David’s repentance of his sin with Bathsheba. Bathsheba was married to Uriah the Hittite until King David decided to have Uriah struck down so that he could take Bathsheba to be his own wife. About a year had passed between this event and his confession to the Lord in Psalm 51, but he does eventually repent of his sin.

1. Read Psalm 51:1-2. Why does David ask for mercy from God?

2. Read Psalm 51:3-5. Though David had Uriah killed after committing adultery with Bathsheba, who did David say that he sinned against? How should this shape our view of sin?

3. Read Psalm 51:6-10. Who transforms the heart, David or God? Why is it important that we know who the transformative power comes from?

What does Psalm 51 tell us about God’s character?

As you read the passages above, what sticks out to you? These passages teach us about confession, prayer, and repentance. They also give us insight into how biblical community in the family of God should look for the believer.

How do I apply what I learned?

Read 1 John 1:5-9. What implications do these verses have on living in biblical community in the family of God?

Consider these questions:

1. What would it look like if in our time with the Lord we grieved over our sin like David grieved over his?
2. When have you been met with mercy in times of repentance?
3. If we are called to walk in the light with the Church, what does that look like? How can you come alongside the others in your group to help them walk with Jesus?
4. How does Jesus' life, death, and resurrection give us hope and confidence to continue confessing, praying, and repenting of sin in our life?

Praying Truth

Take time to pray with your City Group

Praise. Praise God that He has given us a family to experience life alongside.

Admit. Confess times when you've not been intentional towards a brother or sister in Christ.

Request. Ask that the communion God gives us with Himself would encourage and empower us to invite others into biblical community.

Thank. Thank the Lord for providing this group with a space to gather and people to engage with.

Week 2 | *The Family Meal*

Experiencing the Family

The Gospel brings us into God's family. As believers, we are more than a Bible study or a support group, we are a family! Families share life as they gather around tables and enjoy meals together. That's why this week your City Group will be sharing a meal together.

Meals were at the very core of Jesus' ministry as he often ate with His disciples, sinners and unbelievers, and many other friends along the way (Matthew. 9:9-17, 26:20-30; Luke 10:38-42). The early church did more than just gather at the temple for preaching, they met in homes to eat with one another, encourage one another, and point one another back to Jesus.

"They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." (Acts 2:46)

Why are Tables so important?

Meals remind us of God's Provision. God is gracious to provide us with food, but ultimately we want to remember that Jesus is God's ultimate provision. He is the bread of life who saves sinners (John 6:35).

Meals remind us of our Humanity. You may be strong or weak, young or old, rich or poor, but eating together reminds us that we are all humans who get hungry and need food.

Meals create space for Community. God has not left us alone. He gives us a community to belong to. The dinner table is a space to share stories, joys, pains, and hopes with other believers (Romans 12:15).

Coaching for Family Meals

- Communicate with the group at least one week in advance that you are doing a Family Meal.
- Pick a main dish or theme (i.e. taco night) and invite group members to bring a side to share.
- The host should prepare by making sure there is enough seating for everyone.
- Remind the group why family meals are important and introduce the Connection Questions for the night.
- And remember to have fun! Laughter and fun help build deep friendships.

Connecting Around the Table

Share a meal together. As you eat, walk through these questions together!

1. What is your favorite memory with your family and why?
2. What's something from last week's discussion that stuck out to you?
3. How does the community in your City Group give you a greater picture of community with God?

Week 3 | *Guide to Huddles*

Enjoying community while experiencing the Gospel.

Each of us longs for and needs other people to walk alongside with in life. Friends and family are a way to encourage us when we are downcast, show us hope when we see none, and enjoy life with. When done through the lens of the Gospel, we can both express the joys in our life and confess the sins in our life. Confessing the pride, anxiety, doubts, struggles, and messiness of our hearts doesn't leave us in despair, but actually gives us a greater hope. Exposing our sin serves to communicate the Gospel and point us toward our ultimate hope in the person and work of Jesus.

What are they?

Huddles are an extension of Sunday morning gatherings and City Groups. They are a place where 2-3 people of the same gender meet weekly for discipleship.

Why are they important?

A Huddle is a place to be known by others in such a way that you can be completely honest with your joys and struggles, confess sin, speak the truth of the gospel to one another, and point each other to Christ!

Hear & Obey

Bring your SOAP journal and share what you have heard from God and how you can obey it.

Repent & Believe

We all sin and we all need to repent of that sin. Each person confesses how you have sinned against God this past week and then repent (turn) from your sin. Encourage one another to believe and respond to the good news of the Gospel.

Questions to ask:

1. What are you trusting in besides God?
2. How have you been resisting God?
3. What is isolating you from God and other relationships?
4. How have you been stewarding your time, talents, and treasures?
5. How have you battled temptation?
6. How has anger or anxiety shown up this week?
7. Who are you in conflict with?

Praise & Prayer

Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? Who in the group do you need to call out greatness in today? How can the group pray for you? Who are you seeking to share the gospel with and how can we pray for them?

A Personal Story of Huddles

How to start a Huddle. How you approach confession and repentance can hugely influence the perception people have of Huddles and biblical community. Therefore, it's important to cast vision well and reinforce the why behind the what. Below is a personal story of a college student and his experience of being in a Huddle.

“My freshman year of college, I would often get together with a couple other guys to take part in what we called “The Crucible”. Simply put, we saw our natural proclivity to sin, desired to fight that sin, and saw that being in community with others who also desired to fight sin made that fight a little easier. And so we would meet throughout the year where we could really take inventory of where we were at in our walks with Christ, confess where we’ve sinned, and take steps to repent of that so that we could be forged more into the image of Jesus.

Our outline for each time we met was a simple acronym: C.P.R.

- confession, prayer, repentance. It helped us see that just as a person might need CPR to breath life back into them, we were getting life breathed into us as we confessed our sin and reminded one another of the true life that Jesus gives.”

How do I Encourage Confess and Repent?

Practice it yourself

James 5:16 says to confess your sins to one another and pray for one another. Why? So that you may be healed. Confessing to others where you fall short of the glory of God or build your own kingdom rather than resting in Jesus brings healing! This practice of regular confession in the presence of other believers allows us to bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2) and to encourage and exhort one another in the Gospel.

Place the focus on Jesus

Biblical confession is never meant to be shameful and moralistic, starting and ending with how we’ve messed up. Biblical confession is meant to be grace-filled and gospel-driven, acknowledging our brokenness and need of a Savior. We are to be ambassadors of God, teaching and admonishing others in all wisdom with the Gospel, singing and praising God in thanksgiving for the radical grace He has shown us.

Prioritize time for it

To the degree that we intentionally set time aside to confess our sin, internally to God and externally to others, to that same degree we will find it harder and harder to grieve the Spirit by holding onto an unrepentant heart. Confession and repentance feed off each other – biblical confession leads to true repentance and true repentance gives you a greater and clearer picture of just how wide the chasm is between you and God, and thus just how wide the cross of Jesus is.

Pursue repentance

How we approach confession is crucial to how we repent – are we nurturing a community of worldly grief or godly grief during confession? Repentance isn’t simply a box to check off, but it’s a lifestyle of continually taking on a posture of humility, and it’s for our good and God’s glory.

In repenting, we see the glorious grace God shows us time and again – Hebrews 4:14-16 tells us to approach the throne of grace in confidence, knowing that those who are willing to turn from their sin receive full acceptance in Jesus Christ. This is true whether it is our first time turning from our sin or the 10,000th time. What good news! Our confidence is Christ's faithfulness, and He was faithful – completely. Therefore, because of His life, death, and resurrection, we have access to complete unending grace from the Father!

Pray

While it may seem simple, something often overlooked is prayer. James 5:16 doesn't simply tell us to confess our sins to one another, but to pray for one another. That's because prayer is powerful and prayer works! It's only God that can change the human heart and stir our affections for Jesus. We need to pray for the Holy Spirit to convict hearts, both ours and others, and to lead them to repentance.

How are we practicing this?

The goal is that Huddles would form in your group and meet regularly. Next week, we'll separate into men and women and get a feel for what Huddles look like. Feel free to meet in two different locations if that works best for your group, or you could have the men meet in the basement and the women meet upstairs.

Remember, confessing and repenting of sin doesn't have to be, and shouldn't be, a time for you to be shamed for what you've done. It's meant to sharpen our beliefs (Proverbs 27:17) and keep us Gospel centered as the church.

Spend some time discussing...

1. How do you think Huddles will give your group a greater sense of community?
2. How do you think they sharpen your faith?

Week 4 | *Huddles in Action*

Pursuing Confession and Repentance in Huddles

Huddles are simply a discipleship tool where hearts are softened and eyes are placed on Jesus. Those in the Huddles should always communicate the Gospel and Jesus should always be the response when someone confesses and repents.

As we start practicing Huddles, let's revisit what we learned last week.

What are they?

Huddles are an extension of Sunday morning gatherings and City Groups. They are a place where 2-3 people of the same gender meet weekly for discipleship.

Why are they important?

A Huddle is a place to be known by others in such a way that you can be completely honest with your joys and struggles, confess sin, speak the truth of the Gospel to one another, and point each other to Christ!

Hear & Obey

Bring your SOAP journal and share what you have heard from God and how you can obey it.

Repent & Believe

We all sin and we all need to repent of that sin. Each person confesses how you have sinned against God this past week and then repent (turn) from your sin. Encourage one another to believe and respond to the good news of the Gospel.

Questions to ask:

1. What are you trusting in besides God?
2. How have you been resisting God?
3. What is isolating you from God and other relationships?
4. How have you been stewarding your time, talents, and treasures?
5. How have you battled temptation?
6. How has anger or anxiety shown up this week?
7. Who are you in conflict with?

Praise & Prayer

Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? Who in the group do you need to call out greatness in today? How can the group pray for you? Who are you seeking to share the gospel with and how can we pray for them?

Let's Practice!

Tonight your City Group will share in Huddles. This is a chance for your group of men or women to come alongside your brother or sister, confess to one another, and praise God together as you hear stories of Him working powerfully. It's also a time to get to know one another on a deeper level and grow as a spiritual family.

Sharing and confessing isn't the easiest thing to do. When someone finishes sharing, it's appropriate to thank them for sharing and maybe follow up with a few questions that push deeper, yet point towards Jesus. Consider using these questions to spur on deeper conversations:

1. What are you trusting in besides God to give you security, joy, value, or comfort?
2. How have you been stewarding your time, talents, and treasures?
3. How have you battled temptation? What area in your life do you find it easy to submit to the desires of the flesh and struggle to submit to the desires of the Spirit?

When you are done sharing, spend time in prayer thanking God for what He has done and asking for the Holy Spirit's power to toil and strive after the desires of the Spirit and put to death the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-18).

Module B | *Biblical Community*

How do we know, love and worship Jesus in the context of community?

Month 7 | *Community on Mission*

Material Overview:

Week 1: Bible Study

Material Focus: Looking at Places of Ministry

Scripture Passages: John 2:1-5, 4:1-10; Matthew 4:18-22, 9:9-13; Acts 16:11-34, 17:16-17

Week 2: Family Meal

Family meal, discussion, and prayer
Brainstorm ideas for your Third Place

Week 3: Equipping

Material Focus: Planning and Praying for your Third Place
Review sharing the Gospel from Module A - Month 3 - Week 3
Put your first Third Place on the calendar

Week 4: In Action

Go out and practice your Third Place

Mission in Third Places

Before You Study

- Read John 2:1-5, 4:1-10; Matthew 4:18-22, 9:9-13; Acts 16:11-34, 17:16-17
- Pay special attention to the places mentioned in these passages.

The Gospel Compels Us to Go

Some American Christians have adopted the cultural belief that “ministry” takes place in a church building. This is an effective means of spreading the Gospel only if the culture views the church as having an important and positive role in society. We assume that all you need to do to be a missionary is invite someone to a church event and allow the “paid professionals” to present the Gospel. Not only is this idea not biblical, but our culture is becoming increasingly post-Christian, meaning that alternative world views are increasing while a Christian worldview is diminishing. Omaha ranks #31 out of 100 in post-Christian rankings of cities polled by Barna in the US.

If the average person is not interested in church, the Bible, or faith in Jesus, how do we, as a community on mission, reach people around us with the good news? Since the tide of culture is not pulling toward God and His Church, we won’t naturally drift into mission. There will need to be intentional steps of obedience to move toward those outside of the faith community because our natural bent will be to focus inward and do what is comfortable.

In this study, we are going to look at a few examples in the Gospels and Acts that identify the places Jesus and Paul went to minister and make disciples. Let Scripture inspire your group to brainstorm places you can go to regularly invest in relationships with people who do not know Jesus. We call these kinds of places “Third Places”. It’s not a Sunday morning church gathering or your City Group Bible study. It’s a Third Place where you can invite people to belong to true community before they believe in Jesus.

“Mission is about people, not projects. We must think through ways we can integrate people into our communities, not just serve them at arm’s length.”

What does the Bible say?

1. *Read John 2:1-5* - Where were Jesus and the disciples when Jesus performed His first miracle? Have you ever been presented with an opportunity to minister in some way at a celebration you were invited to?

2. *Read John 4:1-10*--Verse 4 says that Jesus “had to pass through Samaria.” Many strict Jews opted never to pass through Samaria in order not to defile themselves by coming into contact with Samaritans, yet Jesus intentionally traveled that way. Is there a place or people you are avoiding because they are unsafe or somehow “unclean”?

3. *Read Matthew 4:18-22 and Matthew 9:9*—Where did Jesus find His disciples? What was His simple invitation to them? How do you feel when you receive an invitation from someone you admire or respect?

4. *Read Acts 16:11-15*—When Paul arrived in Philippi there was no Synagogue so where did he go and what was he hoping to find? What part did Paul play in this scene and what did the Lord do?

5. *Read Acts 16:25-34*—After Lydia’s conversion Paul and Silas were arrested and ended up in prison. Although they didn’t go there on purpose, God had a purpose. What was it?

6. *Read Acts 17:16-17*—What did Paul notice about the city of Athens? What are the two places he went to reason with people? How often did he go and with whom did he converse?

How do I apply what I learned?

Spend some time discussing these questions:

1. Briefly share with one another the physical place you came to know Christ (If your group is large you may want to do this in pairs or smaller groups). If it happened in a church building, were there events that led up to you attending a church gathering? How does the understanding of where God pursued you inspire you to move toward others who don’t know Him?

2. Think about your unbelieving friends, neighbors, and acquaintances. How do you know them? Where do they spend time? What do they like to do? What would it look like for your group to go to them and create spaces to invite them into your community?

An effective Third Place is neutral ground that is informal and non-committal. It naturally fits into the rhythms of your lost friends' lives, and you do it regularly. Next week you will have a chance to brainstorm together during your family meal what these places might be for your particular community.

Praying Truth

Take time to pray with your City Group.

Praise. Praise God that He invites us into His mission.

Admit. Confess times when you have passed by an opportunity to share the Gospel.

Request. Ask that Jesus would give you strength and endurance to live on mission toward your group's neighborhood or network.

Thank. Thank God for His pursuit of us - would we in turn pursue others!

Helpful Resources

John 5:1-9, Matthew 9:1, Luke 7:36-50, Luke 11:37-38, Luke 14:1-6, Luke 10:38-42, Luke 19:1-7

Week 2 | *The Family Meal*

Experiencing the Family

The Gospel brings us into God's family. As believers, we are more than a Bible study or a support group, we are a family! Families share life as they gather around tables and enjoy meals together. That's why this week your City Group will be sharing a meal together.

Meals were at the very core of Jesus' ministry as he often ate with His disciples, sinners and unbelievers, and many other friends along the way (Matthew. 9:9-17, 26:20-30; Luke 10:38-42). The early church did more than just gather at the temple for preaching, they met in homes to eat with one another, encourage one another, and point one another back to Jesus.

"They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." (Acts 2:46)

Why are Tables so important?

Meals remind us of God's Provision. God is gracious to provide us with food, but ultimately we want to remember that Jesus is God's ultimate provision. He is the bread of life who saves sinners (John 6:35).

Meals remind us of our Humanity. You may be strong or weak, young or old, rich or poor, but eating together reminds us that we are all humans who get hungry and need food.

Meals create space for Community. God has not left us alone. He gives us a community to belong to. The dinner table is a space to share stories, joys, pains, and hopes with other believers (Romans 12:15).

Coaching for Family Meals

1. Communicate with the group at least one week in advance that you are doing a Family Meal.
2. Pick a main dish or theme (i.e. taco night) and invite group members to bring a side to share.

3. The host should prepare by making sure there is enough seating for everyone.
4. Remind the group why family meals are important and introduce the Connection Questions for the night.
5. And remember to have fun! Laughter and fun help build deep friendships.

Connecting Around the Table

Last week's Bible study looked at the various places where Jesus and Paul went and how that led to opportunities to share the Gospel. Tonight, you are going to take time as a group to start brainstorming what this looks like in your context in the 21st century.

We call this kind of space a Third Place. It's informal and naturally fits into the rhythms of life. A Third Place is neutral, natural, and regular.

Ask yourselves—where do people naturally go and how can we gather there instead? Or how can we plan an event that is neutral and will help build new friendships?

Here are some real-life examples of Third Place.

1. One of our college City Groups started doing Sunday morning pancake breakfasts. They invited friends over for pancakes every Sunday and then anyone who wanted to go to church afterward could go together. There were several students who ended up joining them who said they had always wanted to go to church, but didn't want to walk in by themselves.
2. Another group of young adults would meet for City Group and then go to the same country dance bar most Wednesday nights. Eventually the City Group became friends with some of the other regulars. These new friends started asking questions because they kept seeing this group of life-giving young people who genuinely loved each other. Their faithfulness eventually led to a young man joining the City Group who later placed his faith in Jesus Christ!

3. Have you ever thought about how something as normal as a baby shower or bridal shower could be a witness for Jesus? One time a Citylight staff member heard from a personal friend who had never attended Citylight Church that one month she happened to attend a baby shower and a bridal shower for two different people, but they were both hosted by Citylight groups. You know what she noticed? She said it seemed like everyone really loves and supports one another. She told her daughter that when she goes to college, she should try out Citylight Church because she has never seen so many young people who are so serious about their faith and loving to each other.

4. One last story about a Third Place that you wouldn't necessarily choose to be a regular rhythm in your life. A young family in our church found out that their 8-month-old son had leukemia. They ended up spending the majority of the following 10 months at Children's Hospital where members of their City Group visited, brought meals, hung out, played cards, prayed, and cried together. Just like Paul was a witness to the whole palace guard when he was imprisoned, this family was a witness to the hospital staff and fellow patients walking through pain. If someone in your group is going through a hard season, you may not be able to choose where your Third Place is, but you can ask God to give you opportunities to share the Gospel wherever you are.

As you eat, walk through these questions together. Below is a list of ideas to help you get started with your Third Place. The goal is to put at least one Third Place gathering on the calendar for this month.

1. What are some regular places we go and interact with people outside of our community?
2. How could we do some of those things together with more intentionality to build relationships?
3. What's something we can plan together to do for Week 4 of this month?

Ideas for Third Place gatherings:

Invite In – Group Activities

Neighborhood Picnic and Grill Out
Hiking
Disc Golf or Frisbee
Sand Volleyball
Lake day with Kayaks and Canoes
Go get ice cream
Book club
Game nights
Go Karts!
Pool Party
Escape Rooms
The Gym
Kids play dates
Sports League (softball, basketball, etc.)

Join In - Omaha Rhythms

Benson First Fridays
Farmers Market
Midtown Crossing Monday Night Movies
College World Series
Jazz on the Green
Stinson Park Activities
Local 5k Races
Junkstock
Omaha Storm Chasers
Omaha Children's Museum
Joslyn Museum
CenturyLink Center Events
Top Golf

Week 3 | *Equipping*

Third Place: Planning and Praying

Third Place. The tide of culture is pulling away from God and His Church. Third Place is an attempt to intentionally move toward those outside of the faith community. This week your City Group will discuss and determine a Third Place that you will do next week.

A Third Place is neutral ground that is informal and non-committal. It naturally fits into the rhythms of your lost friends' lives, and you do it regularly.

So where do we gather for a Third Place? It depends on the people you're trying to reach. Ask the question, "where do people already spend time and naturally go? How can we gather there?"

For those of you who work downtown, this may be an after work happy hour. Downtown professionals naturally gather there after their workday. For families with younger kids, this might be a park where other families and kids play throughout the day.

A Third Place creates space where someone can belong to before they believe. We want to do it regularly, and invite those who don't know Jesus to participate often.

How are we practicing this?

Third Place is an easy rhythm that your group can practice on a regular basis to connect with people who would never come to a Sunday morning church gathering. Based on your discussion from last week, what's a Third Place that your City Group can do next week? Determining a regular Third Place for your group can be challenging, so you may not find your regular Third Place on the first try. Keep praying and asking God where He would send you.

Once you decide, make sure everyone in the group has the details for next week's Third Place.

1. Where is the event taking place? If it's not a public place, does the host need help preparing? How can your group help the host prepare? (mow the lawn, clean, set up, bring extra tables, chairs, coolers)

2. What time is the event taking place? This may seem obvious, but never assume that everyone knows or remembers what time things are happening. Especially if they are not at the planning meeting.
3. What do you need to bring? Will you have food? Games? Music? Make sure everyone knows what they are responsible to bring.
4. Don't forget to invite people! It's really easy to plan an event with your group that ends up being another family gathering because no one invited anyone outside the group. How will you send out invitations? Will you set up a Facebook event, send text messages, emails, or make phone calls? Do it together tonight. If you have friends in common, make sure they get an invite from each of you.
5. Send reminders. Make a plan to send follow up reminders the day before or the day of the event. People are busy and they forget! Unless they have already said they can't come, send out another quick reminder.

Spend some time...

1. Confirming the plan of your Third Place gathering. Make sure everyone knows the details (especially group members that are not present).
2. Reviewing the material for sharing the Gospel from Module A - Month 3 - Week 3. Be ready if God would lead you to share the Gospel with someone.
3. Praying for those you have invited to next week's gathering. Ask God to orchestrate divine appointments and to prepare hearts--yours and theirs.

Week 4 | *In Action*

Go Out and Practice Third Place

Why should we have a Third Place?

As previously mentioned, our culture is not drifting toward the Church. Rather, many people are actively walking away from the Church. There is a need now more than ever to go and make disciples just as Jesus commissioned us to do.

Matthew 28:18–20

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Let's Practice!

Tonight you will go out and engage in the Third Place that you decided on in Week 3. As you go home from your Third Place, ask yourselves the following questions.

1. What did you enjoy about your Third Place?
2. How did you feel God moving in your interactions with others?
3. How can you make Third Place a regular rhythm in your City Group?

Module B | *Biblical Community*

How do we know, love and worship Jesus in the context of community?

Month 8 | *Living in Biblical Community*

Material Overview:

Week 1: Bible Study

Material Focus: The “One Anothers” of Scripture
Scripture Passages: John 13:34-35; Romans 12:9-21; 1 Peter 2:9-10

Week 2: Family Meal

Family meal, discussion, and prayer
Experiencing and fostering biblical community

Week 3: In Action

Material Focus: Prayer Walks
Group will do a prayer walk through their Third Place

Week 4: Celebration & Review

Celebration Checkpoint

The “One-Anothers” of Scripture

Before You Study

- Read John 13:34-35; Romans 12:9-21; 1 Peter 2:9-10
- Pay attention to the characteristics of biblical community.

What does it mean to live in Biblical Community?

Last week, we talked about the value of gathering as a group at a Third Place. Third Places are neutral and natural spaces in our city where groups can engage people who may not believe the same things or live the same way. By practicing Third Places, City Groups proactively move toward people who do not know Jesus.

This week, we are turning our attention to living in biblical community with one another. At this point, we’ve learned that the Gospel doesn’t just get us into heaven later, but it brings us into a new redeemed family right now. When you place your faith in Jesus, you not only receive a reconciled relationship with the Father, but you are brought into a new spiritual family. So what does life in this new spiritual family look like? How do we speak, love, pray for, and resolve conflict with one another? The good news is that God has given us 59 different “one-another” commands in Scripture. This is not an obligatory to-do list, but a gracious picture of our call to a countercultural life that builds others up and puts the power of God on display to the watching world.

Instead of walking through all 59 one-anothers, we will highlight some of the primary themes we see in Scripture. These commands are more than just good ideas for a healthy City Group. They are a call to God’s people to live in such a way that we would display the humility, love, and kindness of Jesus to one another and to the watching world. This kind of biblical love is fueled by the Gospel and sustained by the Spirit of Jesus working in and through us.

What does the Bible say?

Unity

1 Corinthians 1:10 - "I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment."

Humility

Philippians 2:3 - "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves."

Love

John 13:34 - "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."

Hospitality

1 Peter 4:9 - "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling."

Forgiveness

Ephesians 4:32 - "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Acceptance

Romans 15:7 - "Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."

Encouragement

Hebrews 3:13 - "But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

Confession and Prayer

James 5:16 - "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."

How do I apply what I learned?

Spend some time discussing these questions:

1. Who was your first Christian friend that showed you the love of Jesus? How did that make God's love for you more tangible?
2. Share about a time when you prayed, served, or encouraged another believer? How did that impact that person's life? How did God work in your own heart through it?
3. When have you ever been hurt by Christian community or by another believer? What has been the process of forgiveness, restoration, and reconciliation?
4. How has this City Group been a blessing to you? What "one-anothers" are being lived out in a way that helps you grow in your love and care for others?

Praying Truth

Take time to pray with your City Group.

Praise. Praise God for not being a distant God, but drawing near to us.

Admit. Confess to the Lord and ask for forgiveness.

Request. Ask that your relationship with the Lord would foster intimacy and growth.

Thank. Thank God for giving us the good gift of community.

Helpful Resources

City Groups Resource - List of the Biblical One-Anothers
"Community" - Brad House

Week 2 | The Family Meal

Experiencing the Family

The Gospel brings us into God's family. As believers, we are more than a Bible study or a support group, we are a family! Families share life as they gather around tables and enjoy meals together. That's why this week your City Group will be sharing a meal together.

Meals were at the very core of Jesus' ministry as he often ate with His disciples, sinners and unbelievers, and many other friends along the way (Matthew. 9:9-17, 26:20-30; Luke 10:38-42). The early church did more than just gather at the temple for preaching, they met in homes to eat with one another, encourage one another, and point one another back to Jesus.

"They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." (Acts 2:46)

Why are Tables so important?

Meals remind us of God's Provision. God is gracious to provide us with food, but ultimately we want to remember that Jesus is God's ultimate provision. He is the bread of life who saves sinners (John 6:35).

Meals remind us of our Humanity. You may be strong or weak, young or old, rich or poor, but eating together reminds us that we are all humans who get hungry and need food.

Meals create space for Community. God has not left us alone. He gives us a community to belong to. The dinner table is a space to share stories, joys, pains, and hopes with other believers (Romans 12:15).

Coaching for Family Meals

- Communicate with the group at least one week in advance that you are doing a Family Meal.
- Pick a main dish or theme (i.e. taco night) and invite group members to bring a side to share.
- The host should prepare by making sure there is enough seating for everyone.
- Remind the group why family meals are important and introduce the Connection Questions for the night.
- And remember to have fun! Laughter and fun help build deep friendships.

Connecting Around the Table

Share a meal together. As you eat, walk through these questions together!

1. What was your favorite band, song, or movie growing up?
2. What was your first experience with Christian community? What was good or hard about it?
3. Why have you committed to Christian community and how are you hoping God uses you to bless or build up others?

Week 3 | *Equipping*

Third Place Prayer Walk

Tonight, you will be going out and doing a prayer walk through your City Group's Third Place. Prayer is a labor, but we believe that God hears and answers prayer! In the book of Acts, the Gospel is preached, thousands of people respond in faith, the church is born, and we see the good news of Christ advance across cultural, political, racial, and geographical boundaries. What preceded this powerful move of God was not a capital campaign, a marketing plan, or the recruitment of talented communicators. It was a group of ordinary Christians faithfully praying. Prayer is the primary work of God's people!

Acts 1:14 - All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer

Coaching for the Prayer Walk

Tonight, break into groups of 2-3 and head out on a prayer walk through your group's Third Place. Feel free use the prayer prompts listed below or to pray as the Holy Spirit prompts. If opportunities present themselves, stop and start a conversation with someone you pass by. As a group, agree to meet back up at a specific time and location. Spend time debriefing with the discussion questions and close in prayer as a big group.

1. Pray that you'd be able to form new relationships with people and have open doors to pursue spiritual conversations (Romans 10:14).
2. Pray for a love for lost people and a boldness to share your story and the Gospel with them (Ephesians 6:19).
3. Pray that the people you meet would have multiple Christians pursuing them and inviting them into community (1 Corinthians 3:6).
4. Pray that God would give people a hunger for Him and His Word and distaste for sin. Pray that people would see the emptiness of their idolatry, rebellion, and pursuit of worldly desires.

5. Pray that God would use your City Group to help others come to know Jesus.

6. Pray that God would remove Satan's blinding influence (2 Corinthians 4:4).

· Pray for an opportunity to serve people in a practical way even on this very prayer walk (Matthew 5:16).

Discussion

1. What did God reveal to you as you prayed for others?
2. What kind of burden, conviction, or anticipation of God moving was stirred within you?

Week 4 | *Celebration Checkpoint*

Assessing Growth

Congratulations, you've made it through **Module B!** As you look back on these past four months, take a moment to reflect. Each module is not independent of the other modules, but rather works with them in order for you to experience greater depths of learning and discipleship.

As you reflect on your past four months with your City Group, discuss these questions:

1. What has God been teaching you and your group?
2. How has your group grown together as a family?
3. How can you invite others into experiencing biblical community?

Don't forget the Gospel

If the most important Core Value at Citylight is the Gospel, why don't we dedicate a module to that? Actually, the Gospel is necessarily interwoven throughout each module. While spiritual formation, community, and mission are the focuses of each module, the Gospel is the foundation on which they sit. The Gospel is the cause, while spiritual formation, community, and mission are the effects it should have on one's life.

As you continue reflecting, ask yourself how Jesus' life, death, and resurrection has impacted your learning and discipleship:

1. How does Biblical community give you a greater understanding of the Gospel?
2. How does the Gospel empower you to live in biblical community?

Pray and Celebrate!

Reflect and celebrate over the last 8 months how God has changed you and your City Group through your study of Scripture, community with one another, and equipping for mission.

Pray and thank God for His love that He has shown us through Jesus Christ. Ask God to continue to transform your life and use your City Group as a missional community for His glory!