



Gather & Pray

Title: Spiritual Formation Booklet

Developed by the “Pilot Group” of SonRise Church, Pueblo West, Colorado.
Adapted for Whole Church Initiative with permission and gratitude.

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Deep Dive

“Deep Dive” is a process modeled after the company IDEO, a design and innovation consulting firm based in California.

This material is used by Spiritual Leadership, Inc., a non-profit ministry that has been coaching church leaders and teams since 2000. Others are welcome to use it in their own ministry.

Process

The group views together the 1999 ABC Nightline video featuring the “Deep Dive” process of IDEO. At the time of this booklet printing, the video could easily be found by searching “IDEO Shopping Cart Project” on YouTube. The full video is approximately twenty minutes long and may be found in three parts. There are also more condensed versions available.

After the video, the facilitator can lead the group in discussion. The following are examples that the facilitator may wish to focus upon around IDEO’s process:

- Diversity of the group members and strengths they each contribute to the process
- Leadership style and how it promotes or takes away from innovation
- Other elements within the process that contribute to the effectiveness of generating the best ideas

The facilitator then bridges the discussion, asking how IDEO’s process relates to kingdom-building work within covenant community.

Notes

- This video and discussion is helpful for a group who is tasked with innovation of any kind. It also can help set positive expectations around group dynamics in newly formed groups.
- Any or all of IDEO’s process can be utilized within a group discernment process. For example, colored sticky notes can be used anonymously in order to “vote” on ideas generated in a group.

Reference

KyrlyTube. “IDEO Shopping Cart Project.” Online video clip. YouTube, 4 February 2013. Web. 7 July 2015.



Follow Me x 2

Follow Me x 2 is a discussion process around two examples in scripture of Jesus making the invitation to follow Him. This material was developed by Spiritual Leadership, Inc., a non-profit ministry that has been coaching church leaders and teams since 2000. Others are welcome to use it in their own ministry.

Process

The facilitator introduces two scripture passages: Matthew 4:18-22 and John 21:15-19. These texts may be read out loud by any group member. The group is then invited to reflect upon and discuss the following questions:

- What are the implications in the first “follow me”? What is happening?
- What are the implications the second time? What is happening?
- Where do you think you are? Where are you called to go?
- What kind of environment is going to call people to the second level?

Take notes that the group can see, perhaps using a T-chart for comparing the texts.

Notes

- This activity is excellent as an early group formation exercise - the feeling of saying “yes” to an invitation is still fresh. As such, the facilitator should focus upon affirming those who risk sharing openly and drawing out participation from as many in the group as possible. Watch and note the group dynamics as well as the comfort level in talking about following Jesus. Listen for overlap in responses, revealing common reasons for the group gathering and journeying together for the upcoming season.
- Depending on what the facilitator would like to draw out of the activity, different versions may be used for each text. If the discussion gravitates toward version preference, focus on the message of the texts.
- This activity can serve as an introduction to Lectio Divina by simply adapting the process. For instance, the facilitator may wish to have the passages read several times, allowing rest and discussion around the questions in between readings.
- If the facilitator senses the group might focus too much on getting the “right answers,” wait to introduce the questions until after open discussion. Most likely, the “answers” will rise up with or without the questions.



Covenant Prayer

The Covenant Prayer was written by John Wesley, founder of the Wesleyan/Methodist movement. This prayer is appropriate for any and all occasions, but especially when the individual or group needs or desires to yield to God's path for the moment or the future.

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
thou art mine, and I am thine.
So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven.
Amen.

Process

This prayer can be prayed individually or corporately, spoken or silently. It can be used at any time during a gathering – beginning, end, or to refocus the group during times of activity transitions.

Notes

- The words of this prayer can be adapted to better reflect today's dialect. For example, "thine" and "thee" can be changed to "You" or "God."
- This prayer can provide an option for the Lectio Divina process (see page 13), or paired with journaling (see page 11).



God Sightings

Glory is God's Incarnated Awesomeness! Where have we seen God at work in the world? When was the last time you told someone a story about some incredible work you witnessed God doing?

Paul witnessed to the work of the Holy Spirit in the world. Despite all the challenges, problems, and life-threatening situations he faced, this was agenda item #1. We glorify God when we notice all the intricate and amazing things God does in our lives and in the world, whether things that are so small we sometimes overlook them or so huge that we are overwhelmed.

Followers of Jesus share tales of God's work in the world, our stories of how God has shown up and shown off. When we tell the stories, the Holy Spirit grows the Church deeper and stronger in the midst of the listening. When we share God Sightings, we praise and glorify God, encourage others on their walk with God, and increase our confidence in the present day activity of the Holy Spirit.

Process

Take turns sharing how you have seen God working in your community and in the world. Share and celebrate life transformation and God stories.

References

- *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* by Reggie McNeal



Gratitude

Gratitude is a matter of attitude! For instance, an attitude of gratitude for salvation in Christ is genuine and keeps us in right relation to God. Studies have shown that expressing gratitude regularly helps promote joy and other positive emotions. The purpose of this exercise is for the group members to experience and share a memory of being truly grateful for God's grace in their lives.

Process

The group leader introduces "gratitude" as a word that defines the appreciation we have for God's Word, Creation, and Love for us. The leader starts the group by sharing a story of gratitude or a Bible verse that captures the joy in being thankful (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 5:18). This does not have to be dramatic but needs to be genuine in setting the tone for the group.

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina, translated as "Divine Reading," is an ancient practice of reading and meditating on scripture. Individuals or groups engage in a process of reading, silence, listening, and sharing around a passage, usually no more than a paragraph in length. The process seeks to reveal the Word as living text through which God speaks to us – yesterday, today, and always.

Process

The process can vary, based on time allotted or group size. Ruth Haley Barton in *Sacred Rhythms* lists four "movements" to the Lectio Divina process: Read, Reflect, Respond, and Rest (56-58).

1. **Reading** may be silent and aloud, using different "voices" (male/female, varying ages/volumes/tones/speeds, etc.) if done in a group setting. Typically the same version of the passage is read, but some groups find hearing different versions to be beneficial.
2. **Reflection** comes as group members listen for what words or phrases are "rising up" or speaking to them, and ponder why they believe this is so.
3. **Responses** may be brief and given freely – participants may share the words or phrases that are rising up during their reflection, or what these words and phrases call out from them. No one is required to provide a reason or application of the text.



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4. **Resting** takes place in silence, allowing the text to plant itself as a seed of God's unconditional love within the hearts of the participants.

Notes

- Lectio is excellent for when an individual or group, for any reason, needs to slow down and focus on quality in reading of Scripture, rather than quantity. Highly valuable for when scripture has become "too familiar" – it provides a fresh look.
- Before engaging in the process as a group, the facilitator should explain the steps and select readers so that the time can flow freely without interruption. Context (where the text fits within the biblical narrative) may also be helpful to explain before reading.
- Look and listen for where the Spirit is moving during the process, especially during the response time. Sometimes a particular word or phrase stands out for multiple people, and other times something different stands out for each individual. Both are recognized patterns of the Spirit moving.
- Allow and affirm wrestling and unanswered questions, evidence of the living Word of God speaking to and refining us today.

Example texts

- Exodus 33:12-17
- Psalm 139
- Matthew 25:31-46
- John 15:1-17

Modifications

Lectio Divina can also be done with song lyrics or other texts that are rich with sacred meaning. Select a hymn where the lyrics are familiar, and read it both with and without music. Singing the song can replace or follow resting.

Recommended Resource

Chapter 3 of *Sacred Rhythms* by Ruth Haley Barton



Mary and Martha

The sisters Mary and Martha represent two different ways of serving the Lord, as stated in Luke 10:38-42. Mary chose to sit at Jesus' feet listening to what Jesus was saying while Martha worked to make all the preparations to physically serve Jesus who had been invited to stay in their home.

Process

Introduce the scripture (Luke 10:38-42). The text may be read out loud by any group member. Invite the group to reflect upon and discuss the following questions:

- Who do you most closely relate to, Mary or Martha? In what way?
- If you are more a Martha, how can you work on better listening to Jesus as a Mary?
- If you are more a Mary, how can you work on better serving Jesus as a Martha?
- Do you feel that one way is better than the other to relate to Jesus? Explain your reasons.

Media Reflection

Movies and music videos often contain spiritual themes that reflect our culture, values and norms. These can be an excellent source for reflection and discussion.

Process

Movies provide context for what people in our culture are thinking and responding to in their lives. Most genres will do so; look for themes like forgiveness, redemption, liminal space, teamwork, relationships, courage, and ethical dilemmas. Look beyond just plot and character. Set aside time to watch the movie/video together and for discussion time. Music videos are also often intriguing if you look beyond the obvious.

Recommended Movies:

- *Chocolat*
- *The Secret Life of Bees*
- *Saving Mr. Banks*
- *Places in the Heart*
- *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- *Akeelah and the Bee*
- *Macfarlane USA*
- *Road to Utopia*
- *Little Boy*
- *The Shawshank Redemption*
- *Lars and the Real Girl*
- *Freedom Writers*
- *The Book Thief*
- *The Milagro*
- *Beanfield War*
- *The King's Speech*



Rice Paper Confessions

Rice Paper Confessions offer a tangible symbol of the forgiveness we receive through Jesus Christ when we confess our sins to God. This is a meaningful spiritual formation tool to use during Lent.

Process

The facilitator begins with a scripture reading, or liturgy to set the mind in a spirit of repentance. Allow a time of prayer. Invite participants to write a burden/sin/confession on the rice paper, and place it in a bowl of water on the altar or in a place created to invite God's presence. Watch the "sin" disappear, signifying that God has forgiven it, and it is forever gone and forgotten. An ending prayer may be offered, or the group may pray the Lord's Prayer together.

Notes

- Materials needed: squares of rice paper (available at Hobby Lobby), pencils, bowl of water.
- Be creative with the setting, using inspirational music, candlelight, a cross to kneel before and pray, etc.



What Would You Tell a Middle-Schooler?

“What would you tell a middle-schooler?” is a question for individual reflection and/or group discussion.

Process

Invite participants to reflect upon what they would tell a middle-schooler, based on what they know now. Ask the group to remember what they focused on, found happiness in, worried about, and struggled with in middle school. If they could go back and share wisdom with their middle-school selves, what would they say? The group should be encouraged to go deeper than surface answers of “do well in school” or “listen to your parents” – what would speak to the heart and character of a middle-schooler?

How the conversation is processed is up to the group. The reflections could continue through individuals’ prayer time throughout the week. The group could also be challenged to pray for and seek out a middle-schooler in their life – not necessarily to share the reflections, but to listen and build a relationship.

Notes

- If the activity is done as a group, the facilitator should help the group avoid criticizing “young people today.” The point of the exercise is not to compare the challenges faced or parenting methods between generations. Young adolescents of every generation have experienced similar feelings and struggles throughout the ages. Focus the conversation on the emotional and spiritual aspects of humanity.
- This activity is a great kick-start to any project that serves children; the question can be adapted to reflect the age group served. The question focuses a group on the purpose of the project, along with the posture and heart of those serving.