

GOOD GROUND

Guided discussions and exercises to help you learn more about who God is, who you are and explore practical ways to prioritise your spiritual growth.



GOOD GROUND

Adapted from North Point Community Church Ministries (North Point Partners – Further Faster Network) & Finchampsted Baptist Church.

Scripture references are taken from NIV unless otherwise stated.

GOOD GROUND

Jesus told His disciples a parable about a farmer who went out to sow some seeds. The farmer scattered seeds on different types of ground. Some seed fell on a path, some on rocky ground, some among thorns, and some fell on good ground (you can find the parable in Luke 8:4-15).

Each type of ground provided different environments for the seeds to grow in and resulted in varying outcomes and degrees of growth. Unsurprisingly, the only seeds that grew successfully were the ones that landed on good ground.

Jesus explains that the seed is the Word of God and the soil, our hearts: ***"the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop."***

Faith is an adventure that Jesus calls us to – it's active, not passive. It's important to remember that it's God who helps us to grow – who transforms us to be more like Jesus, through the Holy Spirit.

As His followers, Jesus also invites us to work in partnership with Him. As we do, we help to shape the environment that supports our spiritual growth – we become 'good ground'.

Perhaps you've recently come to faith? Maybe you're new to church, or you've done Alpha and are wondering – what's next? Maybe you just want a place to start or to find the next step in your relationship with Jesus...

Good Ground is a way of learning more about who God is, who He has created you to be, and exploring some of the 'tools' that can help you prioritise and invest in your spiritual growth.

We pray that working through this resource with your mentor will equip you for what God wants to grow in your life.



Session One

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble.

ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10 [NLT]

GETTING STARTED

Over the next three months, you'll work through guided discussions and exercises that aim to help you gain a better understanding of who God is, who you are, and practical ways to prioritise and invest in your spiritual growth.

Each session introduces a theme or scripture for you to unpack together and gives you try out exercises to help you explore further or put into practice what you are learning.

Your mentor will have a journal for you to use as you work through the material. You can use it to write down your thoughts, feelings, and prayers. It's a great way to look back and see how God was working in your life during this time.

Use the session outline on the back page to set some dates for your meetings as you begin together.

You can find links to resources and the 'try out' application exercises at: MAYBRIDGE.ORG.UK/GOOD-GROUND

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

This first session is to help the two of you get to know each other.

SHARE

Take turns sharing a little about yourselves.

If it's helpful, use these prompts as a guide for what to share:

- Where are you from?
- What is something not many people know about you?
- Describe your family.
- Describe your faith background.
- Describe a person or event that has influenced who you are today.
- What are you hoping to take away from the next three months?

TRY OUT

Application Exercises

(Choose one to complete before the next session.)

- Write down three things you are thankful for every day this week.
- Find a regular time to pray. Sometimes we can be easily distracted when we pray. One way to help us stay focused on our prayers is to write them down. Spend a few minutes each day writing your prayers in your journal.

PRAY

Spend a few moments praying for your time together. Paul was a leader of the early Church and regularly prayed for the spiritual growth of the believers in his care. You may wish to echo his prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21 as you begin your sessions together.

Session Two

CONNECTING WITH GOD

*Then Jesus said,
"Come to me, all you who are weary
and burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn
from me, for I am gentle and humble
in heart, and you will find rest for
your souls."*

MATTHEW 11:28-29

LOOK BACK

Take some time to discuss how you found the 'try out' exercises from the last session.

INTRODUCTION

There are times when the idea of daily time with God can feel like flossing your teeth – you know it's helpful, but it feels like something you ought to do rather than want to do. These types of tasks fizzle quickly and lead us to do them half-heartedly, if at all. We want the positive results of the discipline, yet the biggest challenge is often choosing – and desiring – to take the step.

But what if we saw it differently? What if we saw this as a daily invitation to connect with the Creator of the universe? The same God who placed the stars in the sky and the sand on the beach is the same God who knows us by name – the one whose love for us never ends and never fails, even when we don't feel lovable. That is the God who invites us to connect with Him daily as our perfect heavenly Father.

This is not a task to be checked off a to-do list. It's not about academic study or reading a certain number of pages each day in the Bible. Even when the busyness of life, or other challenging circumstances eat up our time and make it difficult to prioritise God, He wants us to know that He is with us and that we can come to Him.

There will be days when we don't want to pray, journal, or read the Bible, and He knows. It's a relationship. We don't always feel close, but He is still there.

It's about connecting with God.

In our daily lives, He wants to show us how good He is and how He is with us in everything. We can enjoy the invitation of a relationship with Him. You might connect through listening to music, reading Scripture or a passage in a book, going on a run, expressing appreciation to Him in a journal, or enjoying a sunset and reflecting on where you are in life. The point of these private disciplines is simply connecting with God!

God wants a personal relationship with each of us, and we want to help one another take steps in His direction.

DISCUSS

Questions to process together

- Has there ever been a time when you saw a long-term benefit of a daily habit? What made it difficult to continue? Was there anything that helped make it easier?
- In your mind, what could connecting with God look like? What private disciplines or practices could you put in place to make time with God a priority in the midst of your daily routine?
- Often when we connect with God, we learn more about His character or what He desires for our lives. What do you think would be a benefit of prioritising time with God during your day?

READ

John 15:1-17

Read Jesus' words to His disciples in John 15:1–17.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know His master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.

DISCUSS

Questions to process together

In this passage, Jesus touches on a few ways His followers are to grow in our faith – things like; private disciplines, intentional community, and active faith.

- Where do you see these three areas in this passage?
- What stands out or catches your attention in this passage?
- What questions does it raise? Is there anything that's difficult to understand?
- What do you think it meant to the disciples?
- What do you think this could mean for us today? How can we apply this to our life?

EXERCISE

Our Priorities

Use the grid overleaf or divide a sheet of paper into four sections. Complete each of the following steps before moving to the next line.

1. In the first section list the five things that take up most of your time (e.g. work, family, shopping, hobbies, God...).
2. In the second section, list the five things in order of how you prioritise them. (What do you value the most? What gets the most energy from you?)
3. In the third section, list how you think God would want you to prioritise them.
4. In the last section, remove God from the list, and then prioritise them.

DISCUSS

- How do you see this list differently when you realise you don't need to add God to the list?
- God is actually the page/paper – He wants to be a part of each aspect of your life.

TRY OUT

Application Exercises

Many of the try out exercises in this mentoring booklet are aimed at stepping out in one or more of the three areas we looked at earlier – private disciplines, intentional community, and active faith.

(Choose one to complete before the next session.)

- For three days this week, ask God to show you how He is working in your life. At the end of the day, write in your journal anything you noticed that might be God's goodness around you.
- This week, read through a YouVersion plan together. (We suggest 'Come Near, a six day reading plan on hearing from God from Northpoint Community Church.) In YouVersion, send a message each day sharing one thing you learned or that resonated with you.
- Read a Proverb each day this week (e.g., on the 15th, read Proverbs 15:15). Pray and ask God to teach you about who He is during your time together. Write in your journal a characteristic of God or principle of life the Proverb showed each day.

You can find links to resources and the 'Try Out' application exercises by scanning the QR code or by heading to:

[MAYBRIDGE.ORG.UK/GOOD-GROUND](https://www.maybridge.org.uk/good-ground)

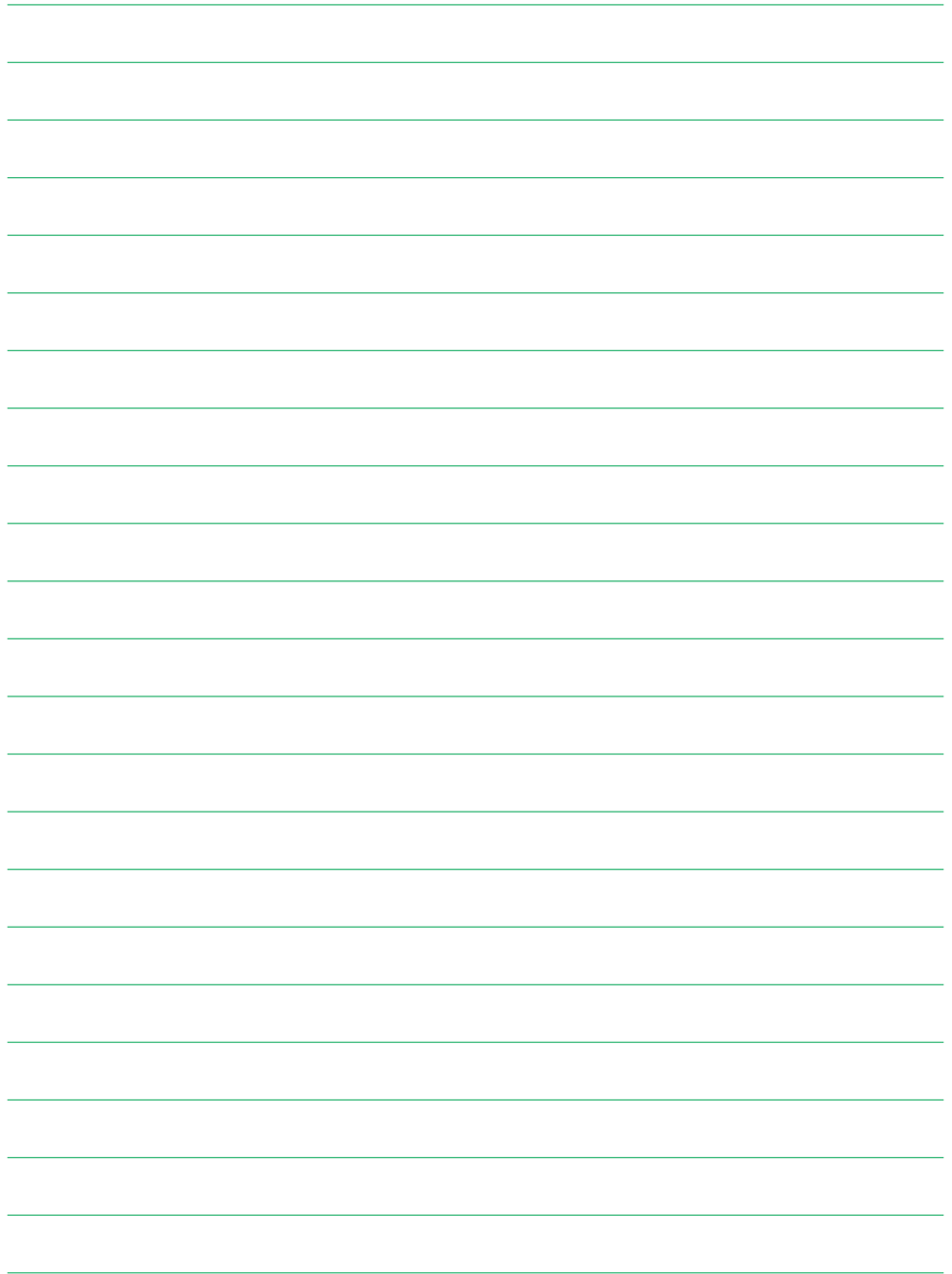


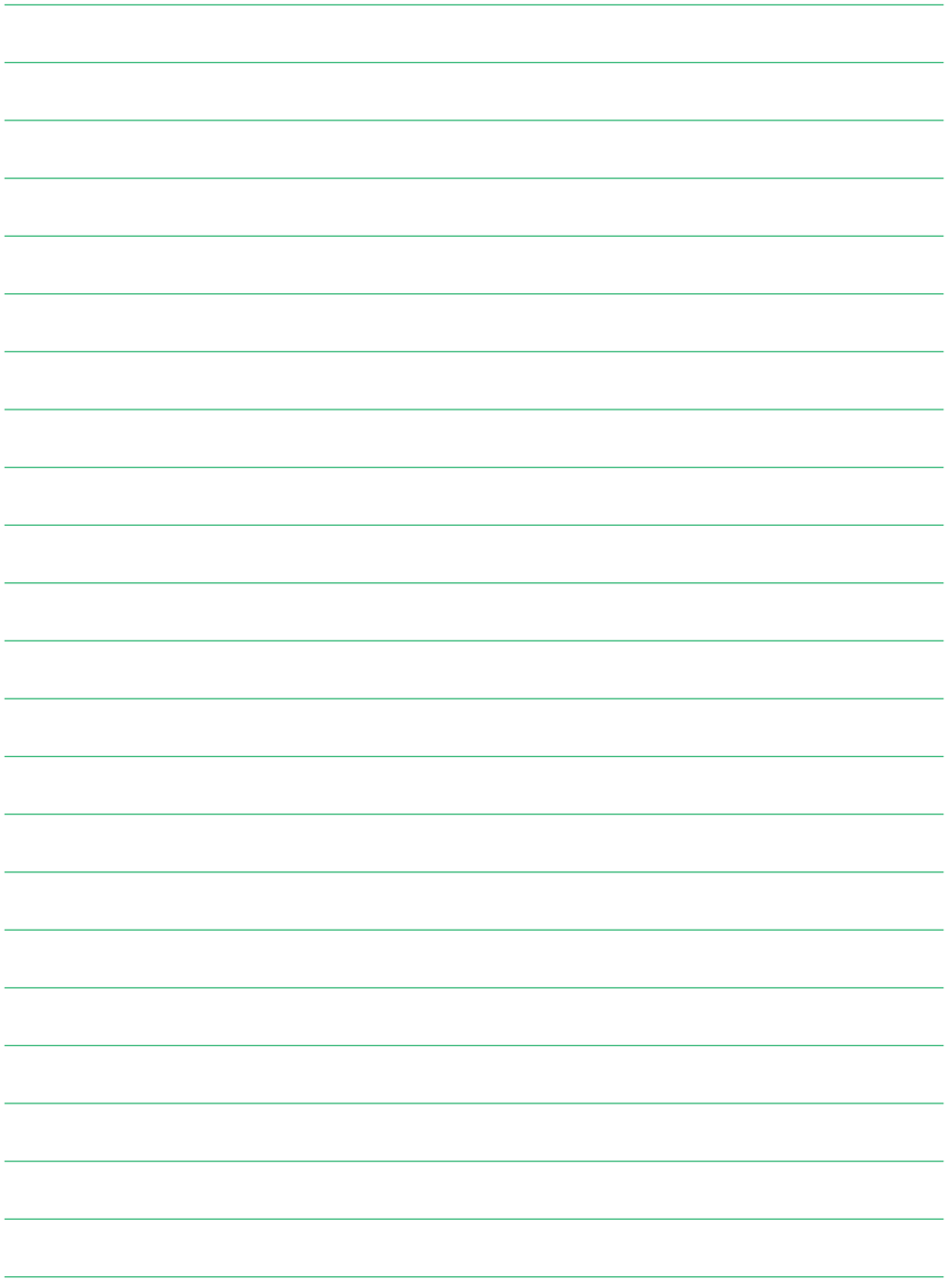
1.

2.

3.

4.





Session Three

HOW GOD MADE YOU

*For we are God's masterpiece.
He has created us anew in Christ
Jesus, so we can do the good things
He planned for us long ago.*

EPHESIANS 2:10 [NLT]

LOOK BACK

Take some time to discuss how you found the application exercises from last session.

INTRODUCTION

Today, we're going to look at the importance of understanding how God made you. This is important because we believe disciples are handcrafted by God, not mass produced. In other words, there are going to be differences in the practices and preferences we have when it comes to our spiritual growth, and that's okay. Part of our growth lies in understanding our wiring and the ways we enjoy connecting with God.

PART 1 - TEMPERAMENT: UNDERSTANDING THE WAY YOU'RE WIRED

Your temperament is how you are wired. It influences everything you say and do, and it doesn't change over time. You can look back over your life and see evidence of your temperament as far back as you can remember. Your temperament is a good gift God has given you. He doesn't see it as a liability, nor does He make one temperament more important or better than another.

There are four temperaments. Below is a broad explanation of each:

Sanguine (Yellow)

Sanguines are naturally outgoing, optimistic, and carefree. They are extroverted and easily liked by others.

Choleric (Red)

Cholerics tend to be goal oriented and natural leaders. They are straightforward, logical in their thinking, and ambitious.

Melancholic (Blue)

Melancholics find comfort in predictability and stability. They enjoy details, accuracy, and logic.

Phlegmatic (Green)

Phlegmatics seek harmony and peace in relationships. They are loyal, sincere, and consistent.

Knowing your wiring is important because it helps us empathise and extend grace to others who aren't wired the way we are, especially when those wirings cross. We understand their wiring is also a gift from God and meant to help us learn to live and love one another better. This is one of the ways we exhibit unconditional love: learning to celebrate one another's differences.

DISCUSS

Questions to process together

- When we talk through the four temperaments, is there one you connect with more than the others?
- What does it mean to you to know that your temperament is a good gift God has given you?

PART 2 - SPIRITUAL PATHWAYS: UNDERSTANDING THE WAYS YOU ENJOY CONNECTING WITH GOD

Getting to know yourself better helps understand the ways you most enjoy connecting with God. You might have been told about ways to connect with God, but when you tried them, they didn't work for you, resulting in frustration and even guilt. Part of this might be due to your temperament, which is why it's helpful to understand your wiring. The great thing is that God is not limited in His ability to connect with us. Understanding how we connect with God helps us plan our times with Him. We find ourselves looking forward to being with Him and are more likely to prioritise time with Him each day.

Here are nine "spiritual pathways" (ways most people connect with God):

- Naturalist: Draws near to God through nature
- Traditionalist: Draws near to God through ritual and symbol
- Activist: Draws near to God through bringing about social change
- Enthusiast: Draws near to God through celebration and mystery
- Intellectual: Draws near to God through their minds
- Sensate: Draws near to God through the senses
- Ascetic: Draws near to God through solitude and simplicity
- Caregiver: Draws near to God through caring for and serving others
- Contemplative: Draws near to God through personal adoration of God and heartfelt devotion

DISCUSS

Questions to process together

- Throughout your faith journey, have you heard about – or observed others – connecting with God in ways that shaped how you tried to connect with Him? How did this affect your relationship with God?
- When we explore the nine pathways, are there any that resonate with you?
- What are some steps you can take to begin to implement these pathways and be more intentional about connecting with God on a regular basis? Any you may like to explore or try?

TRY OUT

Application Exercises

- Complete the online free assessments (provided by North Point Ministries) to discover your temperament and spiritual pathway.
- Based on your pathway results, pick the pathway with the highest score and practice it each day this week. Next, reflect on how your time with God felt different and write down any observations.
- In addition to doing the assessments and putting one of the pathways into practice, we suggest doing another YouVersion Bible plan together: "Flourish in Identity."

Find links to the 'Try Out' exercises and assessments at:

[MAYBRIDGE.ORG.UK/GOOD-GROUND](https://www.maybridge.org.uk/good-ground)

Session Four

WHAT'S GETTING IN YOUR WAY?

*Search me, God, and know
my heart; test me and know
my anxious thoughts.*

PSALM 139:23

LOOK BACK

Take some time to discuss how you found the application exercises from last session.

What were the results of your assessments, and do you feel that the results resonate with you? How did you lean into your top result over the week?

INTRODUCTION

When you make a commitment to grow closer to Jesus, there will inevitably be hurdles to overcome. These obstacles show up in different forms and at different times in a believer's journey. It could be your own motivation – or life circumstances that take your time, energy, or attention away from making growth a priority. It might be that you find it difficult to understand aspects of faith or theology and it holds you back.

SHARE

Take some time to assess where you stand today in your relationship with God. Can you look back over the past several weeks and see a difference in your life? Have you seen any positive changes because of the time you've spent cultivating your faith every day, or are there ways you're still stuck or struggling?

Jesus tells us in John 16:33: *"In this world you will have trouble."* We know there will be tough times and valleys – that's part of being human. Jesus goes on to say, *"But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

The goal of our spiritual journey isn't having a trouble-free life, but having an intimate relationship with God,

who nurtures, protects, provides, and comforts us – a relationship that offers hope and peace amid troubles.

As with any relationship, it can be tough to measure the depth of your connection. There are always new things to learn about the other person, new ways to trust them more, and new ways to depend on them as you draw closer to each other. When you apply this to your relationship with God, you can trust that He is ready to meet you right where you are. *"Come near to God and He will come near to you"* (James 4:8).

So far, you've given one or two spiritual practices a try and hopefully have started seeing some benefits as a result. You've also taken steps toward understanding your unique contribution to God's work in the world based on your temperament, gifts, and personality. What is going to keep you moving forward from here?

DISCUSS

Questions to process together

- When you initially made the commitment to work with a mentor, what was the driving force behind that decision?
- Is that same motivation enough to sustain a continued commitment to growing your relationship with God? Why or why not?
- Is there any new information about Christianity or faith that makes you feel stuck, confused, or derailed in this new pursuit? How can we work through that?
- Where are you running into resistance? What's making moving forward hard for you?

NEXT TIME

After this session, the next meeting will be in two weeks instead of one week. Remember that your mentor is available, but also that these sessions were designed to help you take ownership of your faith, relying primarily on your own motivation and commitment to keep going.

TRY OUT

Application Exercises

(Choose one to complete before the next session.)

- Reach out to your mentor between sessions and report how you're doing with the spiritual practices you've put in place.
- Intentional Community is one of the ways that help us grow our faith – that's why 'we do life together' is one of our values. Share with a trusted friend the spiritual practice you'd like to prioritise. Ask them to check in with you each week (or even multiple times each week) to see how it's going. Let them know how it's impacting your relationship with God or what obstacles are getting in the way.
- If you identified a roadblock in your spiritual growth during this session, take a step to remove it. Choose a roadblock to face head-on, asking God to help you conquer it.

Session Five

ACTIVE FAITH

*Command them to do good, to be rich
in good deeds, and to be generous
and willing to share.*

1 TIMOTHY 6:18

LOOK BACK

Take some time to discuss how you found the application exercises from last session.

Do you have any questions that arose from the discussion around roadblocks?

INTRODUCTION

If you've ever been in a romantic relationship, you've probably seen that engaging in activities important to your romantic partner draws you closer together. This dynamic is also true in our relationship with God. When we actively participate in what God is up to in the world around us, our intimacy with God is bound to grow. Serving others for the sake of God's kingdom helps us see other people the way our heavenly Father sees them. When we act as the hands and feet of God, we better understand His heart.

Engaging in personal ministry helps us grow spiritually. Serving others often moves us out of our comfort zone, making us more aware of our dependence on God. It often fuels our participation in other spiritual disciplines as well. Few things will inspire you more to read your Bible than knowing you will be teaching it to others. Likewise, investing your time and energy in a particular area (joining a serving team, getting involved in a mission charity, local food bank, etc.) often leads to investing financially in that area. This interplay among faith catalysts has a collaborative effect, accelerating our spiritual growth.

There's yet another dynamic at play when we engage in personal ministry.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul explains that followers of Jesus are given spiritual gifts – unique abilities that Paul describes as a “*manifestation of the Spirit... given for the common good*” (1 Corinthians 12:7).

Engaging in personal ministry allows us to use these spiritual gifts (and the natural gifts, talents, and experiences God has given us) to invest in others and advance God's kingdom. When the Holy Spirit acts through us in tangible ways, not only does our confidence in God grow, our intimacy with Him grows as well. In fact, serving others through personal ministry is such an important aspect of our spiritual growth that our growth is often stunted or stagnant when we're not participating in some form of service.

DISCUSS

Questions to process together

- Have you ever taken steps in active faith? Have you ever gone on a mission trip, held a volunteer role at church, or served regularly? How did that affect your spiritual growth?
- Is there an area of ministry that is particularly compelling to you (e.g., working with children or students, leading an adult small group, feeding the poor)?
- Are you aware of your spiritual gifts? What are they? Have you had opportunities to put them to use in active faith? What was that like?
- What breaks your heart? Where do you see God at work in the world around you? Where could you see yourself getting involved?

Session Six

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY

"There can be no maturity in the spiritual life, no obedience in following Jesus, no wholeness in the Christian life, apart from an immersion in, and embrace of, community. I am not myself by myself. Community, not the highly vaunted individualism of our culture, is the setting for living the Christian life."

EUGENE PETERSON

LOOK BACK

Take some time to discuss how you found the application exercises from last session.

Have you taken steps in making your faith more active?

INTRODUCTION

The Bible consistently speaks about the value of community – God’s insistence to Adam to not be alone, the troubles that people in the Old Testament find themselves in when they live life on their own, the stories of Jesus and Paul in the New Testament and how they regularly invited others into authentic relationships with them. Scattered through The Bible is the common theme: God designed us for community.

While our culture may champion individualism and self-sufficiency, God wants us to walk through life with others who are also following Him so that we develop authentic relationships marked by vulnerability, accountability and care.

DISCUSS

Questions to process together

- Who are the people you turn to when you need help or support?
- How would you define friendship? Authentic relationship? Community?
- How have the relationships in your life changed over time? Are you still in relationships with the friends you had growing up? What other relationships have developed through the different seasons of your life?

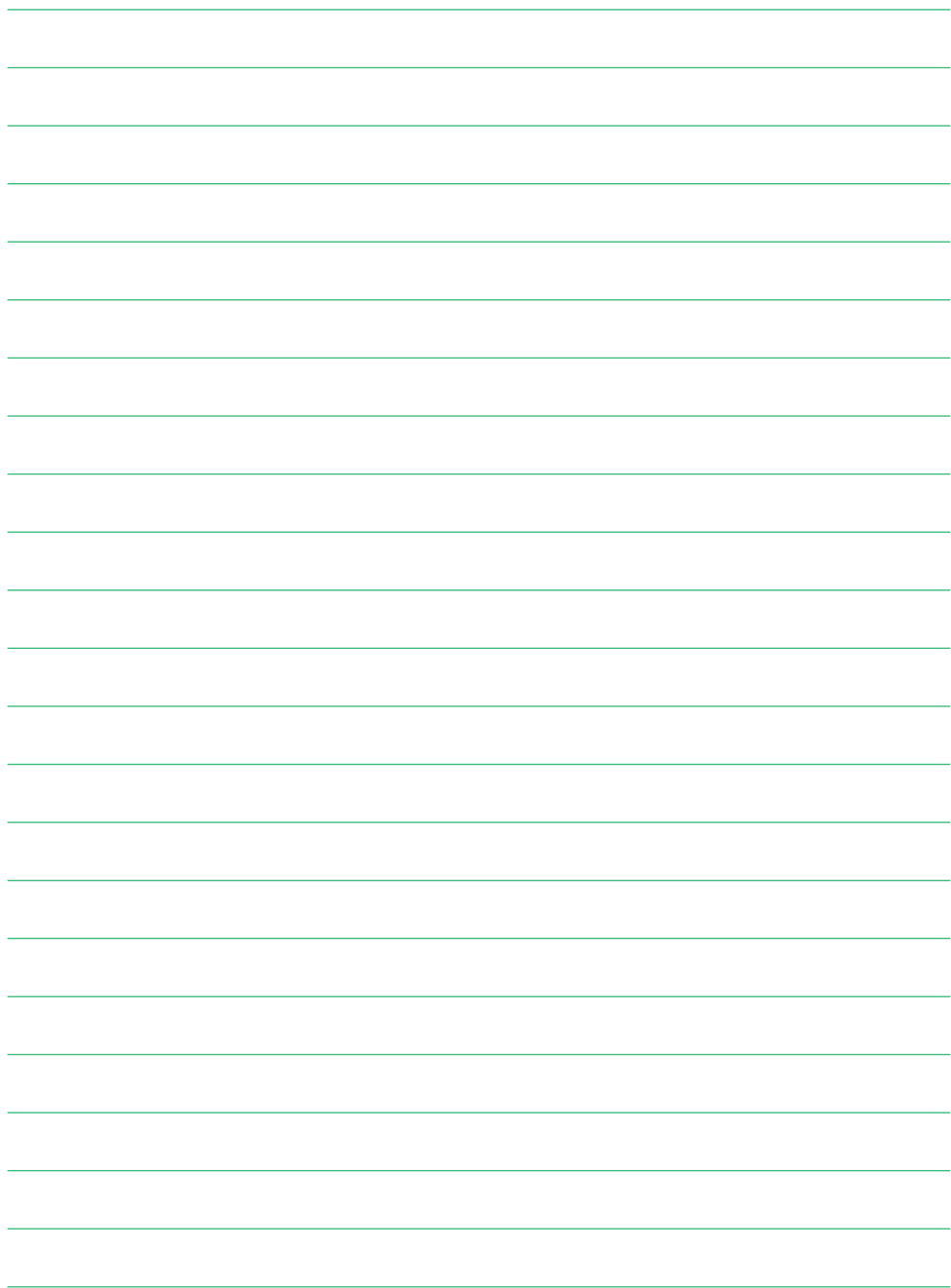
- Most of us have people in our current circle (i.e. co-workers, neighbours, friends, family) who know what’s happening in most areas of our lives. But are there people in your life you trust with the lesser-known parts (i.e. the last 10 percent) and who could speak into them?
- Are there any opportunities for you to develop authentic relationships that will help you grow in all areas?

TRY OUT

Application Exercises

(Choose one to complete before the next session.)

- Identify one person in your life who is actively following Jesus. Ask them to join you in reading a devotional book, completing a free Bible reading plan together on YouVersion, or talking through the Sunday messages together.
- Go along to social events run by Together Groups at Maybridge. They are a great way to get connected with others and find people who can support and encourage you. Find out more maybridge.org.uk/groups.



Session Seven

FOLLOWING JESUS

Then He called the crowd to Him along with His disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

MARK 8:34

LOOK BACK

Take some time to discuss how you found the application exercises from last session.

Do you feel you have intentional community around you, or know what steps to take to lean into that?

INTRODUCTION

You've covered a lot of ground in your journey over the last three months. Look at all you've done together: spending time with God through private disciplines, understanding how God made you, living a life of generosity through active faith, and doing life with other followers of Jesus in intentional community.

And as with any growing relationship, you've probably run into some resistance along the way. But here's what we know... life is complicated. Jesus told us it would be. But when you choose to follow Jesus, you grow in experiencing hope, joy, peace, love, and contentment (to name a few) in spite of your circumstances. Following Jesus makes life better and makes you better at life.

So the question is not, "Where are you on the continuum of spiritual maturity?" The question is, "Are you following Jesus?" That doesn't mean making a radical change all at once. It means taking a next step. Whatever your next step is, take it. Just keep moving. And whatever your current challenge is, that might be where God wants to work in your life.

DISCUSS

Questions to process together

Based on everything we've talked about and the steps you have taken over the last three months:

- What have you enjoyed most?
- Where have you seen the most growth in your relationship with God and other people?
- What has been most challenging for you?
- What is one area you would like to continue to prioritise moving forward? (Maybe it's related to one of the three ways to grow your faith: private disciplines, active faith, and intentional community.)

NOW WHAT?

Application Exercises

We want to support you in taking your next step as a follower of Jesus.

- Commit to a habit (private discipline) moving forward. Arrange a time to catch up with your mentor in a month or so to catch up and see how you are getting on.
- Think about joining a Partnership Group (or a Grow Group if you're in our Amplify youth group) – small groups that support and disciple one another to grow and live in the ways of Jesus. Find out more maybridge.org.uk/groups.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

We'll pair you with a disciple-making mentor who will walk with you for three months.

The goal for this time is that they support you in taking active steps to grow your own faith – understanding better what it means to have a relationship with God, follow Jesus and what you need to do to grow.

Through mentoring you'll be leaning into three areas – active faith, intentional community and personal disciplines. These are helpful catalysts for spiritual growth – your mentor will hold you accountable and walk with you, pointing you to Jesus. The course materials point you to ways you can invest in the disciplines of Bible reading, prayer, silence, and challenge you to step out in faith in your every day life.

You'll meet weekly for the first month, fortnightly in the second, and once in the third month. You'll work through a booklet with your mentor, looking at topics such as who God is, who He has created you to be, and how you can prioritise and invest in your spiritual growth.

MONTH 1

Week One

Session One – *Getting to know each other*

Meeting on: _____

Week Two

Session Two – *Connecting with God*

Meeting on: _____

Week Three

Session Three – *How God made you*

Meeting on: _____

Week Four

Session Four – *What's getting in your way?*

Meeting on: _____

MONTH 2

Week Six

Session Five – *Active Faith*

Meeting on: _____

Week Eight

Session Six – *Intentional Community*

Meeting on: _____

MONTH 3

Week Ten

Session Seven – *Following Jesus*

Meeting on: _____

Find a downloadable version of this booklet, additional resources, plus links to the 'try out' exercises and assessments by scanning the QR code or heading to:

MAYBRIDGE.ORG.UK/GOOD-GROUND



  MaybridgeCommunityChurch

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