



Huddles

Women in the Bible, Week #7

Learning to love and follow Jesus—together—by His strength, in every day life.

What are huddles at Foundations?

- Groups of 3-8 people (or 3-4 couples) that meet for one hour per week at a time and location of your choosing. Larger groups should plan for 75 minutes.
- Huddles last for 8 weeks. At the end of each 8-week session, you can keep your group, add to your group or even change groups & topics.
- While gathering on Sunday is vital to spiritual growth, so is connecting with others to encourage one another, discussing what it means to follow Jesus and praying for one another. These practices are detailed in our RHYTHMS course (which is not necessary to take part in huddles, but highly recommended).

Our Mission is to bring the extraordinary life-changing message of Jesus Christ to a lost and broken world.

- Huddles are one way we prepare to do this very thing, and we can't do that unless our lives are being transformed by Him.
- Hence, the goal of every session is that you will grow more like Jesus in some small way.
- In order to do this, we will focus on God's Word, encourage one another and commit to praying for one another.
- Each week, there are individual rhythms we encourage that will help you "love and follow Jesus."
- Similarly, there are corporate rhythms that help us in our spiritual formation.
- Consistent practice of these rhythms is part of the holistic development of disciples, and this booklet is designed to touch on that development.
- This holistic framework will give structure to your meeting time.

The individual rhythms overview (for those that haven't taken the Rhythms course):

Prayer: Talking to God and listening to Him via His Word, His Spirit-Filled people and His creation. If you don't know how to pray, a good start is the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 5.

Abide in the Word: Reading the Bible, prayerfully, asking God to show you what He wants for you. A good practice is to read with a pen & journal to write your thoughts as He leads them.

Silence: choosing to avoid speaking in order to listen to what He might want to say to us. Another **Solitude:** avoidance of interaction with others in order to be alone with Him. Silence enhances this.

Reflection (especially effective at the end of the day, maybe before sleep): Take some time in stillness to experience His presence, tell God things you're thankful for, make note of where you experienced Him today--or where you didn't—and note instances of loving your “neighbor” well—or failure to do so. Ask God for what He may want for you in the day tomorrow.

Other rhythms that will likely be practiced less frequently: Fasting (food; if there's an area you are seeking specific guidance); giving joyfully (financially as an act of worship) and rest (setting aside time to enjoy your life and choosing to refrain from work)

The corporate rhythms overview (for those that haven't taken the Rhythms course):

Worship gathering: A time for our family to be together to participate corporately in the rhythms of worship together.

Participation in community: A time to engage in huddle, as well as other forms of being together as a church family (such as concerts, conferences/classes, events, etc.)

Lord's Supper: A chance for our family to reflect on the person and work of Jesus and look forward in hope to His coming again in a symbol of eternal unity.

Baptism: A one-time action of a declaration of faith in Christ. It is our hope that everyone be baptized, as well as choosing to enjoy the celebration of others who choose to do so.

Using your gift to serve the Body: We have been given a gift to help the body of Christ come to maturity in faith, and we benefit by your presence.

Having a ministry of love for neighbor: We choose to exemplify the abundant life in order to fulfill our mission of bringing the extraordinary life of Jesus Christ to a lost and broken world.

Prayer, Day 1 (Week 7, David & Bathsheba)

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God and be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down what you talked with God about and/or how He answered in a journal.

If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray aloud the following prayer from St. Augustine:

Lord Jesus, let me know myself and know you, And desire nothing, save only you.

Let me hate myself and love you. Let me do everything for the sake of you.

Let me humble myself and exalt you. Let me think of nothing except you.

Let me accept whatever happens as from you. Let me banish self and follow you,

And ever desire to follow you. Let me fly from myself and take refuge in you,

That I may deserve to be defended by you. Let me fear for myself, let me fear you,

And let me be among those who are chosen by you.

Let me be willing to obey for the sake of you. Let me cling to nothing, save only to you,

And let me be poor because of you. Look upon me, that I may love you.

Call me, that I may see you,

And for ever enjoy you. Amen

Time in the Word, Day 1, Esther 2: 1-11

- Background & Insights on the Reading:
- King Ahasuerus held a party for the elites of the Medo-Persian empire that lasted for 6 months. After that party, a 7-day event was held in the capitol city of Susa for all the citizens. His queen, Vashti, was throwing a party for the women of the palace at the same time.
- Ahasuerus summoned Vashti, who refused to appear. His advisors demanded that punishment take place in order to secure the ability of men to manage their home life. The king, in effect, demoted Vashti. He chose Esther.
- Esther is the adopted daughter of Mordecai, a Jewish advisor in the palace. He had been her uncle and assumed parentage after the death of her parents. He instructed her not to divulge their Jewish heritage.
- Questions for Reflection:
- Mordecai instructed Esther to remain silent about her Jewish heritage (we don't know precisely why, however, we can assume this would've been dangerous to her and/or Mordecai in some way). In what ways do we need to value keeping confidences or guarding our own privacy?
- How do we balance the value of silence as well as the value Foundations has of being "raw & real?"

Prayer, Day 2

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God and be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down what you talked with God about and/or how He answered in a journal.

- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray using the Lord's Prayer as an outline for your own words to express...

Tell God how thankful you are for the privilege of calling the King of Kings "our Father," & that He listens and hears.

God is worthy of honor and worship

We should acknowledge that things on earth are not what they are supposed to be, and that we should ask God to be aware of His presence and strive to see what He wants this world to be. We should let others see His Kingdom by how we live.

We should be thankful that He provides our basic needs.

We should pray for forgiveness and forgive others

We should name our weaknesses and our temptations, and for the Spirit to strengthen us. We should close with praise.

Time in the Word, Day 2, Esther 2:19--3:6

- Background & Insights on the Reading:
 - Esther gained great favor with the king over the course of one year. She was diligent with the advice she was being given by the eunuchs in charge of the harems.
 - Additionally, Mordecai, her uncle/adopted father, was active in politics at the city gates. He learns of a plot to assassinate Ahasuerus and makes Esther aware...who communicates on behalf of Mordecai to the king. The plot is foiled and Esther & Mordecai grow trust with the king.
 - Haman became an administrator of the king's advisors. He noted that Mordecai wouldn't bow down to the king—a consistent practice of Jewish people throughout the OT to honor God--and set out to have not only Mordecai punished, but also the entire Jewish citizenry.
- Questions for Reflection:
 - We see that Esther has great trust in Mordecai. Who are the people you can truly trust?
 - We see in Mordecai elements of what it means to live in the culture but maintain following God above all else. What are some ways you've let culture take precedence over following Jesus? What are some ways you can correct that?

Prayer, Day 3

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God and be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down what you talked with God about and/or how He answered in a journal.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray using the ACTS method as an outline for your own words to express...
- Adoration (a time of worship): don't be afraid of "artistic expressions" here, or to use Psalms or hymns or other forms of praise.
- Confession: We all fall short and miss the mark. Confession of sin helps us our relationship to God.
- Thanksgiving: Simply tell God what you're thankful for.
- Supplication: Asking God for needs of the world, our country & leaders, our church, and anything and everything else. God wants to hear from you.

Time in the Word, Day 3, Esther 3:13--4:8

- Background & Insights on the Reading:
- Haman arranged for a law that would have the Jewish people in the nation killed.
- Mordecai begins public grieving. He is in sackcloth and ashes in the center of town. As the information became public, the Jewish citizens did the same.
- Initially, Esther was likely embarrassed by Mordecai's actions as she sent him clothes—encouraging him not to mourn. When Mordecai refuses, Esther cuts through the bureaucracy and gets her trusted servant to begin communications.
- Mordecai charges Esther to do something about the edict.
- Questions for Reflection:
- Notice that Mordecai doesn't go into hiding, but rather practices his religious faith as prescribed. What are some specific ways we can be authentic in the public practice of our faith? Are there any areas where you are fearful of doing so? How might this section provide insight?
- Esther will now have to reveal her identity if she does what Mordecai suggests. What do you think she might be thinking and feeling upon hearing this?

Prayer, Day 4

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God and be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down what you talked with God about and/or how He answered in a journal.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray using the breath method to pray:
- Simply take a Psalm and breathe in as you read the first line, and then exhale on the second.
- Take deep, long, slow breaths.

You can also do this with just one verse of Scripture, and almost every Psalm can be done this way. Try to focus on the ones that focus on God and/or resonate with where you are at the moment.

Time in the Word, Day 4, Esther 4: 9-17

- Background & Insights on the Reading:
 - Note in verse 10 that Esther now begins to assert her power as queen instead of her previously passive approach. She knows that her death is possible if she shows up to the king unrequested and she hasn't been asked to see the king in a month.
 - Mordecai is quite clear that not only is approaching the king her only issue by reminding her that she is Jewish and falls under the edict as well. He reminds her that it's possible that God has placed her in that time & place for His purposes.
 - Esther immediately goes into a time of prayer and fasting for guidance. She is aware that death is a distinct possibility.
- Questions for Reflection:
 - Where has God placed you at this time and in this place? What do you think His purposes might be for you?
 - How can we be more like Esther in going first to God in prayer when faced with difficult circumstances? Why do you think so many people try to handle difficulties using their own ideas & methods before going to God?

Prayer, Day 5

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God and be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down what you talked with God about and/or how He answered in a journal.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to simply pray using a Psalm...they are really great prayers! Find one that you resonate with, and pray it aloud:
- Simply take a Psalm, and this week you might want to go with Psalm 55
- Pray aloud, even if in a whisper, slowly and with concentration on the words.
- Try to be attentive to the thoughts that come to mind and discern if those may be something God is trying to tell you.

Time in the Word, Day 5, Esther 5: 1-8, 6: 1-14

- Background & Insights on the Reading:

- Esther goes before the king after prayer and fasting. He grants her favor and agrees to host a banquet for Haman, per Esther's request. She also invites the king to join them.
- Haman was excited to be asked, despite seeing Mordecai refusing to bow down to the king again. This made him angry, and upon the advice of his wife, builds gallows to hang Mordecai from the next morning.
- Meanwhile, the king couldn't sleep and discovers that Mordecai has not been honored for foiling the earlier assassination plot. The king asks Haman to throw a parade for the man the king wants to honor & Haman thought HE was that person. He suggests and elaborate celebration—only for Haman to discover that Mordecai is the man the king wishes to honor.

- Questions for Reflection:

- Note the king “had trouble sleeping.” How can we strive to seek God's presence when what appears to be “normal” in our lives might actually be the work of God “behind the scenes?”
- Notice that Esther is growing not only in her role but also in her spiritual life. How would you evaluate your spiritual life right now? Why did you answer the way you did?

Prayer, Day 6: A Time for Reflection

Traditional time of Examen	A Few Thoughts on This Method
<p>This is a version of the five-step Daily Examen that St. Ignatius practiced.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Become aware of God's presence.2. Review the day with gratitude.3. Pay attention to your emotions.4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.5. Look toward tomorrow.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Breathe & slow down. Ask God to make you aware of His presence and to bring to mind moments of your day to focus on.2. Walk through your day and give thanks for areas where you saw God "show up" and for His blessings.3. The things you feel when you review often highlight areas where God wants you to focus and what he wants to teach you. Often this results in confession when you see your emotions out of line with walking in the Spirit.4. Ask God to show you moments where you loved others well (or, conversely, He may bring to mind an area you didn't). Give thanks or ask forgiveness as warranted.5. Think through your day tomorrow and ask God what He may be calling you to do or be in the upcoming day.

Time in the Word, Day 6, Esther 7 & 8

- Background & Insights on the Reading:

- Haman is aware that he is not in a position of political strength given the honoring of Mordecai, but has to attend the dinner anyway. To do so would insult the king.
- Haman must've felt significant tension at the dinner. The king asked Queen Esther (it's worth noting this is how she's being referred to at this point in the story) her request, and she very humbly asks for her people to be saved from the edict. Esther showed political savvy by phrasing her request in a way that would allow the king to avoid being complicit.
- Haman is sentenced to death and hanged from the gallows he built to hang Mordecai on. Mordecai is promoted to Haman's former position.
- The edict was reversed & the entire provinces celebrated.

- Questions for Reflection:

- One of the notable traits of Israel is to commemorate and celebrate the works of God's faithfulness to them. What are some ways we can model that in our own lives?
- What are some specific ways we can model both the humility and wisdom of Esther?

Huddle Meeting: (suggested time = 30 mins)

General Check-In (10 minutes)

Describe your sleep habits this week.

Describe your dietary habits this week.

Describe your exercise habits this week.

Describe your development in intellectual curiosity this week (keeping up with current events, artistic endeavors, learning new skills, hobbies, etc)

Emotional Check-In (10 minutes)

Using the SACHET wheel, describe how you're doing emotionally right now. You may want to write down some of these to pray for your huddle during the week.



Rhythms Check-In (10 minutes)

Describe your experience with the individual rhythms this week.

Describe your experience with the corporate rhythms this week.

How can the huddle encourage you this week in these areas? Or...

...How can you encourage the huddle this week in these areas?

Huddle Meeting: Discussion for Growth

10 Minutes:

What is something you feel God truly taught you this week?

20 Minutes (based on Esther 1-8)

Notice that “God” is never mentioned by name in the story. However, it is obvious that He is orchestrating from “behind the scenes.” What can we do to be more sensitive to similar movements of God in our own lives?

Note Esther’s growth in her identity as queen as well as in her relationship to God. How are you currently growing in your own identity in Christ (being who you were created to be) and in your relationship to Him?

Regardless of your faith level, if you were to make any changes in your life based on what we read this week, what would that look like?