

Huddle Overview - John Study Week 1

Discipleship Definition:

Learning to love and follow Jesus—together—by His strength, in everyday 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 stay with your group, add to your group or even change groups and 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 at Foundations is to bring the extraordinary lifechanging 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.

Rhythms Overview

The individual rhythms (for those who 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 place to start is the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 5.

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

Silence: Choosing to avoid speaking in order to listen to what He might want to say to us.

Solitude: Avoidance of interaction with others in order to be alone with Him. Silence enhances solitude. Have you intentionally gotten away to be alone (including technology/social media)?

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. 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 individual 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 (for those who haven't taken the Rhythms course):

Worship gathering: A time for our family to be together to participate corporately in the rhythms of worshipping 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: An opportunity for our family to reflect on the person and work of Jesus and to look forward in hope to His coming again.

Baptism: A one-time action of a declaration of faith in Christ. It is our hope that everyone be baptized, and that they also celebrate others who are being baptized.

Using your gifts 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 neighbors: 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

- 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. Talk to God, and be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- 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 read through a Psalm, such as Psalm 23 or 51. 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 1, Read John 1:1-18

Background and Insights on the Reading:

John's purpose is to present Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, sent to earth to fulfill all that the Old Testament anticipated: bringing new life - eternal life - to a dark world (h).

What Jesus taught and what He did are tied inseparably to who He is. Although Jesus took upon Himself full humanity and lived as a man, He never ceased to be the eternal God who has always existed, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and the foundation of all truth.

Throughout this gospel, Jesus' own words reveal His true identity. When He uses the phrase "*I am*," He affirms His preexistence and eternal deity. Jesus says, *I am* the bread of life; *I am* the light of the world; *I am* the gate; *I am* the Good Shepherd; *I am* the resurrection and the life; *I am* the way and the truth and the life; and *I am* the vine. John, the eyewitness, chose eight of Jesus' miracles (or signs as John calls them) to reveal His divine/human nature and His life-giving mission. These signs were meant to invoke faith in the people who witnessed them, and John wanted the same for those who would read this gospel. His goal wasn't the mere growth of knowledge; he wanted a decision of faith to accept Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of the world. Therefore, John's purpose was not to write a biography of the life of Christ. It is to show the world that Jesus is the Messiah so that the ones reading his book would believe (b, c).

Listen to what Jesus says. Watch what Jesus does.

Questions for Reflection:

- What titles and terms does John use to describe Jesus?
- What was John the Baptist's purpose?
- What does John 1:9–13 teach about how to become a child of God? Where do you see God's grace in these verses?

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. Talk to God, and be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray using Paul's prayer of thanksgiving for others as an example (Ephesians 1:15-22). You can use this to pray for yourself and for others. Tell God you love Him. Ask God for spiritual wisdom and that He would reveal Himself in ways you can know Him more. Pray that you know the hope of His calling you. Pray that you would know the hope - the complete assurance - of the inheritance of the saints. Ask God that you would know the power He gives to those who believe. Praise Him for being the God who is above all rule and authority and has the name above all other names. Thank Him for being the head of the church.

Time in the Word, Day 2, Read John 1:19-34

Background and Insights on the Reading:

John the Baptist summarizes who Jesus is and what Jesus does: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Jesus takes away sin. Jesus, by His perfectly righteous life, sacrificial death on the cross, and victorious resurrection from the grave, fulfills all of the symbolism of the Passover lamb and other Old Testament sacrifices.

In the Old Testament, the people of God traveled to the temple and made sacrifices, following elaborate instructions, in order to ensure that their sins were taken away. Deliverance through the shed blood of an animal, most notably the Passover lamb, prefigured the coming of Jesus as the Lamb of God who once and for all obtained salvation for God's people (h). To pay the penalty of sin, a life had to be given - and God chose to provide the sacrifice Himself. The sins of the world were removed when Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice. This is the way our sins are forgiven. The "sin of the world" means everyone's sin, the sin of each individual (b).

Questions for Reflection:

- In what way does Jesus fit John the Baptist's description as "the lamb of God"? How does this provide the means to salvation for those who believe?

Additional - see appendix.

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. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray in thanks for the ability to talk with God, through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26-27). Heavenly Father, I know that intentional prayerfulness is essential for those who are in Christ. I thank you for making a way for me to connect with you, even when I may be overly anxious that I'm "praying wrong," or praying outside of your will, or not being able to put to words what I am trying to say. Thank you that your Spirit is interceding for me. Thank you for giving me the Holy Spirit and for making a way for my unspoken groanings toward you to be transformed into prayers that conform to your will. Thank you, God, ever in search mode, for receiving those prayers directly from my heart, enabling me to be in potentially constant communication with you.

Time in the Word, Day 3, Read John 1:35-51

Background and Insights on the Reading:

Jesus summons five men to follow him, to be his disciples. Notice that Jesus initiates the relationship. Also notice that Jesus doesn't ask his disciples to meet certain qualifications. *To enter into a relationship with Jesus, only one thing is required: faith.* As the Gospel accounts all testify, Jesus' original band of disciples didn't have it all together - they routinely sinned, failed, and made a mess of things. Yet Jesus loved them. It was Jesus who first called them to follow him. This passage makes clear that the deciding factor in this relationship is Jesus and his grace, not us and our qualifications (h).

Questions for Reflection:

- In these verses, Jesus calls his first five disciples. As they get to know Him, they say different things about him. List these various declarations. What is the significance of each of these declarations, and how do they deepen your understanding of who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish?

- Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" (1:35-38). What would you say, today in your current circumstances, if Jesus asked you, "What do you want?"

Additional resources - see appendix.

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. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- 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). **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 in our relationship to God. **Thanksgiving** - simply tell God what you're thankful for. **Supplication** - ask God for the needs of the world, our country and leaders, our church, and anything and everything else. God wants to hear from you.

Time in the Word, Day 4, Read John 2:1-11

Background and Insights on the Reading:

When the disciples saw Jesus' miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana, they believed. The miracle showed His power over nature and revealed the way He would go about His ministry - helping others, speaking with authority, and being in personal touch with people.

Miracles are not simply superhuman events, but events that demonstrate God's power. Almost every miracle Jesus did was a renewal of fallen creation - restoring sight, making lame people walk, even restoring life to the dead. Believe in Christ not because He is a superman but because He is the God who continues His creation, even in those of us who are poor, weak, crippled, orphaned, blind, deaf, or with some other desperate need (b).

This was the very first of the signs or miracles Jesus did and it manifested His glory (an attribute of God). The divine glory and presence that dwelt in the OT tabernacle (v 1:14) was now residing in the person of Jesus. A "sign" (a special word John uses), is a miracle designed to attest to the authority of a messenger and the validity of His message. John recorded these signs to bring about faith in Christ. The words "His disciples believed in Him" show that at the earliest contacts with Jesus, His disciples had saving faith (excluding Judas, John 6:70-71) (a).

Questions for Reflection:

- According to John 2:11, why did Jesus perform this first sign, and what was the effect of this sign?

Additional resources - see appendix.

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. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray using the breath method. Simply read through a Psalm and breathe in as you read the first line, and then exhale on the second. Take deep, long, slow breaths. Good examples are Psalm 46 and 47, but 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 5, Read John 2:12-25

Background and Insights on the Reading:

THE TRUE TEMPLE. After clearing the temple, Jesus issues a bold claim: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” For centuries, the Jerusalem temple had stood as the meeting place between God and man - the physical place where heaven and earth met, atonement was made for sins, and God communed with his people. Here Jesus declares that he is the true temple, the true meeting place for God and man. Jesus states that after being destroyed by death, He would come back from death. And this, indeed, is what Jesus did - proving that he is the true and better temple, the temple that cannot be destroyed.

This is what Jesus can do with death: undo it. There is no life so broken that Jesus cannot fix it. Jesus turns spiritually dead people into living people (h).

In the gospel of John, we often see people respond to miracles based on their preferences. What a person wants to believe is often more powerful than what they should believe, or what they have reason to believe. Some, like the Pharisees, refuse to see God's work, and come up with ways to explain away the miracle. Others, like the disciples, see them as proof that what they've read in the Scriptures is true (j).

Questions for Reflection:

Jesus' first major confrontation with the Jewish leaders occurs as He clears the Jerusalem temple during the Jewish Passover.

- Why did Jesus clear the temple, in light of the true purpose of the temple?

- What does this scene teach us about Jesus?

Additional resources - see appendix.

Prayer, Day 6: A Time for Reflection

- Traditional time of Examen. This is a version of the five-step Daily Examen that St. Ignatius practiced.
- Become aware of God's presence. Breathe, and slow down. Ask God to make you aware of His presence and to bring to mind moments of your day to focus on.
- Review the day with gratitude. Walk through your day and give thanks for areas where you saw God "show up" and for His blessings.
- Pay attention to your emotions. 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.
- Choose one feature of the day and pray about it. 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.
- Look toward tomorrow. 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, Read John 3:1-21

Background and Insights on the Reading:

Nicodemus came to Jesus personally, although he could have sent one of his assistants. He wanted to examine Jesus for himself to separate fact from rumor. Perhaps Nicodemus was afraid of what his peers, the Pharisees, would say about his visit, so he came after dark. Later, when he understood that Jesus was truly the Messiah, he spoke up boldly in His defense (7:50-51). Like Nicodemus, we must examine Jesus for ourselves - others cannot do it for us. Then, if we believe He is who He says, we will want to speak up for Him.

NEW BIRTH. According to Jesus in John 3, salvation comes not through a human decision or fresh resolve, but by being "born again." This requirement cannot be performed by men or women themselves any more than was their first, physical birth. The Spirit of God must accomplish this. God himself must grant and perform the miracle of new birth. According to John 3, salvation is not a mental assent to a new doctrine or a resolution to live differently. Salvation comes, most fundamentally, through the miracle of new birth, whereby our hearts are set free to put our trust in Jesus (h).

Questions for Reflection:

- According to John 3:3, what must happen for someone to see the kingdom of God? How does this happen?
- John 3:16 may be the most well-known verse in the Bible. If this were the only verse you had, what would you know about God and salvation?

Additional resources - see appendix.

Huddle Meeting:

General Check-In (10 minutes)

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?

Discussion for Growth (30 Minutes)

- Feel free to discuss any questions from the prior days' studies.
- In your own words describe what "the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us" means to you.
- Describe the time in your life when you "received" Jesus, or believed in Him. This is more than an intellectual belief. It refers to trust in and commitment to Jesus as Savior and obedience to Him as Lord.
- What, for you, was the most meaningful concept or truth in this week's study? What do you believe God wants you to do in response to this week's study?

appendix

References

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