

## Huddle Overview - John Study Week 4

### **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. 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 1, Read John 10:1-21

### Background and Insights on the Reading:

In this section, Jesus delivers His third and fourth "I AM" statements, out of seven in this gospel. In this first of three analogies, Jesus points out that sheep only follow the voice of "their" shepherd, not the voice of a stranger. Those who reject Christ do so because they don't belong to Him. In Jesus' era, several separate flocks of sheep would be housed in a single sheep pen. These structures were walled off to prevent other animals from getting in. They also featured a single, narrow opening. This allowed the gatekeeper to control which animals got in or out. When allowed by the gatekeeper, shepherds would call to their flocks, who would respond only to the voice of their own shepherd.

Jesus then claims "I am the door." Meaning He is the gatekeeper—the person who controls access to the pen. He is also the opening, the single means by which the sheep can move in or out. This analogy brings several layers of meaning. First and foremost, it is only through the door that the sheep can "be saved." This uses a Greek term, *sōthēsetai*, which implies something being kept safe, healed, or rescued from destruction. Jesus' statement, then, is unusually direct in its spiritual implications. Jesus is that door, and the only door, an idea often repeated in the New Testament. Closely related to this, the door is what separates all sheep into two basic groups. Sheep are either "in" or "out"; they are "saved" or "unsaved." There are no other categories, and no other options. This also supports the New Testament's consistent teaching that Jesus is the one and only means by which any person can be eternally saved (h).

Jesus also says "I am the Good Shepherd," who puts His life on the line for the flock. The Sovereign God of the universe humbled Himself, became a man, and lived among sinful, errant, and willful human "sheep." He laid down His life for them so that all who believe in Him could enter into the fold and become part of His flock. And once they become His sheep, He does for them exactly what the shepherds long ago did - He feeds them, protects them from enemies, brings them back when they stray, strengthens the weak, and cares for the hurting. He knows each of us intimately and calls us by name, leading us every step of the way through this life. And when we are truly His, we can distinguish His voice from all the others and will follow Him in obedience (l).

### Questions for Reflection:

- **Jesus calls you by name.** Let that sink in. *He* calls *You*. Describe what it means to you that Jesus knows *your* name, and He calls *you* to Himself?

## 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. 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 about this week's study and ask the Holy Spirit for opportunities to learn and to apply it in your life. Thank God for His promise to keep and carry His people. Ask Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith, to continue changing you from the inside out, making you more like Him every day. Ask for opportunities to do hard things in His name and in His power – the same power that parted the Red Sea. Praise Him for allowing you to be a part of building His kingdom, just like those who have gone before you (f).

## Time in the Word, Day 2, Read John 10:22-42

### Background and Insights on the Reading:

Jesus has been cornered in the temple, in an overtly threatening way, by His religious critics. The words “gathered around Him” literally means “surrounded Him” (a). They have challenged Him - dared Him, in effect - to repeat His former claims about being the Messiah. Several months prior, Jesus had given analogies about Himself using shepherding as a theme. Through those statements, Jesus claimed to be the only source of salvation, and that His salvation was eternal, permanent, and irrevocable. Here Jesus explicitly says that He offers eternal life which can never be lost. He first refers to His people as being held in His hand, then refers to the same people as being held in God's hand. Those who are saved through Jesus Christ are saved because they are "given" to Jesus, and given by God. He indicates that it is the hand of the Father from which they cannot be taken. Jesus again links His power and authority with that of God the Father (h).

Jesus connects those dots without the slightest hint of subtlety: "I and the Father are one." Jesus uses the "neuter" form of the Greek word for "one" here, confirming that they are "unity." Rather than saying that Jesus and God are the same person, Jesus is claiming that He and God are unified as one, a partial explanation of the Trinity (h). Jesus and the Father are not the same person, but they are one in nature and purpose. Thus, Jesus is not merely a good teacher – He is God. His claim to be God was unmistakable. The religious leaders wanted to kill Him because their laws said that anyone claiming to be God should die, and nothing could persuade them that His claim was true (b). This culminates in another attempt on Jesus' life, which He somehow avoids. This also represents the last time Jesus will publicly teach prior to His crucifixion.

### Questions for Reflection:

Jesus says this about those who are His - *He says this about you*: “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand (b).” Write down what this promise from Jesus means to you personally.

### 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. 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 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 3, Read John 11:1-44

#### Background and Insights on the Reading:

When Lazarus was dying, his sisters urgently called for Jesus. Imagine how their grief must have compounded when He didn't instantly respond to their request. God's silence is difficult to accept. We want Him to leap into action when we call, particularly if we are hurting or afraid. But since He promises to meet our needs, we can be sure that His silence has purpose.

**Silence grabs our attention.** The disciples knew that Jesus could heal, so they must have wondered why He delayed instead of rushing to His friend's bedside. But the Lord wanted them to witness something even greater: His power over death. They had been confused by His statements about conquering death, and they needed to understand that He could fulfill His own resurrection prophecies (Mark 9:31-32). The miracle at Lazarus' tomb was part of their preparation.

**Silence teaches us to trust.** Mary and Martha sent word of Lazarus' illness because they anticipated that the Lord would heal him. But would their faith waver if that expectation was not met? Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" Martha answered the question by stating, "I believe that You are the Christ." (John 11:27). And sure enough, the Lord demonstrated His power with a stunning miracle: their brother's return to life.

At times, the only thing we can hear when we pray is our own breathing. That can be frustrating and frightening. But Scripture says God is always with us, and His silence will not last forever (Job 23:8-10; Matt. 28:20). Cling to those promises as you wait for Him to answer (l).

John 11:33-37. John stresses that we have a God who cares. When Jesus saw weeping and wailing, He too wept openly. Perhaps He empathized with their grief, or perhaps He was troubled by their unbelief. In either case, Jesus showed that He cares enough for us to weep with us in our sorrow. Here we see so many of Jesus' emotions - compassion, indignation, sorrow, even frustration. He often expresses deep emotion, and we must never be afraid to reveal our true feelings to Him. He understands them, for He experienced them. Be honest, and don't try to hide anything from your Savior. He cares (b).

Questions for Reflection: Even when the curtain of death was between them, Lazarus responded to Jesus' voice. Lazarus' resurrection poses an important question; When you die, do you fully expect that your next conscious experience will be hearing the voice of Jesus call you by name? (b)

## 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. 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 11:45-12:11

### Background and Insights on the Reading:

The events of this segment happen less than a week before Passover. In this case, the date in question is the Passover where Jesus will be sacrificed for the sins of mankind. Chapter 12 begins the final week of Jesus' life (a). In the chapters leading up to this, John has provided mountains of evidence that Jesus is divine, which is the purpose of this entire gospel (John 20:30–31). That evidence includes miracles, testimonies, and references to Scripture. Among the more spectacular of those points was the raising of Lazarus - dead four days - from the grave in front of a crowd of witnesses (h).

Jesus now returns to the site of that miracle, being treated to a dinner in the hometown of Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha. The verses which follow present several examples of how Christians present their testimony of faith in God and the hardness of resistant hearts.

These verses echo the various ways Christians can apply their loving faith in Jesus, through the actions of the three siblings. All three are a kind of "service," in different forms. Martha's contribution is the most literal kind of service, as she works to provide food and hospitality. Lazarus' service is in personal testimony: a living representation of the power of Christ in someone's life. Mary's service, anointing Jesus with perfume, is in worshipful sacrifice. As a woman of the ancient middle east, Mary probably owned no property or land. This perfume, then, was a substantial part of her life savings. The container, made of the marble-like stone called alabaster (Mark 14:3), highlights how valuable the substance was. That act will be met with an indignant response by Judas, among others. His motivations are far from pure, making his presence a symbol of those who put down the efforts of others (a, h).

### Questions for Reflection:

Sometimes people mistakenly think that only those involved in official churchwork are God's servants, but every believer is called to serve the Lord. Think about the stay-at-home mom who raises godly children or the bedridden man who prays regularly for his church family. God is pleased by such faithfulness (i). *What gifts, skills or interests do you have?* Write them down. Pray for ideas on how you can use them in praise for Jesus - seek ideas from a pastor or from godly friends.

## 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. 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, consider this: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 5:16-17). Is it really possible? How about trying an experiment? Start and end your day with a prayer. Lift up short prayers to God as often as you can throughout your day. Look for routine points throughout your daily schedule and resolve to talk to God during those times. Ask God to help you with your to-do list. When you hear a troubling news report, lift up the situation to God. Say a prayer for your spouse or child as you give him or her a hug. Pray for the person you're talking to. Say a breath prayer for the nature in front of you: breathe in...exhale saying... Thank you God for your beautiful creation. Your Rocky Mountains are majestic this morning! Look for and make prayer moments that work for your life.

## Time in the Word, Day 5, Read John 12:12-36

### Background and Insights on the Reading:

Here, John describes the triumphal entry; Jesus coming into Jerusalem on what we know as Palm Sunday, the Sunday before the crucifixion. It is significant because by this action Jesus presented Himself officially to the nation as the Messiah and Son of God (n). To this point, Jesus has been relatively quiet about His mission, even asking people not to proclaim Him. Now, He fulfills prophecy by riding into the city on a donkey, as people shout "Hosanna" and throw down coats and palm branches in front of Him. Palm branches were ancient symbols of victory. The term hosanna was most famously used in Psalm 118, and means "save now!" It came to be a figure of speech praising God for deliverance, and it was said in support of a king or victor. So, the people who celebrate Jesus' entry into the city are deliberately applying Old Testament ideas to Him. They are proclaiming Him as the Promised One and the Savior of Israel (h).

The Sanhedrin and other Jewish leaders wanted Jesus dead but did not want Him killed during the Passover time because they feared stirring up the multitudes with whom He was popular. Jesus entered the city, however, on His own time and forced the whole issue in order that it might happen exactly on the Passover day when the lambs were being sacrificed. As Scripture says, "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:19). In God's perfect timing, at the precise time foreordained from eternity, Jesus Christ presented Himself to die (n). His arrival affirms the fears of local religious leaders, who worry Jesus' popularity will attract the anger of the Roman Empire. As it turns out, most of these people misunderstand Jesus' mission, thinking His plan is to overthrow the Romans to free Israel (h).

Questions for Reflection: Nothing we can do will make us acceptable to God. But God loves us! He sent His Son to rescue us by bearing our sins and suffering the divine wrath that we deserve. In these verses, we see Jesus coming to our rescue and entering Jerusalem, knowing exactly what He is riding into. Imagine yourself in this scene, walking near Jesus and knowing what He is about to do. *Write down some thoughts on what His imminent sacrifice means to you.*

## **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 12:37-50**

### Background and Insights on the Reading:

When Jesus called loudly for Lazarus to rise from the dead, the gospel of John used a Greek term similar to what's found here (John 12:44-45). Both terms imply a loud, deliberate proclamation. These verses correspond to other statements made in the New Testament - that Jesus Christ is God; He is identical to God the Father. Here, the emphasis is on the idea that when one sees or hears from Jesus, they are also seeing and hearing God. Though people cannot see a visible form of God the Father, they can see God visibly in the form of the Son (Colossians 1:15). Those who do not see Christ for who and what He is are those "blinded" to the truth (2 Corinthians 4:4). This is why a rejection of Christ is a rejection of God (John 3:18, 36) (h).

12:49-50. Jesus repeatedly made it clear that He did not speak by His own authority or initiative. So, His message about eternal life is the Father's message as well. "I know His commandment leads to eternal life," means that God commands everyone to believe, and believing leads to eternal life (a). "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40) (b).

This section records the last public statement Jesus makes prior to His crucifixion. This is a sincere "plea" to the people. In relatively few words, Jesus summarizes His purpose, and states that He alone provides the means of salvation (h).

### Questions for Reflection:

Jesus teaches as one who has authority. He knows the dimensions of God's throne room, the fragrance of its incense, the favorite songs of the unceasing choir. What does it mean to you that Jesus has a unique, one-of-a kind, unrivaled knowledge of God and He wants to share His knowledge with *you*? (i)

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.
- 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?
- Our faith and our relationship with Jesus should change how we live. Think about your life, and write down two ways your faith has changed how you live on a day-to-day basis. Now write down two ways that your love for Jesus can be reflected in your daily life.

## Appendix

- a. The Moody Bible Commentary, Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham, General Editors, Moody Publishers, Chicago, Illinois, 2014
- b. Life Application Study Bible, NIV, Tyndale House Publishers Inc. Wheaton, Illinois and Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2005
- c. studyandobey.com, Copyright 2012-2021
- d. Bible Gateway app. Version 49
- e. The MacArthur Study Bible, Copyright 1997 by Thomas Nelson Inc. App Version 2.0.9
- f. The Gospel Coalition, thegospelcoalition.org, Copyright 2021
- g. Gty.org, Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time, ©2021 Grace to You
- h. Bibleref.com, Copyright 2002-2021, Got Questions Ministries
- i. Jesus The God Who Knows Your Name, Max Lucado, Nelson Books, ©2020
- j. Got Questions Ministries, gotquestions.org, Copyright 2002-2022
- k. Biblehub.org, Copyright 2004-2021
- l. Intouch.org, Copyright 2022 in Touch Ministries
- m. Blueletterbible.org, Copyright 2022 Blue Letter Bible
- n. John – Jesus the Word, the Messiah, the Son of God, Copyright 2007, John MacArthur