

Huddle Overview - John Study Week 7

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 pray using the Lord's Prayer as an outline (for your own words). Tell God how thankful you are for the privilege of calling the King of Kings, "our Father," and 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 for an awareness 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 we should forgive others. We should name our weaknesses and our temptations, and pray for the Spirit to strengthen us. We should close with praise.

Time in the Word, Day 1, Read John 18:12-24

Background and Insights on the Reading:

Earlier in this Gospel, Jesus' enemies plotted to have Him killed (John 11:53). This group is sometimes referred to by John as "the Jews," but his meaning is the religious ruling class of Jerusalem. These men justified their hostility by fear that Jesus would trigger an uprising against Rome, resulting in catastrophic backlash. Eventually, they found a traitor among the disciples (h).

Both Caiaphas and Annas cared more about their political ambitions than about their responsibility to lead the people of God. Though religious leaders, they had become evil. As the nation's spiritual leaders, they should have been sensitive to God's revelation. They should have known that Jesus was the Messiah about whom the Scriptures spoke, and they should have pointed the people to Him. But when deceitful men and women pursue evil, they want to eliminate all opposition. Instead of honestly evaluating Jesus' claims based on their knowledge of Scripture, these religious leaders sought to further their own selfish ambitions and were even willing to kill God's Son, if that's what it took to do it (b).

John points out that the current high priest, Caiaphas, had described Jesus' fate through an accidental prophecy (John 11:51–52). In a display of cold-blooded arrogance, he sneered at his peers' indecision and suggested a death plot. His precise comment was "it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish" (John 11:49–50). In his mind, murdering one person was a small price to pay for maintaining the status quo.

Jesus' role as Messiah was meant to accomplish something very similar. Rather than allow all of mankind to suffer eternally, God arranged for just One to experience death. While Caiaphas was indifferent to Jesus' innocence, that lack of sin was key to His role as Savior. That single death allowed the salvation of the entire world (John 3:16), accomplished in those who turn to Christ in faith (John 3:36). (h).

Questions for Reflection:

What does it tell you about Jesus' character and divine purpose that He'd *allow* Himself to be bound and interrogated, knowing the religious leaders' motivation was status and position, rather than truth?

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 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 2, Read John 18:25-27

Background and Insights on the Reading:

Previous verses explained how John and Peter followed the squadron that arrested Jesus and entered the outer courtyard of the high priest (John 18:12–16). During that passage, Peter's earlier bragging (John 13:37) and reckless bravery (John 18:10) gave way to a self-preserving lie. The focus then shifted to Jesus, being interrogated by Jewish religious leaders.

Twice, Peter has been asked about his relationship to Jesus, in relatively gentle ways (John 18:17, 25). The servants of the high priest who asked those questions may have assumed Peter was not a disciple of Jesus. Or, at least, they couldn't believe that any of Jesus' disciples would be in the high priest's courtyard at that moment. In both cases, Peter has denied that he knows Jesus. The third question is more direct. The servant who is asking the question was there when Jesus was arrested, so he would have seen Peter slashing with a sword (John 18:10–11). Worse, for Peter, the man challenging him now is related to the maimed servant. So, he's quite sure that Peter is the man he's thinking of (John 18:26).

John's depiction of Peter's third denial is bland; other Gospel writers explain that Peter (Mark 14:71; Matthew 26:74) became desperate and insisted that he was not a follower of Jesus. At that moment, Jesus' earlier prophecy is completed, as the rooster crows (John 13:38). Luke includes an especially heartbreaking detail. This marks what is almost certainly the lowest moment of Peter's life. At the instant Peter makes his third denial of Christ, Jesus is being brought back outside for the next phase of His sham trial (John 18:24, 28). Just as Peter is angrily, insisting he does not know Christ, the two look eyes (Luke 22:61). Memory of Jesus' recent prediction floods into Peter's mind (Luke 22:34, 62) and he immediately breaks down, running away and sobbing (Matt. 26:75; Mark 14:72). (h).

Questions for Reflection:

Read the related passage from Luke 22:54-62. What do you imagine might have been communicated between Jesus and Peter immediately following Peter's third denial of Christ?

As difficult as this scene is to read, it serves to teach that restoration, even after the most egregious of failures, is possible. What are your thoughts about the fact that Jesus knew Peter would deny Him, yet He also knew that Peter would rise as a future leader in the spread of His gospel?

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 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 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 3, Read John 18:28-37

Background and Insights on the Reading:

At this time, Caiaphas was the man currently recognized by the Roman government as Israel's high priest. John skims over the details of Jesus' sham trials with the Sanhedrin, which is why Jesus was secretly arrested and brought to Caiaphas' home. Long before Jesus was taken into custody, these religious leaders had already decided to have Him killed (John 11:49–53).

As the high priest, Caiaphas has some authority from Rome to punish criminals and those who violate Jewish law. That authority does not include the death penalty, however, and Jesus' enemies want to ensure He's executed. That means taking Him to the Roman governor, Pilate, and attempting to paint Jesus as a seditionist. Roman soldiers, not Jerusalem's priests, will be the ones to put Jesus to death. This is something Christ has already predicted in detail (Matthew 20:18–19; Luke 18:32). Further, crucifixion would fulfill Jesus' reference to being "lifted up" (John 3:14; 12:32). So, their claim is that Jesus seeks to rebel against Rome and establish His own state. That's a serious charge, and one Pilate needs to carefully consider, but it is crystal clear that Jesus is not seeking to overthrow the earthly rule of the Roman Empire (Matthew 27:18; Mark 15:10). It will be mob rule, and the threat of civil unrest (Matthew 27:24) which leads Pilate to hand over an innocent man for death (h).

The response Jesus gives to Pilate's statement "You are a king then," dovetails with the remark made in verse 18:36. His kingdom is concerned with truth, not with swords and shields. The truth here means the truth about God, Christ Himself, the Holy Spirit, man, sin, salvation, and all the other great doctrines of Christianity. Everyone who loves the truth hears His voice, and that is how His empire grows. But in the most material, immediate sense, Jesus' message is no threat to Pilate's authority in this part of the world (o).

Questions for Reflection: There seems to have been no question in Pilate's mind that Jesus spoke the truth and was innocent. It also seems apparent that while recognizing the truth, he chose to reject it. It is a tragedy when *we* recognize the truth but fail to heed it (b).

- In terms of *Biblical truth*, describe what the Bible means to you.
- What are some ways you try to apply Biblical truth to your everyday life?

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 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 4, Read John 18:38 – 19:16

Background and Insights on the Reading:

Throughout the trial we see that Jesus was in control, not Pilate or the religious leaders. He remained composed. He knew the truth, He knew God's plan, and He knew the reason for the trial. Despite the pressure and persecution, Jesus remained unmoved (b).

History suggests Pilate was under intense pressure to avoid civil unrest. Now, at the start of a major religious holiday, he's looking to appease a mob demanding the death of an innocent man. With that in mind, Pilate had Jesus brutally scourged (John 19:1) and allowed soldiers to bully and mock Him (John 19:2-3). Their teasing fits the theme of Jesus' accused crimes: claiming to be "King". They sarcastically outfit Jesus with a crown of thorns and a purple robe and mockingly proclaim His throne, (purple was symbolic of royalty). When Pilate presented this mangled figure to the crowd, he assumed it would be enough to satisfy their anger (John 19:4-5). It was not. The threat of riots (Matthew 27:24) and hollow claims of the mob's imperial loyalty (John 19: 12-15) strongarmed him into signing Jesus' death warrant, despite knowing full well the sentence was unjust.

Much of Pilate's posturing here (John 19:13-15, 19-22) is an attempt to "save face": to deflect embarrassment. By pretending Jesus is being executed for insurrection, he can recast this sentence as an act of Roman superiority. Labeling Jesus "King of the Jews" as He's being brutalized and humiliated is meant as a gesture of disrespect towards the Jewish people. What the crowd demands, and Pilate commands, is a process designed to be cruel and offensive. In that era, crucifixion was so horrific it was only spoken of indirectly. The purpose of crucifixion was not merely to end a life: it sought to destroy a person's reputation, their image, and their legacy. Victims were subjected to intense domination, shame, exposure, and then given a death that could last days, while maximizing their physical pain (h).

Questions for Reflection:

Backed into a corner, Pilate sent Jesus to the cross (yet Jesus went willingly to accomplish God's will). The cross – the reality of horrific death, has become a symbol of the saving love and sacrifice of Jesus. Write down a few thoughts about what Jesus' loving sacrifice means to you.

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 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 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 19:17-27

Background and Insights on the Reading:

John's concise explanation of the verdict and its completion (John 19:18) masks the brutality involved. Jesus' crushing anxiety in the garden of Gethsemane, as He anticipated this moment, speaks to the horror entailed (Matthew 26:38–42; Luke 22:44). Forcing the condemned to walk along a public road, bringing their own execution tool, seems cruel. This is a deliberate component of Roman crucifixion: to be as shameful, embarrassing, and humiliating as possible. Roman crucifixion was so shameful and barbaric that Roman citizens were exempt from it. Victims were usually stripped naked and forced to carry at least the horizontal beam to the execution site (John 19:17). This site was frequently chosen for visibility, maximizing witnesses. When everything went as intended, a crucifixion victim would languish in agony for as long as several days. Eventual death came through exposure, suffocation, or blood loss. This horrific process inspired the English term for maximum pain: "excruciating," from a Latin reference to crucifixion. And yet, other gospels note that it was around this time when Jesus expressed forgiveness towards these men who crucified Him (Luke 23:34). (h).

In spite of His own suffering, the Lord had tender regard for others. John, also known as the one "whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23), has been brave enough to come close to the cross during this time (John 19:26). He would have seen, first-hand, the soldiers shamelessly gambling for a dying man's clothes. John notes this happened that Scripture might be fulfilled (Psalm 22:18). Later, as He nears death, Jesus will recite the opening lines of this same Psalm (Matthew 27:46) (h). Also present are at least four women who are followers of Jesus (John 19:25). One of those women is Jesus' own mother, Mary. An early prophecy at Jesus' birth (Luke 2:35) is coming true as she watches Him die. Jesus refers to Mary using a polite, formal title, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." By telling John to see Mary as his own mother, Jesus is ensuring that Mary will be cared for (b).

Questions for Reflection:

- If you have never trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, will you now, as you read this account of how He died for you?
- Even while dying on a cross, Jesus was concerned about His family - He instructed John to care for Mary. Our families are precious gifts from God, and we should value them and care for them under all circumstances. What can you do today to show your love for your family?

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 19:28-42

Background and Insights on the Reading:

Until this time, a complicated system of sacrifices had atoned for sins. Sin separates people from God, and only through the sacrifice of an animal, a substitute, could people be forgiven and become clean before God. But people sin continually, so frequent sacrifices were required. Jesus, however, became the final and ultimate sacrifice for sin. The word "finished" is the same as "paid in full." Jesus came to finish God's work of salvation (4:34; 17:4), to pay the full penalty of our sins. With His death, the complex sacrificial system ended because Jesus took all sin upon Himself. Now we can freely approach God because of what Jesus did for us. Those who believe in Jesus' death and resurrection can live eternally with God and escape the penalty that comes from sin (b).

John 19:30. John presents Jesus' declaration here using the Greek word *tetelestai*. Archaeologists have found this word inscribed on records to indicate debts which have been paid, or obligations which have been met. That which Jesus was sent to accomplish - (2 Corinthians 5:21) - an atonement for sin on behalf of mankind is entirely and fully completed in this moment: "It is finished." No further work needs to be done, nor can it be done (Titus 3:5). There is no room for other actions, rituals, sacraments, sacrifices, or payments to accomplish salvation (1 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 10:12-14).

The fact that Jesus is said to "give up his spirit" is significant. Matthew and Luke make similar observations (Matthew 27:50; Luke 23:46). From a physical standpoint, Jesus' body has suffered fatal injury. And yet, His death is entirely an act of His own will. That included His willingness to be born into human form (John 1:14), to submit to God's will (Matthew 26:39), and to allow His own arrest and execution (Philippians 2:8). Scripture clarifies that Jesus is "giving up" His life to God the Father - it is not being stripped away from Him by force (John 10:17-18). (h).

Questions for Reflection: Stop here. Think about the magnitude of the impact of what Jesus did for *all* believers. Now, think about what He did for *You*. Jesus suffered and died on a cruel cross for *You*. Write down a few of your thoughts on this personal, sacrificial act of love from Jesus for you.

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 is something you learned about Jesus in this section?
- How could knowing this about Jesus change the way you relate to Him in your everyday life? How could it change the way you relate to others?
- Jesus' final words from the cross were "It is finished!" (John 19:30). What did He mean by that?
- What are some unfinished areas of your life? A broken relationship that hasn't been repaired? A dream that hasn't come to fruition? What does it feel like for these things to be unresolved? (i).

Appendix

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