

# MAJOR LEAGUES



# MARCH MADNESS

The Christian walk can easily be compared to the sports world. As a team of people we are united under our Coach for a common goal. There are practices to be held, players to recruit, positions to be filled, and victories to be won. So how can we be successful in the game of life? In this series we'll explore the practical disciplines necessary to achieve success on the court for Christ. Join us for the Madness!

## Series Sermons:

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|-----------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| March 6:  | “The Importance of Practice” | Hebrews 10:23         |
| March 13: | “What Position Do You Play?” | 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 |
| March 20: | “Full Court Press”           | Mark 14:32-42         |
| March 27: | “The Final Door”             | Luke 24:13-35         |

# THE IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICE

## Hebrews 10:23

*“Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” - Hebrews 10:23*

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**As your group time begins choose one or more of the following questions to tip off the discussion:**

*Are you a fan of NCAA Basketball? If so, What team do you pull for?*

*What emotions or attitudes come to mind when you hear the word “practice.” Explain.*

*When have you had to practice hard for something? What was the end result and was it worth the practice?*

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The writer of Hebrews was pointing out the importance of practicing one’s faith, and the reason why was rather simple. If you don’t practice, you start to lose your skills. You’re not quite as sharp and strong as you once were. And when it comes time to perform, you’re not game-day ready. Our passage today encourages us to hang on to Jesus and keep putting into practice the disciplines He taught. We need the same encouragement today!

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Practice is important because it helps us **ENDURE**. **Read Hebrews 10:23 as a team.**

What have you endured in life? What were you holding onto that allowed you to stay the course?

What is our passage saying we must hold onto, or “keep a firm possession of,” that we might endure in our walk with Christ? What does that mean to you?

We practice in sports and exercise our mind and body that we might endure to the end and receive the reward. How might we exercise our faith so we won't waiver in it?

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Practice is important because it also helps you **REMEMBER YOUR POSITION**.

Have the circumstances of life every steered you in a direction you didn't think you would ever go? How have you forgotten your position?

Read **2 Chronicles 20:14-17**. What was Jahaziel telling the people of Israel to do under the circumstances?

What are you going through in life now that you may need to hear this same reminder?

Read **2 Corinthians 1:21-22**. What does it mean to have God's "seal of ownership on us?"

If the Spirit is merely a deposit in our life, what more do we have to look forward to as believers? How does this help us stand firm and remember our position?

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Finally, practice is important because it helps us **LIVE WITH CONFIDENCE.**

Have you ever had a false sense of confidence, or manufactured confidence to get through something? Explain.

Is your confidence in the right place? Read Paul's words in **Philippians 3:3-11**. From where did his confidence come prior to knowing Christ?

Why don't we have to fake confidence as children of the King?

**Pray:**

As you close your time together pray that God would help you focus on the spiritual disciplines necessary to endure this life of trouble. Pray that He would give you confidence in your faith and relationship with Christ as you remember your position in His family and in His Kingdom. Surrender the areas of your life to Him that are holding you back from following Him and move forward knowing His name is sealed on your heart, reminding you of your worth!

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**Connect:**

Listen to the song “Sons and Daughters” by Brett Stanfill. Find comfort in knowing He chose the lowly and the weak to carry out the great mission of salvation...and we are called His own! You are close to His heart despite any shortcomings and he will never forsake you! Be reminded that you belong to Him!

# WHAT POSITION DO YOU PLAY?

## 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

*“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” - 1 Corinthians 12:7*

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**As your group time begins use one or more of the following questions to tip off the discussion:**

*What kind of teams have you been a part of? What position did you play?*

*Have you ever found it difficult to work with a team of people? Explain.*

*What do you know about spiritual gifts, and do you know what yours might be?*

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Being a Christian means we are on a team and teams have different roles to fill. The Church is no different. We all have a part to play in the family of God and it's important that we act together to accomplish the work of the Church as outlined in scripture. Paul's letter to the Corinthian people help to focus them individually so they might be more effective as a whole. Discovering our position challenges us to move beyond the borders of what we thought we are capable of alone.

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The first thing to know about our position is **GOD WANTS US TO KNOW OUR POSITION.** Read **1 Cor. 12:1** as a team.

Have you ever been put on the court/field/diamond and felt “uninformed” about the position you were supposed to play? How did that go for you? How did it go for the team?

Have you ever felt God made you and said “I have no idea why I even put him/her here on this earth?” What does God tell us about his plans for us in **Jeremiah 29:11**?

It benefits a sports team when all the players know their position. How does it benefit a church when Christians know theirs?

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The second thing to know about our position is **WE’RE ON GOD’S TEAM.** Read **1 Cor. 12:2-3** as a team.

Were you ever picked last for teams in the school yard? How does it feel to know God chose you and paid a price for you to be on His team? Read **Romans 3:25-26** to see how he did this.

When we’re on God’s team, God is our Coach. What happens when we don’t do what Coach says? Does this apply to God?

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The third thing to know about our position is **WE DON'T ALL PLAY THE SAME POSITION.** Read **1 Cor. 12:4-10** as a team.

What are some of the positions mentioned here and in other scriptures that we “play” as Christians?

Why is it important that we have *different* gifts? Explain.

Would you say most Christians are players or spectators? How does knowing your position help get more people in the game?

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The final thing to know about our position is **GOD ASSIGNED US TO OUR POSITION.** Read **1 Cor. 12:11** as a team.

How is our spiritual gifting determined? Do we have a choice in what our spiritual gift is?

How can you find out what your spiritual gift is so you can help grow the kingdom of God?

Take a minute and share what your spiritual gift is and help those who may not perceive what theirs might be.

**Pray:**

As you close your time in prayer lift each other up and encourage one another to search out what position they play. Ask God to give clarity as to the role we all have in His kingdom and for the courage to act on it so we would make an impact. Pray the Holy Spirit would remind each of you that you are on God's team and when we work together we are the unstoppable church - the church the gates of hell could not prevail against.

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**Connect:**

Go to [www.giftstest.com](http://www.giftstest.com) to take a quick 5 minute spiritual gifts test. This will give insight to where the Holy Spirit has gifted you to serve and hopefully point out how you can get in the game!

# FULL COURT PRESS

## Mark 14:32-42

*“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.” - Mark 14:34*

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**As your group time begins use one or more of the following questions to tip off the discussion:**

*Thinking of your favorite sports teams, what was one of the greatest or worst turnovers you’ve witnessed in a ball game?*

*When have you gotten a “turnover” in life that was a real game changer for you or your family?*

*When have you committed a “turnover” that caused you trouble and cost you something?*

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As Christians we are living in a time where a full court press is needed. We need a game changing moment in which the course of our lives and the history of our nation is set in accordance with the Lord’s Word. The game is on the line for us and we are in a culture of decline. The world is pressing in on us from all directions. What will you do to turn things around?

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Jesus responded to the pressure with a full court press of his own. A full court press first starts with **A RECOGNITION OF WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE GAME.** Read Mark 14:32-34 as a team.

What did Jesus recognize was happening in his life and ministry at this point in scripture?

What did Jesus choose to do in the face of what was coming? Would you make the same call? Why or why not?

What situations are you aware of in the world right now as a Christian? How can we be prepared to respond in a proactive way instead of a reactive way to those issues?

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A full court press also starts with **LOOKING TO THE COACH FOR DIRECTION.** Read Mark 14:35-36 as a team.

How did Jesus look to His Coach? What was he asking for?

What is God doing in your life right now to Coach, or “carry you through” in life? Where do you NEED Him to carry you through?

What does Jesus say in Matthew 7:24-27 will happen if we don't take his coaching advice?

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Finally, a full court press involves **BEING IN SHAPE TO CARRY OUT THE GAME PLAN.** Read Mark 14:37-42 as a team.

What is God's game plan? How can we get in shape to be a part of the plan?

Read **Philippians 2:12-18**. What does Paul say will happen when we work hard to show the results of our salvation, allowing God to work through us?

**2 Timothy 4:5** says, "You should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don't be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you." (NLT) Discuss the following:

What ministry has God given you?

How can you use that ministry/gift to help in the work of telling others the Good News?

How will having a clear mind in all situations help you carry out God's game plan?

**Pray:**

As you close your time together pray that God would give each of you an urgency in the present day and age to carry out the Great Commission - making disciples of all nations and teaching those who follow to obey. Pray for a clear understanding of what God's game plan is for you personally and how you can get in shape to carry out that plan. Ask God to surround you and our church with with right team of people to do the work He has called us to do.

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**Connect:**

Listen to the song "Trading my Sorrows" by Read 2 Corinthians 4 in your devotion time this week. Let the words of Paul encourage you - that even though we may be pressed by this world, we are not crushed! May we speak, as the Psalmist, simply because we believe!

# THE FINAL DOOR

## Luke 24:13-35

*“Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” - Luke 24:31-32*

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**As your group time begins use one or more of the following questions to tip off the discussion:**

*Who’s your pick for the Final Four? Who will win it all?*

*Describe a time when your perception of a situation been totally contrary to the reality of what was going on.*

*How have you gotten in trouble for following your feelings instead of the facts? Explain.*

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The men on the road to Emmaus were baffled about what happened in Jerusalem with Jesus. They were sure He was the One to deliver them. But what they perceived and what they felt were contrary to the plan God had put in motion. But through their encounter with Jesus they learned some important lessons about being on Jesus’ team.

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The first lesson these men learned was to **REMEMBER THAT PERCEPTION IS NOT REALITY.** Read Luke 24:13-16 as a team.

What did the direction of these disciple's travel indicate was their perception of the situation that unfolded in Jerusalem?

What was the reality of Jesus' existence? What evidence had they ignored prior to their travels with him?

Read through Isaiah **43:16-21** together. What was God doing that the people had not yet perceived? Where might God be "doing a new thing" in your life that you haven't yet realized is His handywork?

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The next lesson these men learned was to **REMEMBER THAT FEELING IS NOT FACT.** Read Luke 24:17-21 as a team.

These men felt discouraged because they didn't feel the presence of Jesus with them any longer. Have you ever felt that way before? Has it caused you to believe He doesn't care for you?

Even when we feel Jesus is nowhere near us, we can be confident He is present. God says he will “never leave you nor forsake you.” (Deut. 31:8) What are Jesus’ words in **Matthew 28:20**?

What feelings are you facing today that are causing you to lose hope? How can the truth of God’s Word restore your faith?

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Finally, these men learned to **REMEMBER THAT GOD’S WORD IS TRUE. Read Luke 24:22-27 as a team.**

Why was Jesus frustrated with the men? What did He do in v.27 to help their unbelief?

Have you ever had a hard time accepting any of God’s word as truth in your life personally? Give examples.

When the eyes of the men were opened they rejoiced in their faith. What does Paul say to the **Philippians in 4:4**? When should you rejoice in the Lord and His truth? How does that apply in your life today?

**Pray:**

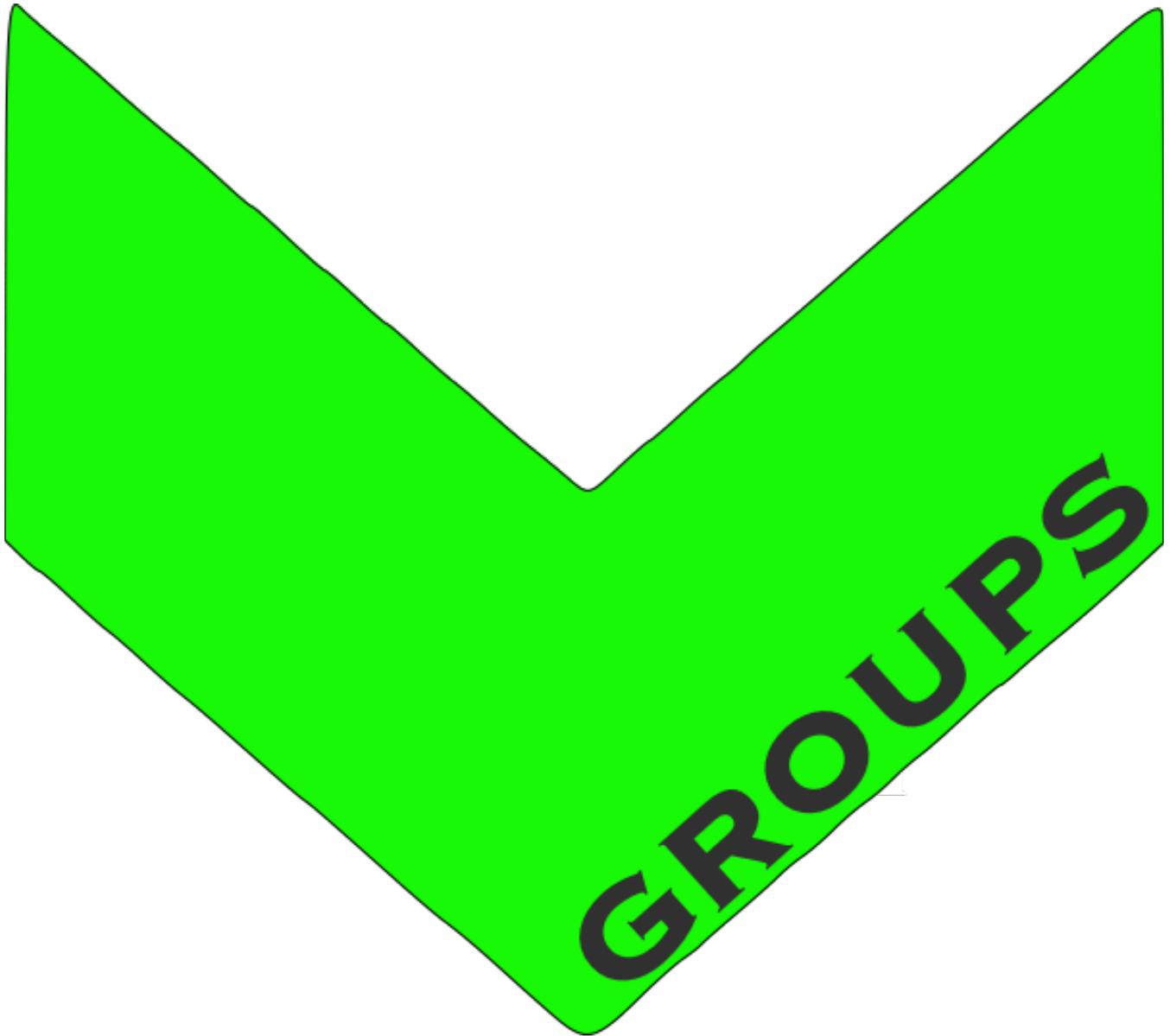
As you close your time together pray for one another's burdens. Walk along side each other as Jesus did with these men. Pray that any bitterness or anger you have toward God would be lifted. Release the idea that Jesus doesn't care for you - He cared so much he died for you. Praise God and rejoice in your prayers to Him. Give thanksgiving for His faithfulness even when we cannot perceive Him working. Thank Him for doing a new thing this day!

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**Connect:**

Listen to the song "Last Word" by Elevation Worship. As you meditate on the words know that God's Word is true and never failing. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow and his love will never end. Find peace knowing "it is finished" and let your hope be endless.





VGroups are the small group ministry of VillageChurch. It is here we Connect, Fellowship, and Grow in our relationship with God and with other believers. We see in Acts 2 that Christian community is essential to be in sync with God's design for our faith and our life. It is here that we come to understand, receive, and reflect God's grace and His character. If you're looking for a group to connect with or just more information on VGroups contact [jonathan@blythewoodvillage.com](mailto:jonathan@blythewoodvillage.com) or visit our website [www.blythewoodvillage.com/#/ministries/vgroups](http://www.blythewoodvillage.com/#/ministries/vgroups).