

PRACTICING WHOLENESS

A Devotional Study for Small Groups & Personal Reflection

Chapel Rock Christian Church

Fall Sermon Series | August 23 - October 4, 2026

"Wholeness is not just mysteriously attained; it requires practice."



CHAPEL ROCK CHRISTIAN CHURCH
PRACTICING WHOLENESS

Digital copy available using QR code below.



Introduction: Why We Practice

About sixteen months ago, the staff of Chapel Rock began intentionally living by seven shared practices, and, on August 23, Pastor Casey Scott spoke on how these practices came to be. (More information about this can be found on our website). These were not rules handed down from above or taken from a conference or book; they were custom crafted for Chapel Rock and discerned together as a team seeking to follow Jesus faithfully in everyday ministry life.

What happened next surprised everyone. Our trust deepened. People began to feel more seen, more known, and more able to show up as their whole selves, bringing about a kind of unity among our staff members that we have been working so hard to cultivate. Most importantly, though, we started to notice God moving in and through us in ways we hadn't seen before.

Now, Pastor Casey and the Chapel Rock staff are inviting you, the whole congregation, into these same seven practices. We believe they are not just staff habits but the road to following Jesus together and becoming whole in Him.

This book is your companion for the seven-week series. Each chapter corresponds to one Sunday message. But Sunday is just the beginning. The pages that follow are designed to help you go deeper in your small group, in your personal prayer and reflection, and in the everyday moments of your week.

How to Use This Book

- Read the chapter introduction before or after the Sunday message.
- Bring it to your small group meeting. The discussion questions and meeting outline are your guide.
- Return to the three personal reflection days throughout the week — ideally spread across Monday/Tuesday, Wednesday/Thursday, and Friday/Saturday.
- Carry the weekly practice into your Monday-through-Saturday life.

Additional Notes

These chapters and practices were uniquely created for Chapel Rock based on scriptures, some of which are included in this devotional. Each one is supported by God's Word and intended to follow His will for us. While we do reference other books, including *Unreasonable Hospitality* by Will Guidara; *The Mission Always Wins* by Tod Bolsinger; *Blood-Stained Pews: How Vulnerability Transforms a Broken Church into a Church for the Broken* by Carl Kuhl; and *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High* by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler, the first of which is secular, we use these to reflect and exemplify the practices scripture has indicated will bring us toward wholeness as a community and help us embrace the wholeness of Christ. These books were not used to discern the practices, but our staff felt they represented the practices we had already discerned and had been living.

You don't have to do this perfectly. Wholeness isn't a performance. It's a posture. Come as you are. Bring your whole self. And let's practice together. — Chapel Rock Staff Team

Chapter 1: The Mission Always Wins

Week of August 23 | Matthew 28:16-20

The mission of Jesus — to make us like Him — always wins.

“The mission always wins” is our governing practice from which everything else flows. At Chapel Rock, all decisions, priorities, structures, and behaviors are ultimately evaluated through one question: does this advance the mission Jesus gave the Church? When things get hard, or competing priorities pull in different directions, this practice is the anchor.

In *Unreasonable Hospitality* by Will Guidara, who is a successful restaurateur, Guidara chooses a mission statement for his restaurant: “to be the four-star restaurant for the next generation.”¹ In his pursuit of this, he listens to a speech by Christopher Russell, a general manager of Union Square Cafe, to Russell’s own employees: “My job...is to do what’s best for the restaurant, not to do what’s best for any of you. More often than not, what’s best for the restaurant will include doing what’s best for you. But the only way I can take care of all of you as individuals is by always putting the restaurant first.”²

At Chapel Rock, we like to say something abbreviated but similar: the mission always wins.

This statement comes from Tod Bolsinger’s *The Mission Always Wins*, where he writes that the mission wins over any leader, donors, teammates, new attendees who have sacrificed to join, overwhelmingly loud people, or people in pain.³ All of these people are valuable, but conflicts between them are solved by seeing what benefits the mission most.⁴ Decisions are made by putting the mission first.⁵

Fortunately, unlike the situation with these restaurateurs, because God’s will for us is good, following His mission and a statement that aligns with it will *always* include what is best for the church, its employees, its members, and its possible future attendees, even if it does not seem like it in the moment. Since God’s will and mission are perfect, anything that supports it is ultimately for the best of God’s people.

What is that mission? According to scripture, our mission is to make disciples who make disciples.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

¹ Will Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality* (New York: Optimism Press, 2022), 57.

² Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 63.

³ Tod Bolsinger, *The Mission Always Wins* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2024), 34.

⁴ Bolsinger, *The Mission Always Wins*, 34.

⁵ Bolsinger, *The Mission Always Wins*, 52.

By reminding ourselves the mission always wins, we can prioritize making disciples who make disciples in our choices, remembering that this commission supersedes all else because it is God's will.

From the Staff's Experience

In the sixteen months in which our staff was discerning the seven practices, we began seeing this first practice in small, daily moments: a pastor sitting with someone who walked into the office overwhelmed, a receptionist praying spontaneously with a grieving visitor, schedules shifting to better serve a need in front of us, intentional conversations about discernment and discipleship. Even what seems mundane becomes a mission act when it is offered as worship to God (Colossians 3:23).

This practice also creates accountability. When a decision is hard, asking, "Does this help people know Jesus better?" cuts through a lot of noise. Even conversations about building decor and word choice have noticeably taken into account this question. While we always have room to grow, being immersed in this practice as a staff for a year and a half has taught us the value of this question.

Additional Scripture to Explore

- Acts 1:8 — Our purpose is to be witnesses both locally and globally.
- 1 Peter 3:15 — Be prepared to give a reason for the hope you have.
- Colossians 3:23 — Do everything for the Lord; even the mundane is worship.

Small Group Meeting Outline

Suggested time: 60-90 minutes

- **Opening (10 min):** Share one small moment this week when you felt you were "on mission," even unexpectedly.
- **Watch/Recap (5 min):** Briefly revisit Pastor Casey's key point from Sunday: the mission of Jesus is to make us like Him, and that mission always wins.
- **Scripture Reading (5 min):** Read Matthew 28:18-20 together aloud and consider its implications. Observe the text and reflect on its meaning.
- **Discussion (30-40 min):** Work through the discussion questions below.
- **Practice Commitment (10 min):** Each person chooses one "live it out" practice for the week.
- **Prayer (5-10 min):** Close by praying for one person who needs to encounter the mission of Jesus from your life, such as your neighbor, family member, or friend.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions to guide your group conversation. Don't rush. Depth matters more than coverage.

1. When you hear "the mission always wins," what reaction do you have? Does it feel motivating, heavy, or something else? Why?
2. Can you think of a time (in ministry, at work, or at home) when you had to let the mission reshape a decision or preference? What happened?

3. What “small” or “ordinary” part of your typical week could actually be a mission moment if you approached it differently? How would you turn this moment into one that points to Jesus?
4. Where do you sense tension between personal preferences and the mission? How do you navigate that?
5. Does Colossians 3:23 (do everything for the Lord) change how you think about tasks that feel unimportant? If so, how?

Practices to Live It Out

Faith grows when we act. Choose one or more of these practices to embrace this week.

- Write the question, “Does this help people know Jesus better?” on a sticky note and place it where you make decisions. Consider options like your desk, car, computer, or mirror.
- Determine how you can treat “ordinary” everyday interactions as mission moments, thinking of how you can use your daily life to invite people into discipleship. Start implementing this.
- Memorize Matthew 28:19a: “Go and make disciples of all nations.” Repeat it when you leave home each morning.

Personal Reflection — Three Times This Week

Days 1 & 4: Awareness

Begin by sitting quietly for two minutes. Ask God, “Where is the mission showing up in my everyday life that I’ve been missing?”

Reflect & Write

- What parts of my week do I treat as “just routine” that could actually be mission moments? How can I use these more intentionally?
- Where have I recently prioritized my comfort over the mission? What do I need to do to change this?

Days 2 & 5: Application

Read Acts 1:8. Think about the “concentric circles” of witness (your household, your neighborhood, your city, the world).

Reflect & Write

- Who in my “Jerusalem” (immediate circle) needs me to show up differently this week?
- What would it look like to be more intentional in that relationship?

Days 3 & 6: Action

Consider Colossians 3:23. Think of something you did this week (like a task you performed, a conversation you had, or a decision you made).

Reflect & Write

- Did I do this as “for the Lord” or was I going through the motions? How can I tell, and, if necessary, how can I refocus my attitude?
- What's one specific way I can offer my work or relationships as worship next week?

Chapter 2: Follow Jesus Together

Week of August 30 | Matthew 4:18-22

We only have the wholeness of Jesus by following Him together.

Togetherness and community are a major part of following the mission. Guidara advises those in the restaurant industry to create a “culture of collaboration,” encouraging his workers to hand-signal each other for help, allowing them to take over parts of the restaurant for which they were passionate, and stopping himself from hindering his business’s success by having too much of its work on his own plate (pun intended).⁶

The body of Christ, a family, has people with different gifts all meant to support one another. Without even one of these individual parts, the body is incomplete.

In following God, leaning on this family (both for their help to you personally and in accomplishing the mission) is vital. You cannot accomplish the mission on your own, nor will your own faith life be as successful as it could be without the support of your community.

Discipleship is not a solo endeavor. There are no lone-ranger Christians. Even the lone-ranger had Tonto. Jesus called the first disciples not one by one into isolation but into a community of shared life, shared mission, and shared obedience. At Chapel Rock, following Jesus together means we pursue Christlikeness in community and recognize that we need each other to grow.

Matthew 4:18-22 (NIV)

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed Him.

From the Staff's Experience

Our staff holds joint prayers, regularly checks in with one another, and seeks to notice when other staff members seem dreary or overly burdened. These practices are not *just* routines or items to check off a list, though. Some staff members will break down in tears as their hearts break for those with whom they walk or for whom they pray. This has helped make us unified in following Jesus together. By making time to connect with one another, listen, understand, and care, by even seeking out one another outside of office hours to check in and build friendships, our staff has created a community, even a family, where people can achieve more together than individually and can kindly hold one another accountable in pursuing faith.

One insight from the team: “Many people carry unseen struggles. Sometimes all they need is someone willing to listen.”

⁶ Will Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality* (New York: Optimism Press, 2022), 100, 102-107, 232-233.

Small Group Meeting Outline

Suggested time: 60-90 minutes

- **Opening (10 min):** Name one person (outside your family) who has helped you follow Jesus more faithfully. What did they do? What did this inspire you to change or begin? How did God use this in your life?
- **Scripture Reading (5 min):** Read Matthew 4:18-22 together and consider its implications. Observe the text and reflect on its meaning.
- **Discussion (30-40 min):** Work through the discussion questions below.
- **Practice Commitment (10 min):** Choose one practice for the week.
- **Prayer (10 min):** Pray for one another by name, specifically for what each person shared today.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions to guide your group conversation. Don't rush. Depth matters more than coverage.

1. What does “following Jesus together” look like practically beyond showing up to church on Sunday?
2. Who in your life is following Jesus alongside you right now? How intentional is that relationship?
3. Give an example of a hard time when you felt like you had to navigate alone spiritually. What did that cost you? In what ways can you consider community to plan better for future difficult circumstances?
4. Is it hard for you to let people in when you are struggling? If so, how do you do this? Why do you think it is uncomfortable for you? What makes it hard? What would you need to allow people to help you?
5. How can this group become a more intentional “follow Jesus together” community? What specific actions, words, and environments would support this?

Practices to Live It Out

Faith grows when we act. Choose one or more of these practices to embrace this week.

- Find something with which you have been struggling. Perhaps this is reading your Bible or praying regularly, or perhaps it is a behavior that you know isn't aligned with your identity in Christ. See if you can find an accountability partner with whom you can check in to grow closer to Jesus together.
- Pray with someone this week, not just *for* them, but *with* them. Even a two-minute prayer together changes things.
- Share something honest about your own spiritual journey with at least one person. Not a polished testimony, but something real and current.

Personal Reflection — Three Times This Week

Days 1 & 4: Awareness

Think about the people with whom you are following Jesus right now.

Reflect & Write

- Am I growing spiritually in isolation or in community? How can my growth become more consistent?
- Who has God placed near me that I have been overlooking as a companion on this journey? What makes me think of this person, or, if I am unable to think of someone, how could I find companions?

Days 2 & 5: Application

Read John 15:12-13. Jesus calls his disciples friends, not servants.

Reflect & Write

- What does it mean to me that Jesus calls me into a friendship that involves mutual laying down of life?
- Am I withholding myself from the community I belong to, and, if so, where? How can I change that?

Days 3 & 6: Action

Think about your small group, your staff team, or your closest relationships.

Reflect & Write

- Where have I seen God work through another person in my life recently? Describe the situation.
- How can I be more present and less distracted in my community this week?

Chapter 3: More Than Words

Week of September 6 | Romans 12:3-8

Words of love are meaningless without matching action.

This custom-made practice of “more than words” is reminiscent of the saying “mind the gap,” which warns people to remember there is a gap between a platform where we are standing and the subway train where we want to be, and a very dangerous gap at that. We must remember that this gap exists between who we are and who we claim to be, and this “more than words” practice that we discerned and lived for 16 months is meant to combat the gap and encourages us to put conscious effort into making our actions reflect our words and values.

Guidara noted an important mistake in running his restaurant: one of the practices in his dining room that he himself had supported did not match one of the major values his restaurant claimed to have, unreasonable hospitality. He had taught his dining room staff to give speeches about the history connected to different foods, utensils, decor, etc. to all guests, which prevented servers from having natural conversation with customers and frustrated people who came to just eat or sit with their friends instead of hearing “a history lesson.”⁷

Though Guidara’s restaurant said it valued hospitality and sought to “tailor the service experience to the guest,” their actions here put their own selfish interests above the comfort of their customers, leading to temporary, and, according to Guidara, justified criticism.⁸ This practice was unsurprisingly changed to better match their unreasonable hospitality value.

Similarly, exploring our own practices and actions and whether or not they truly match what we claim to believe is important to the process of becoming more Christ-like.

Our faith and values must be demonstrated through action. What we do must align with what we say. When our actions match our words, when we mind the gap, we show integrity, and people are more likely to trust us. Trust is the currency of the Kingdom.

Romans 12:3-8 (NIV)

Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought...We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy...if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement...

From the Staff's Experience

In the year and a half of discerning the seven practices, though we did not suddenly become perfect experts on more than words, the staff identified this practice in the everyday texture of our lives together: prayer, follow-up calls, cards, and authentic check-ins. One staff member noted, “I consistently see our

⁷ Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 239-241.

⁸ Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 240-241.

team caring for one another as soon as they walk into the office doors with genuine compassion. Our team asks each other how they may be of service. I see it every single day.” Our staff immerses itself in prayers, the Bible, and community while also seeking to actively serve both in and out of the office.

This practice also brought to the surface a convicting question: “Do my actions towards others reflect what I expect from others?”

Small Group Meeting Outline

Suggested time: 60-90 minutes

- **Opening (10 min):** Tell about a time someone showed up for you with a concrete act of care. What did it mean to you and why?
- **Scripture Reading (5 min):** Read Romans 12:3-8 together and consider its implications. Observe the text and reflect on its meaning.
- **Discussion (30-40 min):** Work through the discussion questions below.
- **Practice Commitment (10 min):** Choose one practice.
- **Prayer (10 min):** Ask God to show each person one specific way to move from words to action this week.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions to guide your group conversation. Don't rush. Depth matters more than coverage.

1. Mind the gap: where is the gap between what you say you believe and how you actually live? (Be honest: this is a safe space.)
2. Think about someone in your life who embodies “more than words.” What do they do that makes them trustworthy?
3. Is there a relationship where your words and actions have not been aligned recently? What would it take to close that gap?
4. How does knowing your spiritual gifts help you figure out how to act in practical, loving ways?
5. Out of hospitality, care ministry, and everyday interactions, which comes most naturally to you? Why? How do you demonstrate it? Which is hardest? Why? How can you improve in this area?

Practices to Live It Out

Faith grows when we act. Choose one or more of these practices to embrace this week.

- Think of someone with whom you have not yet really put into practice, making your actions match your words. Write their name down and one concrete action you can take to show them your words and values are real.
- Before you speak a commitment or encouragement to someone, ask yourself, “Am I willing to back this up with action?” Figure out a way to answer this with a “yes.”
- Practice the “stop and help” posture this week: when someone is in front of you with a need, pause what you are doing and ask, “How can I help right now?”

Personal Reflection — Three Times This Week

Days 1 & 4: Awareness

Read James 2:14-17 (“faith without works is dead”). Sit with that for a moment without defensiveness.

Reflect & Write

- Where is my faith currently more words than actions?
- What is one step I could take today to make my faith more visible?

Days 2 & 5: Application

Think about the people closest to you, like your family, coworkers, or neighbors.

Reflect & Write

- Do they experience me as someone whose actions match my words? Why or why not?
- Would they agree with my answer? What would they say if asked?

Days 3 & 6: Action

Think about your spiritual gifts, whether they are teaching, serving, encouraging, giving, leading, etc.

Reflect & Write

- Am I using my gifts, or are they sitting unused? How can I tell?
- Who could benefit from me using my gifts more intentionally this week, and how?

Chapter 4: Set the Table

Week of September 13 | Luke 22:24-27

Invisible, uncredited service is the currency of the Kingdom.

If you have ever had the experience of someone being ready for you, really *ready* and prepared for you, expecting your presence and seeking to accommodate it, you already know what this practice is about.

Guidara, author of *Unreasonable Hospitality*, is undoubtedly known for his high-achieving abilities to not just set the table literally but metaphorically. Though we developed this practice before reading his work, he certainly knows how to demonstrate it.

He describes a story he believes is a great example of this kind of hospitality: when a couple at a restaurant left a champagne bottle in their freezer for celebrating their anniversary instead of their refrigerator, the sommelier took to their home with the keys to not only transfer the champagne but leave caviar, chocolates, and a card.⁹

This kind of story inspired Guidara to go above and beyond in his own restaurants, instructing his staff to care even to details no one would notice, like lining up logos on wineglasses with the edge of the table.¹⁰ He stresses the one-inch rule (essentially the idea of finishing strong), as well, because he notices people often lose focus in the last stretch of serving and diminish the experience.¹¹ He and his team even develop Dreamweavers, whose jobs were to notice individual tables' specific conversations and desires and create gifts that were personalized to those people.¹²

This kind of hospitality, similar to Chapel Rock's value of radical hospitality, is meant to be thoughtful.¹³ It seeks to not only accomplish as much as possible for everyone, preparing ahead of time to make a space as perfect as can be and making sure not to ever drop the ball because of carelessness, but to also consider people's individual characteristics, personalities, and hopes and to cater (again, pun intended) to them and their comfort.

Setting the table *is* about hospitality, but not the kind that requires a perfect house or a catered meal. It is the practice of creating space where people feel seen, welcome, and expected. It asks, "Who might be standing just outside the circle? And how do we extend the table to include them?"

Luke 22:24-27 (NIV)

A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them...But you are not to be like that...I am among you as One Who serves."

⁹ Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 26.

¹⁰ Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 124-125.

¹¹ Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 126-127.

¹² Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 202-206.

¹³ Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 214.

From the Staff's Experience

For our staff, setting the table is about making room for the other, setting others up for success, and creating space and opportunities for others to experience Jesus. We do this by greeting visitors and each other warmly, trying to remember names, helping people feel seen, and anticipating needs that people haven't voiced yet. Even seemingly little things, like a staff member leaving candies on people's desks before they sit down, have created this atmosphere of searching for ways to add to someone's life. As one staff member reflected, "There could be many reasons they don't ask for something. They're overwhelmed, too tired, too proud. Our job is to notice."

This practice extends beyond Sunday hospitality. It is just as relevant between coworkers as between a greeter and a first-time guest. Who might feel unseen right now, and what does this person need?

Small Group Meeting Outline

Suggested time: 60-90 minutes

- **Opening (10 min):** Describe a moment when someone made you feel truly welcome somewhere. What did they do?
- **Scripture Reading (5 min):** Read Luke 22:24-27 together and consider its implications. Observe the text and reflect on its meaning.
- **Discussion (30-40 min):** Work through the discussion questions below.
- **Practice Commitment (10 min):** Choose one practice.
- **Prayer (10 min):** Pray specifically for one person for whom each of you will "set the table" this week.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions to guide your group conversation. Don't rush. Depth matters more than coverage.

1. Is there someone I have unintentionally labeled or made to feel like an outsider?
2. What are the invisible barriers in your church or community that make some people feel unwelcome without anyone meaning for it to happen?
3. How is setting the table different from just being nice? What makes it an intentional spiritual practice?
4. Luke 22 shows Jesus redefining greatness as service. Where do you struggle with this in your own life?
5. What would it look like if Chapel Rock became known in the community as a place that "sets the table" for those who feel unseen?

Practices to Live It Out

Faith grows when we act. Choose one or more of these practices to embrace this week.

- This week, greet one person at church or in your community whose name you don't know. Learn it. Use it.

- Think of someone who is going through something hard. Do one “table-setting” act for them this week, such as providing them a meal, sending a text, or visiting them.
- Practice the art of noticing: at your next gathering with other people, ask yourself, “Who is on the edge of this circle, and how can I draw them in?”

Personal Reflection — Three Times This Week

Days 1 & 4: Awareness

Read Romans 15:7: “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you.”

Reflect & Write

- Who have I been slow to accept or include? Why, and how can I overcome this?
- What would it look like to extend to them the same welcome Christ extended to me?

Days 2 & 5: Application

Think about someone who recently walked into your world for the first time.

Reflect & Write

- Did they feel “set the table” hospitality from me? Why or why not?
- What's one thing I could do differently next time?

Days 3 & 6: Action

Reflect on Luke 22:27: “I am among you as One who serves.”

Reflect & Write

- What would it look like for me to carry the posture of a servant this week?
- Where am I more likely to want to be served than to serve? How can I change this starting now?

Chapter 5: Bring Your Whole Self

Week of September 20 | Mark 12:28-34

Wholeness is impossible if we hold back parts of ourselves.

Have you ever wanted to stop self-editing? Do you feel tired of curating an image of yourself for other people? We know what this is like. In a world of social media, falling into this is incredibly easy, as we want to present our best selves to the world. This practice that we discerned is going to challenge that and begs us to bring our *whole* selves instead of a manufactured image.

Guidara's staff often felt comfortable bringing their whole selves. They demonstrated excellence in and passion for different roles, formed a culture where it was cool for them to care tremendously and obsessively attend to details, and brought enthusiastic ideas.¹⁴ On the other end, though, they brought their low points, their vulnerability, becoming part of a family with each other, sharing disappointments, opening up, and developing a signal to request help when they needed it from other servers.¹⁵

Bringing their whole selves allowed them to not only become vulnerable with each other and develop a supportive, trusting workplace environment, but it allowed them to use what they were given in the best ways they could.

Carl Kuhl, author of *Blood-Stained Pews: How Vulnerability Transforms a Broken Church into a Church for the Broken*, specifically calls people to bring their brokenness, not just their gifts, to churches. Do not lie to yourself or disguise your turmoil, nor bury yourself in shame that targets your person instead of your behavior and separates you from God.¹⁶ Instead, be upfront about how your past, fears, and ongoing struggles may be affecting you.

Kuhl claims that shame, pride, apathy, or doubt can be some of the primary limiters of vulnerability and honesty, as well as Fundamental Attribution Error, which describes how we often take credit for good things in our lives and blame circumstances for bad things.¹⁷ Any of these traits and behaviors can block us from bringing our whole selves, with some causing us to ignore our gifts and others causing us to pretend we are faultless and hide our real selves.

God works through our whole lives, including our brokenness, gifts, limitations, doubts, pasts, and growing edges. This practice is an invitation to stop compartmentalizing. The journey you may try to hide may be exactly the one God wants to use to assist someone else in their own.

Mark 12:28-34 (NIV)

¹⁴ Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 66-67, 85-88, 95.

¹⁵ Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 132, 142-146, 160-162.

¹⁶ Carl Kuhl, *Blood-Stained Pews: How Vulnerability Transforms a Broken Church into a Church for the Broken* (Austin, TX: Fedd Books, 2026), 26-27, 34.

¹⁷ Carl Kuhl, *Blood-Stained Pews*, 13-14.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” The second is this: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no commandment greater than these.

From the Staff's Experience

Throughout sixteen months of developing and living this, our staff has found this practice to be one of the most personally challenging ones. Even seeking to be immersed in bringing our whole selves, though it gave us experience, did not completely remove the difficulty of living this way. One team member reflected honestly, “I realize there are parts of my story and myself that I haven't shared yet. I assumed, if I wasn't asked to share, I shouldn't.” That assumption quietly closes the door on connection and on the ways God might use us.

This practice does not mean sharing everything with everyone. It is wise to use discernment of when, where, and how. And it can be difficult, especially in ministry, discipleship, and, unfortunately, in Christian circles, to talk about experiences that are still hurting us, sins you may feel define us or will cause others to label us, and parts of faith we don't understand yet. But discernment means bringing our real selves (our doubts, our past, our ongoing struggles) into the relationships where trust already exists, so that we can grow and so that others can be helped by our journeys. Vulnerability is a must if we want to be a place that is safe for vulnerable people.

Small Group Meeting Outline

Suggested time: 60-90 minutes

- **Opening (10 min):** Share one part of your personality or history that people in this room probably don't know about you.
- **Scripture Reading (5 min):** Read Mark 12:28-34 together and consider its implications. Observe the text and reflect on its meaning.
- **Discussion (30-40 min):** Work through the discussion questions below.
- **Practice Commitment (10 min):** Choose one practice.
- **Prayer (10 min):** Pray for one another to have courage to bring more of yourselves to God and to community.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions to guide your group conversation. Don't rush. Depth matters more than coverage.

1. What part of yourself do you most often leave at the door when you come to church? Why?
2. Have you ever been helped by someone's honesty about their own struggle? What did that do for you?
3. Is there a story from your life that you've never shared in a spiritual context? What would it take to share it, and with whom?
4. Mark 12 calls us to love God with “all”: heart, soul, mind, and strength. Which of these do you find hardest to bring fully to God? Why? What do you need to do in order to surrender?

5. How does this practice connect to “follow Jesus together”? What does community make possible that isolation doesn't?

Practices to Live It Out

Faith grows when we act. Choose one or more of these practices to embrace this week.

- Share something real and current about your faith journey with one person this week. This does not mean a polished story. It should be something you're in the middle of.
- Ask someone you trust, “Is there something in my life you've noticed I have been avoiding sharing with you?” Then, listen without defending.
- Write a brief “spiritual autobiography” paragraph (just for yourself). What has shaped your faith? What have you never told anyone?

Personal Reflection — Three Times This Week

Days 1 & 4: Awareness

Sit quietly and ask, “What parts of my story have I been hiding from God, from others, or from myself?”

Reflect & Write

- Is there something in my past I still feel shame about that I haven't brought fully to God? Why am I holding onto this?
- What would it mean to let that part of my story become something God redeems? How could I let Him have it?

Days 2 & 5: Application

Think about the people in your small group or closest community.

Reflect & Write

- Do they know the real me? Why or why not?
- What's one true thing about my current journey that I've been keeping private unnecessarily? Is this something I can share now, and what would it take for me to do that?

Days 3 & 6: Action

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9: “My power is made perfect in weakness.”

Reflect & Write

- What weakness or limitation do I most want to hide? Why do I feel the need for this to be so private?
- How might God want to use exactly that for His purposes?

Chapter 6: Safe to Ask

Week of September 27 | John 4:1-26

Curiosity and love make the most Godly conversations.

On the other side of people bringing their whole selves is the provision of an environment where people feel comfortable to do so. Even this environment, an environment that hopes to make people feel safe to ask, is a two-sided coin, though. We must provide an attitude and atmosphere that allows a person to be vulnerable and ask questions, but we also must learn that, when others we trust ask hard questions of us, we must trust that their motivation is for our own good. We must be receptive of questions that explore brokenness and faith struggles, but we also must be receptive of questions that challenge us to grow if the other person is seeking what is good for us.

In *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High* by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler, the authors talk about crucial conversations and how to handle them. They define a crucial conversation as one that involves opposing opinions, strong emotions, and high stakes.¹⁸ At Chapel Rock, we want to be aware of how we can make our atmosphere feel safe for people even in these most difficult circumstances. We want to assure they see their opinions, struggles, and questions are being received. One mistake noted by these authors is that people think they have to “choose between candor and kindness,” but a safe environment values both.¹⁹ The method expressed in this book mirrors the practices we have discerned, suggesting that we can make an environment safe by still speaking truth, but also searching for our own growing areas; keeping sight of our goals (as suggested by “the mission always wins”); reading the room while being aware of our own behavior and stress reactions, as well; expressing respect and care for others’ desires; being ready to apologize if we have made mistakes; seeking a mutual purpose; being aware that our opinions are not necessarily facts; making ourselves open to disagreement; and showing curiosity about others’ views.²⁰

Guidara does a good job of developing this kind of culture. He attempts to “make the charitable assumption” about others, asking about them and their well-being before treating them as a bad person or as though they have failed.²¹ He noticed the way a boss had criticized him viciously and publicly when he was younger and wanted to make sure he did not have that practice in his own restaurants, instead turning to private and behavior-focused criticism instead of person-focused criticism, as well as regular praise.²² He seeks to have people speak freely in strategic planning meetings, feel allowed to ask for clarification and help, and be open to giving ideas—and he advises listening to every idea (especially the first time one is presented to you).²³ He encourages people “to start by listening” even though “you’re not

¹⁸ Kerry Patterson et al., *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012), 1-2.

¹⁹ Patterson et al., *Crucial Conversations*, 22.

²⁰ Patterson et al., *Crucial Conversations*, 23, 34, 40-44, 53-55, 63, 93, 101, 154, 174, 215.

²¹ Will Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality* (New York: Optimism Press, 2022), 29.

²² Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 50, 68.

²³ Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 95, 115-116.

always going to agree with everything you hear.”²⁴ He emphasizes being human with your team and allowing yourself to show your real emotions, even in times of disappointment.²⁵

These were his strategies to creating a community where people felt they were safe to ask questions, and they are transferrable in many ways to Christian communities. We should treat people with these charitable assumptions, be careful in our criticism and abundant in our praise for good things, separate behaviors from people, aim to make people feel comfortable asking questions and giving ideas by listening and truly considering as much as possible their viewpoints, and by allowing ourselves to be vulnerable enough to connect with people.

Kuhl emphasizes similar points in *Blood-Stained Pews* but takes the concept even farther, talking about making people feel safe to ask by examining your own sin (bringing your whole self) because this teaches you to be humble and more understanding of others’ faults by understanding your own. Guidara himself makes mistakes and owns up to them because this creates a culture of trust, honesty, and vulnerability. As for Kuhl’s book title, it references a church that was a shelter for taking care of the wounded during World War II, and blood that stained the pews was kept by the church to remind people that it was “a place of hope and healing for broken...for the wounded to come, for the injured to bleed, for people to be healed...no matter who they were, their beliefs, or their background.”²⁶ Making a space where brokenness is shown allows people to bring their own.

Jesus is always inviting us to bring our brokenness and hard questions. He welcomes them. He asks questions Himself. He never makes someone feel foolish for wondering. While He challenges people, He is highly invitational, always focusing on establishing real relationships with people and showing His care for them. This practice is about cultivating that same culture in our church, small groups, staff teams, and families that we may have a place where people’s struggles and honest questions are welcomed instead of feared.

John 4:1-26 (NIV)

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give Me a drink?”...The woman said to Him, “Sir, I can see that You are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain...” Jesus declared, “Believe Me, a time is coming...”

From the Staff's Experience

While bringing our whole selves was the practice we found most challenging, developing a safe-to-ask environment is what we found most *transformative*. Our staff consistently noted two things about this practice. First, we discovered how meaningful it is to feel safe asking for help without judgment. Being able to ask for help combats feelings of loneliness, as we can see other people who have experienced or actively choose to understand our doubts and needs even outside of experience. Second, we saw how

²⁴ Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 64.

²⁵ Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 164-165.

²⁶ Carl Kuhl, *Blood-Stained Pews: How Vulnerability Transforms a Broken Church into a Church for the Broken* (Austin, TX: Fedd Books, 2026), 1-3.

past situations can make asking feel unsafe even when the current environment welcomes questions and openness about brokenness.

Our staff members look to understand people, to see their full personhood and why they have come to different conclusions or are asking questions, and to show people that having questions and struggles is not strange. It does not have to put someone on the outside, especially since brokenness and questions are common to all people. Creating a safe-to-ask culture requires both builders and protectors: people who ask good questions and people who receive questions without dismissing or redirecting.

Small Group Meeting Outline

Suggested time: 60-90 minutes

- **Opening (10 min):** What is a question about faith or God that you've hesitated to ask out loud? (You don't have to answer it. Just name the question.)
- **Scripture Reading (5 min):** Read John 4:1-15 together and consider its implications. Observe the text and reflect on its meaning.
- **Discussion (30-40 min):** Work through the discussion questions below.
- **Practice Commitment (10 min):** Choose one practice.
- **Prayer (10 min):** Ask God to make you a safe person around whom others feel free to ask hard questions.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions to guide your group conversation. Don't rush. Depth matters more than coverage.

1. When have you felt unsafe asking a question in a Christian environment? What made it feel that way? What would have made you feel more comfortable?
2. What does Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman show us about how to receive someone's honest questions?
3. What would it take for this small group to become a place where truly hard questions about faith, doubt, and life are earnestly welcomed?
4. Is there a question you've been carrying for a long time that you've never felt free to ask? Can you name it here?
5. What is the difference between creating a safe space for questions and simply affirming everything people believe?

Practices to Live It Out

Faith grows when we act. Choose one or more of these practices to embrace this week.

- This week, invite someone to ask you something they've been wondering about faith. Give them full permission to go wherever the question leads.
- When someone in your world asks a hard question this week, respond with curiosity first, not correction. Ask a follow-up question before you answer.

Personal Reflection — Three Times This Week

Days 1 & 4: Awareness

Ask yourself, “What is a question I've been afraid to bring to God?”

Reflect & Write

- What am I afraid the answer might be? Why am I afraid of this?
- Can I bring that question to God honestly this week, trusting that He is big enough for it? How can I make sure I bring these questions to Him in the future?

Days 2 & 5: Application

Think about the people who come to you with questions. Perhaps they are kids, friends, or people in the group.

Reflect & Write

- Am I a safe person for hard questions? Explain. Would someone else answer the same way about me? What do I do (or not do) that might make someone feel dismissed when they come to me with uncertainty?
- Do I usually “make the charitable assumption” about others? What does this look like when I do? Where in my life have I made judgments about people without fully hearing them out first, and did this lead to problems? If so, what happened?

Days 3 & 6: Action

Read Proverbs 2:1-6 (which talks about seeking wisdom as if searching for silver).

Reflect & Write

- Am I approaching my faith with genuine curiosity and searching? Explain. What are some hard questions I have? How can I keep these in mind when I am listening to others' hard questions?
- Can I approach others with this same curiosity about their own questions and opinions? What would this look like? What might change in my relationships if I seek most to understand other people's struggles and questions instead of trying to fix or answer them immediately?

Chapter 7: Carry a Towel

Week of October 4 | John 13:3-5

Those who would be whole must serve those who are not.

If you are familiar with *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams, you may already understand the importance of carrying a towel. While Adams describes the many practical uses of a towel, we use this practice in a more metaphorical sense: always having a towel with us means we are always prepared to serve.

Guidara, in his love for hospitality, also has a huge focus on serving. He tells the story of his restaurant giving canelés as a send-home gift. Ultimately, however, he changed this: he had the restaurant send them home with a granola jar instead.²⁷ When taking the gifts under consideration, he believed the guests would value the granola jar much more than fancy French pastries, claiming that the pastries were what they wanted to serve and not what guests wanted.²⁸ He says, “Serve only what you want to serve, and you’re showing off.”²⁹

This highlights the real value of service: putting others before yourself. Service should serve the person it is intended to help, not the person serving. Serving that aims to value the server more than the served has missed the point.

He began a practice of hiring people as a kitchen server first, as well, having them start “at the lowest position in the dining room,” allowing them to learn the value of all jobs and make sure they were both well-trained and focused on the job of serving.³⁰ This kind of process emphasizes humility and learning.

Jesus, on the night before He was betrayed, wrapped a towel around His waist and washed His disciples' feet. Carrying a towel is the practice of servant leadership: leading from below instead of above and serving first instead of last. We as disciples must embrace this kind of service, discovering what others want and need and being willing to put ourselves in the lowest position to accomplish that for them, ridding ourselves of selfish desires to become focused on others.

John 13:3-5 (NIV)

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God; so He got up from the meal, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet...

From the Staff's Experience

The examples our staff shared about this practice were humble and quiet. In addition to colleagues going to each person in the office every morning to ask how they are doing, leaders step in to help with tasks

²⁷ Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 80.

²⁸ Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 80.

²⁹ Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 245.

³⁰ Guidara, *Unreasonable Hospitality*, 82.

that are not their responsibility, pastors offer welcome help and guidance without being asked, and ministries collaborate with each other and share their resources. We can more easily say, “I have never felt so loved at a workplace. It feels more like family.”

We are not experts yet, but attempting to live this practice for sixteen months has made one thing clear: this kind of culture is built one towel at a time.

Small Group Meeting Outline

Suggested time: 60-90 minutes

- **Opening (10 min):** Tell about someone who served you quietly and without recognition. What did they do, and what did it mean to you?
- **Scripture Reading (5 min):** Read John 13:3-5 followed by verses 12-17 together and consider their implications. Observe the text and reflect on its meaning.
- **Discussion (30-40 min):** Work through the discussion questions below.
- **Practice Commitment (10 min):** Choose one practice.
- **Prayer (10 min):** Ask God to reveal one “towel moment,” a specific act of quiet service, for each person this coming week.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions to guide your group conversation. Don't rush. Depth matters more than coverage.

1. John 13:3 says Jesus served knowing exactly who He was. How does security in your identity make servant leadership easier?
2. Where in your life do you tend to want credit for your serving? What does that reveal?
3. Who in your life needs someone to “carry a towel” for them right now quietly, without being asked?
4. How does this practice create the kind of culture where people feel like family, rather than like colleagues or attendees?
5. Is there an area of ministry or relationship where you've been waiting for someone else to serve first? What would happen if you picked up the towel?

Practices to Live It Out

Faith grows when we act. Choose one or more of these practices to embrace this week.

- Do one act of service this week that no one will see or know about. Resist the urge to mention it.
- Ask someone, “What's one thing I could do to make your week easier?” Then do it.
- At your next gathering, whether it be church, work, or a family dinner, look for the “towel moment”: the task no one wants to do. Do it.

Personal Reflection — Three Times This Week

Days 1 & 4: Awareness

Sit with John 13:3. Jesus served from a place of knowing who He was, secure in His identity.

Reflect & Write

- Do I serve from security, or do I serve to earn approval or recognition? What would these different types of serving look like in my life?
- How could I serve more freely this week, knowing Whose I am?

Days 2 & 5: Application

Think about the communities you belong to, such as your church, family, and work.

Reflect & Write

- Where am I serving well? Where am I absent or waiting to be served? What has this looked like?
- What is one way I can show up more humbly and practically?

Days 3 & 6: Action

Read Philippians 2:3-8: “In humility consider others better than yourselves.”

Reflect & Write

- Where do I most struggle with genuine humility? Why is this a problem for me?
- What would need to change for servant leadership to become my natural posture rather than an occasional effort?

Living These Practices Forward

You've walked through seven weeks. You've sat in small groups and alone with these pages. You've asked questions, wrestled with practices, and (hopefully) taken a few steps you wouldn't have taken otherwise. So... what now?

The goal of this study was never to add seven new items to your spiritual to-do list but to help you see a way of being that creates a posture toward God, others, and yourself that makes wholeness possible. These practices are a pattern for following Jesus together.

What Happens When All Seven Are Practiced?

One of our staff team members answered this question beautifully, saying, “We would see deeper unity, stronger discipleship, and a culture where people truly feel seen and supported.”

That is what wholeness looks like in community: people being genuinely known who are growing closer to God and to each other, put God's will first, tell the truth in both words and actions, are vulnerable but safe with each other, focus on service, and give themselves away to the mission of Jesus to make disciples and become more like Him.

Five Ways to Keep Practicing

- Stay in community. That is where these practices work best. Keep meeting with your small group.
- Return to the book. Revisit the reflection days for any practice in which you want to go deeper.
- Name your growing edge. Which of the seven practices is your biggest stretch? Make it your focus for the next season.
- Teach it to someone. The best way to internalize a practice is to invite someone else into it.
- Come back to the mission. When life gets complicated or busy, return to Practice 1: The Mission Always Wins. Let it reorient everything else.

A Final Word

Wholeness is a direction, not a destination at which you will immediately arrive. You keep moving toward it together, with Jesus, one practice at a time.

"Wholeness is not just mysteriously attained. We have to practice it. And here's how."

May you carry a towel. May you bring your whole self. May you set the table for someone who needs a seat. May you follow Jesus together.

Appendix: Quick Reference Guide

The Seven Practices at a Glance

#	Practice	Scripture	One-Line Summary
1	The Mission Always Wins	Matthew 28:16-20	The mission of Jesus always wins.
2	Follow Jesus Together	Matthew 4:18-22	We follow Him together, not alone.
3	More Than Words	Romans 12:3-8	Faith without action is incomplete.
4	Set the Table	Luke 22:24-27	Serve the unseen; expand the welcome.
5	Bring Your Whole Self	Mark 12:28-34	Wholeness requires honesty and risk.
6	Safe to Ask	John 4:1-26	Curiosity and love make Godly conversation.
7	Carry a Towel	John 13:3-5	Serve quietly, humbly, and without fanfare.

Suggested Small Group Covenant

Consider adopting this brief covenant as a group at your first meeting:

We commit to showing up to our group, to our practices, and to one another. We will bring our whole selves, ask honest questions, listen before we speak, and serve one another quietly. We will follow Jesus together.

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Notes

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