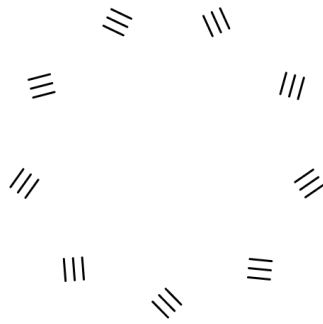


A Four-Session Companion
Guide to Cultivate Community
in the Way of Jesus



The Community Practice

Practicing the Way

Practice

Share a meal together.

Through practicing community intentionally and eating together, we learn to love others and live as the family of God.

We invite you to begin each session by sharing a meal together as the baseline for the remainder of the Practice.

Choose your place(s).

- Decide on the location(s) where you will host your dinners.

Set a consistent day and time.

- Choose a specific day and time each week that works for everyone, ideally before each of the remaining sessions.

Organize a potluck style meal.

- Have everyone sign up for specific elements (mains, desserts, drinks). Be mindful of any dietary restrictions in the group.

Encourage contributions beyond food.

- Participants can also help with setting and cleaning up.

A LITURGY FOR

Community

O Triune God,
Father
Son
Holy Spirit — the joyful relationship
at the center of the Universe.

Let us not be mistaken to think
that the ordinary nature of this gathering
means You are not here.

Meet us, O Lord, in every curious question,
honest prayer, and offering of attention.

May we share in Your life
as we now share in one another's.

For some, the table brings memories of
connection and plenty;
for others, absence and lack.

Grant us compassion, O Lord.

May the table we set be wide enough
for all these stories.

Open our hearts to love today, knowing
that in receiving our brother, our sister,
we are surely receiving You.

Amen.

Reflect

Take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions:

01 Where did I feel resistance?

02 Where did I feel joy?

03 Where did I most experience God's nearness?

GO DEEPER

Optional resources to enhance
your experience of this Practice:



Listen

Rule of Life podcast on Community
(Episode 01)



Read

Made to Belong by David Kim
(Chapters 01-02)

Practice

At your next weekly meal, go around the table and share the highs and lows of the week.

When we learn to share our joys and sorrows with one another, our time with our community can become communion with one another and with God.

Highs

- Your highs could be what you're grateful for, excited about, or something that is currently bringing you joy.

Lows

- Your lows could be what you're grieving, what you're fearful about, or a moment that was difficult for you during the week.

Regardless of what your high or low is, be honest and let your community into what you're celebrating and what you're finding challenging.

Reflect

Take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions:

- 01 What did I find most difficult about this exercise?
- 02 What emotions did I experience in sharing my joys and sorrows?
- 03 How do I sense the Spirit inviting me deeper into honesty in community going forward?

GO DEEPER

Optional resources to enhance your experience of this Practice:



Listen

Rule of Life podcast on Community
(Episode 02)



Read

Made to Belong by David Kim
(Chapters 03-05)

Practice

This week, we invite you to find a confessor and confess your sins.

Jesus has come to set us free from sin and its shame, and to connect us to God and to each other in a bond of love.

Find a confessor

- A confessor could be a trusted friend, pastor, mentor, therapist, or spiritual director — anyone who you feel safe with and believe would love you no matter what.
- Ask them to get together and let them know you want to share how you're really doing.

Confess your sins

- You can start small by just naming an ongoing struggle in your life. Or, depending on the level of trust and the relationship, you can be more vulnerable.
- Be discerning in what you share, but we invite you to be courageous in taking this step deeper into community, and towards healing.

If you're the one receiving the confession:

- Listen with attention, attunement, and a heart of compassion. When they are done, you can say, "In Christ's name, you are forgiven."
- If you want, you can also say something like, "I've never loved you as much as I love you right now." Community is the place where we come out of hiding and experience the love of God through each other.

Reflect

Take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions:

- 01 Where did I feel resistance in confession?
- 02 Which emotions did I expect to experience? Which was I surprised by?
- 03 In what ways did I encounter God as I confessed my sins?

GO DEEPER

Optional resources to enhance your experience of this Practice:



Listen

Rule of Life podcast on Community
(Episode 03)



Read

Made to Belong by David Kim
(Chapters 06-07)

Practice

Create a plan for your next steps in community.

When we learn to stay and re-engage when we're frustrated with community, we make space for deeper and transformative relationships.

For our final exercise, complete this guided reflection to help you discern God's invitations to you.

To Start

- Pause for a moment to quiet yourself before God. Take a few deep breaths. Let yourself come to stillness.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to fill your mind and imagination, and guide your heart into his will.

Prayerfully reflect on the following questions:

- Close your eyes and imagine your life 3-5 years from now.
 - What's your ideal vision of living in community?
 - How do you dream of doing life in a more relational way?
 - What kind of close friends do you have?
 - What does your kinship group look like?
 - What kind of rhythms do you live by?
 - How do you move through life together?
- Just dream for a few moments and write down your preferred future.
- What next steps do you sense the Spirit inviting you to take to move toward this vision? They are likely small. Write down 2-3 next steps.

To End

- Quietly offer your dreams, desires, questions, and fears to God ... ask him, who “sets the solitary in families,” to pastor you into community, and incrementally shape you into a person of love.

May God who “sets
the solitary in families,”
make you into a family.

May he bind your hearts
together in his love.

May he heal you, grow
you, and form you into
people of love.

GO DEEPER

Optional resources to enhance
your experience of this Practice:



Listen

Rule of Life podcast on Community
(Episode 04)



Read

Made to Belong by David Kim
(Chapters 08-10 and Conclusion)

Further Practice

You are not going to find and form a kinship group in four weeks. This short Practice is only designed to get you moving on a lifelong journey.

Where you go from here is entirely up to you, but here are a few ideas of how you could go deeper into community.

- 01 Go on retreat with your group:** Book a cabin, Airbnb, or local retreat center for a meaningful getaway. Design a meaningful program for the time featuring intentional conversations, good meals, and prayer.
- 02 Go on vacation together:** Camp, take road trips, or rest with your community in your preferred way.
- 03 Build regular touchpoints into your weekly routine:** Combine existing activities with community time, such as gym visits, group runs, play dates, attending church, or joining book clubs or online courses.
- 04 Host Sabbath dinners:** Invite a few friends or family for celebratory meals expressing gratitude, sharing honestly, and even singing.
- 05 Begin therapy:** Work with a trusted Christian counselor to heal and form deeper, trusting relationships.
- 06 Move closer to each other:** Consider relocating near your closest community to make it more possible to walk in life together. If appropriate, become roommates or explore co-housing or multi-generational living.
- 07 Go through more Practices together:** Visit practicingtheway.org to explore courses and other Practices.

Recommended Reading

Here are some of our favorite books on the Practice of Community for those of you who desire to learn more:

***When the Church Was a Family*
by Joseph Hellerman**

An incredible book on the biblical and cultural meaning of “family” in the New Testament. It paints a compelling picture of the church as a “strong group” community in a culture of radical individualism.

***The Life We’re Looking For*
by Andy Crouch**

A beautiful vision of life in community in the digital age, with an inspiring chapter on kinship groups.

***Find Your People*
by Jennie Allen**

An honest look at how to find and form community in our transient time, that is both inspirational and pragmatic.

***How to Know a Person*
by David Brooks**

An exploration of really learning to listen and love another soul.

***Made to Belong*
by David Kim**

Our recommended reading for this Practice and an excellent overview of finding belonging in community.

***The Relational Soul*
by Richard Plass and James Cofield**

A stunning introduction to attachment theory and spiritual formation.

***The Other Half of Church*
by Jim Wilder and Michel Hendricks**

A provocative take on the need for a whole brain, relational approach to discipleship, based on easy-to-read overviews of recent learnings from neuroscience.

***Relational Spirituality*
by Todd Hall**

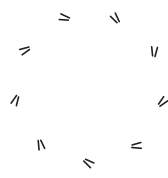
An in-depth, academic work that is best read with a few others, this is a seminal work on the relational nature of spiritual formation.

***The Band Meeting*
by Kevin Watson and Scott Kisker**

A short, compelling summary of both the Methodist discipleship band model and the heart of true Christian community.

Practicing the way of Jesus

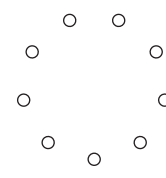
Our nine Practices are spiritual disciplines centered around the life rhythms of Jesus. They are designed not to add more to your life, but to slow you down and create space for the Spirit of God to form you to be with Jesus, become like him, and do as he did. Ultimately, they are a way to experience the love of God.



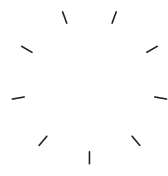
SABBATH



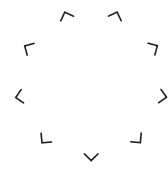
PRAYER



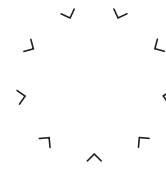
FASTING



SOLITUDE



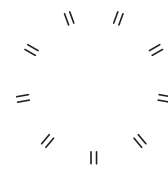
GENEROSITY



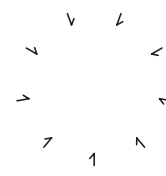
SCRIPTURE



COMMUNITY



SERVICE



WITNESS

Join The Circle

The Circle is a group of monthly givers who decide to live with less so that others can grow in their apprenticeship to Jesus. All of our resources are free because of The Circle and other generous gifts. Together, we can see formation integrated in local churches.

To learn more, visit practicingtheway.org/give.