

NEWSOUL GROUPS CURRICULUM

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WEEK 1: THE TABLE OF FORGIVENESS

Written by Matthew Taylor

Scripture: Matthew 26:26-28 (NIV)

“²⁶While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.” ²⁷ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Have you ever lost a friend? Had a fight that was so bad you couldn’t find a way to reconcile? Did you ever have a fight that broke a relationship, but you cannot even remember what the fight was about? There are so many things that block our paths back to others. Pride, pain, entitlement, fear, bitterness, etc. If we’re honest, the only real problem is unforgiveness. We hold it against others just as they hold it against us. Perhaps we’re too hurt and feel justified in our hurt. Perhaps we expect an apology first. Perhaps we require recompence. Maybe we enjoy the feeling of power and feeling owed something. Thank God that He does not do the same with us. Instead, he made a way. Relentlessly God fought to bring Jesus into the world to forge a path toward forgiveness and reconciliation with Him.

Even though we did not deserve it. This is what communion is all about.” – Matthew 26:26-28

Focus: The significance of communion and the forgiveness of sins.

Key points: Understanding Jesus' sacrifice, receiving forgiveness, and extending forgiveness to others.

The last supper, the final meal that Jesus ate, was eaten with His disciples, His closest and most trusted friends. Here, he delivered to them and to future believers, the sacrament of communion. Jesus expressed that he eagerly longed to share this meal with His disciples (Luke 22:15). The event that Jesus and the disciples were observing was the Passover, the yearly observance remembering the salvation of the Hebrews from the Angel of Death in Egypt. The event, which you can read about in Exodus 12, depicts the sacrifice of a lamb whose blood is spread over the doors of the house, instructing death to “pass over” the house. Generations later, Jesus would be the sacrificial lamb whose blood saves all those who call on His name. Jesus is bringing his disciples to a table of forgiveness, alluding to the same power of God to save His people through communion.

1. Receiving forgiveness:

Forgiveness is a hand extended, and we choose to take that hand. There is no coercion in the way God loves us. The justice that we deserve is death and separation from God. That is true and honoring of God's character. He is, after all, the inventor of justice.

Receiving forgiveness requires humility, a death to our pride and entitlement, an admission of our dependence. This is hard and harder still when we require forgiveness, not from God, but from other people. It may be easier to comprehend our need for forgiveness from God, but our *need* for forgiveness from other imperfect people? Much harder. Yet, we are called to forgive as quickly, often, and sincerely as God forgives us (Matthew 6:15-16).

2. Extending forgiveness to others:

Matthew 6:15-16 spells out very clearly for us: "For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

Forgiveness is far more than just ensuring that we can be forgiven by God. He wants to encourage us to reconcile with others in the same way he did

with us. There is great significance in the name of this sacrament, *communion*.

The event takes place with others and with God. Communing is happening in both the physical and spiritual ways. As we receive forgiveness from God we are reminded to extend forgiveness to others. Just as forgiveness of sins opens the pathway for communion with God again, so too does forgiveness of others open the pathways of communion.

Discussion Questions:

1. When did you first believe that you truly were forgiven for your sins? How did you know?
2. Have you ever struggled to receive forgiveness from God or another person? What emotions were at work when that was happening?
3. Who have you withheld forgiveness from? Did you forgive them in your heart but withheld telling them? Are you harboring unforgiveness as punishment toward any person or group? What would need to happen inside of you, for you to be ready to forgive as we are commanded to do?

WEEK 2: THE TABLE OF HEALING

Written by Matthew Taylor

Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 11:23-24, Isaiah 53:5

"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.'" –1 Corinthians 11:23-24

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed." – Isaiah 53:5

Focus: Seeking and experiencing God's healing power.

Key Points: Faith in God's ability to heal, testimonies of healing, and praying for the sick.

Isaiah tells us that the broken body of Jesus was for our healing.

Have you ever witnessed a physical healing performed in Jesus' name? I have seen many miracles throughout my journey with the Lord. One of the most profound miracles I have ever seen was when a person

who had had a stroke and lost brain function in half of their brain, received total healing after praying and the laying on of hands. This miracle was confirmed by MRI! Even the doctors were astonished.

Healing isn't always physical. Healing can be mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical. We often need healing from past traumas, sinful habits, broken relationships, and mental health struggles. The broken body of Jesus was for our healing in every area of our lives.

One thing people often struggle with is the question, "Is it God's will to heal me?" But you see in scripture that Jesus never rejects anyone who comes to him for healing. Isaiah tells us in the past tense, "By his wounds WE WERE healed," meaning that the healing was already paid for. I believe it is always God's will to heal. Even if we do not experience his healing power here in this life, we will experience his complete and whole healing in eternity.

So, what do we do when we pray for healing, but it does not happen? Be cautious not to blame God or blame a lack of faith. I do not know why people do not always receive healing immediately, but I still choose to trust and have faith in God. I leave it in the realm of mystery. I don't lean on my own understanding but trust that God is good, faithful, and a healer.

All believers have the ability to pray for the sick and see them recover because we are all filled with the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit that was in Jesus lives in me and lives in you. There is no special formula when it comes to praying for healing. It's not about praying the right words or praying loud and intense, but simply praying with faith, calling on the name of Jesus.

Healing serves a few major purposes in the church. First, healing brings confirmation to the message of the gospel. When an unbeliever sees or experiences a miracle, it will point them to the living God. Healing also serves the believer who is in need. God has the power to do the impossible for his people. God is still a healer today!

1. The broken Body of Jesus is for our healing:

At the Last Supper, Jesus took bread and said, "This is my body which is given for you." Isaiah tells us his stripes were for our healing. Jesus paid the price for our healing when his body was beaten during the crucifixion

2. It is God's will to heal:

Healing is the ultimate end for all believers. In eternity, there will be no sickness or disease. The best way to approach healing is as though it is

always God's will to heal here and now. When we don't experience an immediate miracle, it's important to continue to trust God and know that he is still a healer. Pray with faith because nothing is impossible for God.

3. Healing is physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual:

Healing isn't just for our bodies but also for our minds and souls. Many of us come to Christ with a lot of baggage from our past, and the broken body of Christ exists to heal that brokenness. In our journey with the Lord, we will go through pain and struggle. When we go through pain, his body is available to make us whole again.

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever witnessed a healing or miracle?
What was it, and how did it make you feel?
2. How can God heal us in our minds and souls?
Have you ever experienced God's healing power in your mental or emotional life?
3. How does experiencing miracles affect your faith in Christ?

Closing: Pray for anyone who needs a healing or miracle. Be sure to lay hands and pray in the name of Jesus. Healing isn't always physical. Healing can be mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical. We often need healing from past traumas, sinful habits, broken relationships, and mental health struggles. The broken body of Jesus was for our healing in every area of our lives.

WEEK 3: THE TABLE OF RECONCILIATION

Written by Hector Mancha

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:18-21:

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." – 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

Focus: God's Ministry of Reconciliation through Christ.

Key Points: Being reconciled to God, reconciling with others, forgiving others.

The word "reconcile" means to become friends again after an argument or disagreement. In biblical times, the word reconcile was used to describe a broken marriage or relationship that was made whole or reunited again. A couple of years ago, I had dinner with a friend that I had

not seen in years. We had a falling out, and our relationship was broken. We sat down at a table and began to talk, open up, and make amends. We were reconciled at that table. At the cross, we were reconciled to God because our sins were forgiven. Our broken relationship with God was restored.

Maybe you have a broken relationship that needs to be reconciled.

While we are commanded to forgive everyone, I have found reconciliation with everyone is not always possible. Reconciliation requires willingness on both sides in order to take place. As believers, we are to lead the way toward reconciliation. Don't wait to say sorry or ask for forgiveness. Reconciliation is often an avenue for God's love to shine.

Now that we have been reconciled to God, we have the job of leading others to be reconciled to God. We perform this job of reconciliation by sharing our faith and being a light to the world. We live in a broken world that desperately needs the Lord. He is the answer to all the brokenness we see and experience in this life. How many of our friends and family members need the Lord? We are Christ's messengers and ambassadors with a simple message, "Jesus loves you and wants to be reconciled to you."

1. Being Reconciled to God:

Christ's sacrifice on the cross not only forgave us but brought us back into relationship with God. We now can walk with God and know God. Our broken relationship with God has been made whole.

2. Reconciling with Others, Forgiving Others:

In life, sometimes our relationships with others can be fractured or broken. Many people will go years without speaking to an immediate family member. Our job as believers is not only to forgive but seek reconciliation when possible. While reconciliation is not always possible, our nature as believers should always seek unity and reconciliation.

3. Helping Others Be Reconciled to God:

Our job, once we have been reconciled to God, is to help others find reconciliation with God also. We call this the Great Commission, going into all the world to preach the good news.

Discussion Questions:

1. How have you been reconciled to God? What has God done personally in your life as an act of reconciliation?

2. Do you find forgiving others and working towards reconciliation difficult?
3. How can you act as a reconciler between God and the world around you?

Closing:

Invite someone to small group next week. This is an act of trying to bring someone back into a relationship with God. Reconciliation isn't always easy, but it is a powerful testimony of God's love and grace. By inviting others to experience the love and forgiveness of Christ, we are fulfilling our role as ambassadors for Christ, bringing the message of reconciliation to a broken world.

WEEK 4: A TABLE IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES

Written by Matthew Taylor

Scripture: Psalm 23

“A psalm of David.

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name’s sake.

Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” – Psalm 23

Focus: Finding hope in God during the difficult times.

Key Points: Anchoring our hope in God, the role of hope in our faith journey and sharing hope with others.

What motivates you most to pray? To seek God's help and rescue? Most times we pray when we are desperate and cannot withstand what we are experiencing anymore. This is good, and God is ready to hear us in these times. We should always be praying and connecting with God, but there is no shame in feeling desperate to see God work in your situation. Life is hard. The world is broken. Death, disease, attack, fear; we've all experienced things that make us suffer and prompt us to seek God to change our circumstances. But what happens when God doesn't change the circumstance?

David, the author of this Psalm, wrote most of his Psalms while fleeing for his life from Saul; the king who wanted him dead. Though David was innocent he spent time in hiding and fearing for his life. Did God stop Saul? No. Did God whisk David away and make him king immediately? No. Nevertheless, David found reason to trust God and enjoy His presence.

God does not always remove us from our enemies or difficult circumstance, but He does always join us. He is ever present. He is faithful to be by our side.

1. Anchoring our hope in God:

Circumstances are facts but they are not always truth. When we suffer great trials, we know the truth is that God is with us, and we have hope that He will not abandon us. While we may be tempted to anchor our hope in being saved from our circumstances, God wants us to anchor our hope in Him. While Christ was being crucified, one of the men dying beside him understood this well. He knew he did not deserve rescue; he knew that Christ would not save him any more than He would save himself. Yet, He anchored his hope in Christ and asked him to remember him in His Kingdom (Luke 23:43). Even sitting right in the middle of the valley of death, with enemies around us, God sits at a table and shares a meal with us. He reminds us that we are with Him and that he knows what is happening. We are never alone.

2. The role of hope in our faith journey:

Hope has a shaping and forming power in us. The action of hoping, when it is placed in God, forms us

into God's image. Once hope is satisfied, we no longer need it (Rom 8:24). Perhaps this is why God allows us to wait and hope and pray for His presence and interventions. As always, God is more interested in who we are becoming. He longs to help us grow into His image and trust him no matter what is happening to us. Hope is a horizon that forms us into more refined believers.

3. Sharing hope with others:

Hope is a journey, and it requires help. Our hope can give up, despite our faith and best efforts. God calls us into community for many reasons. Encouragement and edification are some of the most important. As he models setting a table for us in the presence of our darkest circumstances, we are called to do the same for one another. The power of kind words, praying for each other, acts of service, or a friendly hug cannot be overemphasized. How can you share hope and encourage others? Who can you set the table for?

Discussion Questions

1. What lessons have you learned in your journey of hope that will bring life to others?

2. When have you hoped and not received what you hoped for? How did you learn about God in that time?
3. How can you grow in your hope despite past disappointments?
4. Who can you come alongside to support?

WEEK 5: THE TABLE OF PROVISION

Written by Hector Mancha

Scripture: John 6:1-14

“After this, Jesus crossed over to the far side of the Sea of Galilee, also known as the Sea of Tiberias. A huge crowd kept following him wherever he went, because they saw his miraculous signs as he healed the sick. Then Jesus climbed a hill and sat down with his disciples around him. (It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration.) Jesus soon saw a huge crowd of people coming to look for him. Turning to Philip, he asked, “Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?” He was testing Philip, for he already knew what he was going to do. Philip replied, “Even if we worked for months, we wouldn’t have enough money to feed them!” Then Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up. “There’s a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?” “Tell everyone to sit down,” Jesus said. So, they all sat down on the grassy slopes. (The men alone numbered about 5,000.) Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks to God, and distributed them to the people. Afterward he did the same with the fish. And they all ate as much as they wanted. After everyone was full, Jesus told his disciples, “Now gather the leftovers, so that nothing is wasted.” They picked up the pieces and filled

twelve baskets with scraps left by the people who had eaten from the five barley loaves. When the people saw him do this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, “Surely, he is the Prophet we have been expecting!” – John 6:1-14

Focus: God’s provision and abundance in our lives.

Key Points: Trusting in God's provision, experiencing His miracles, and sharing His blessings with others.

1. Trusting in God’s Provision:

When Jesus asks Philip where they can buy bread to feed the large crowd, his response is one many of us can relate to, fear and scarcity. How could they possibly afford to feed 5000 people with limited resources? I find it interesting that while Philip focused on the lack of resources, Andrew saw opportunity. He brings a young boy with five barley loaves and two fish and gave them to Jesus, even though they seemed inadequate. His faith was the vehicle of provision and miracles that day. His action demonstrated his belief in Jesus’ power and willingness to provide for the needs of the people. Today you may find yourself suffocated by impossible (health, faith, friendship, finances) but I want to

challenge you to look up and around—God can take what appears inadequate and turn it into leftovers! Truly, nothing is wasted.

2. Experiencing Miracles:

We all know someone with the gift of hospitality, they work tirelessly to set the table for others to experience connection and love. Andrew got to experience the joy of hospitality—by bringing the boy and his meager offering to Jesus, he set the table for the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fish. His role may seem insignificant compared to the grand miracle of feeding the crowd, but his involvement is crucial in the unfolding of the miracle. God can absolutely work through our humble efforts to do miraculous things.

3. Sharing God's Blessings with Others:

This story underscores the role of faith and trust in the provision and abundance of God. Trusting in God's provision and stepping out in faith to share what we have with others, even in times of lack or uncertainty, opens the door for God to work miraculously and bless both the giver and the receiver. I love that this story happens during the Passover celebration. The act of sharing a meal together created a sense of

community, togetherness and unity— a perfect and holy moment for the occasion. The joy we receive in sharing God's blessings with others is unmatched. Generosity knits resource and needs together into the most beautiful ways that only He can do. He brings us together, what a gift we've been given to be able to be joined together by His provision.

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways have you personally experienced God's miraculous provision or seen His abundance in your life or the lives of others?
2. As believers, it is important to grow in gratitude. We do that by recognizing God's provision and responding with a heart of thankfulness. It's easy to grow discontent, always chasing after the next big thing, but my prayer is that we continue to posture ourselves in humility, appreciation and recognition of God's grace and abundance in our lives.
3. In what ways can you be intentional about looking for opportunities to share God's blessings with others, whether through generosity, sharing your faith, acts of kindness?
4. Generosity requires margin. Margin doesn't come haphazardly; it requires us to be diligent with our

resources (time, finances, energy) and steward well what God has blessed us with. How can you create margin in your life?

5. Are you in a seemingly impossible situation? If so, are you willing to share and allow others to share God's blessings with you? How can this group best support you during this time?

Closing:

Vulnerability is challenging, especially if you've been let down by others. In fact, disappointment and discouragement can paralyze us if we allow it.

Community is formed in sharing life with one another—good, bad and ugly.

WEEK 6: THE TABLE OF THANKSGIVING

Written by Samantha Ortiz

Scripture: Psalm 100

“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness;

come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving

and his courts with praise;

give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;

his faithfulness continues through all generations.” –

Psalm 100

Many of us know this verse well. It is the subject of many songs, prayer nights, and encouraging words. And when times are good, when it's easy to see the blessings of God surrounding our every moment, it is easier still to offer up thanksgiving and praise for those blessings.

However, as you have most likely figured out by now (having lived for any number of years) life is not all sunshine.

There will be seasons where your days are overshadowed by grief and hardship.

But does this change what our response to God should be in those seasons? No, it really doesn't. Does it make it harder? Perhaps. But only if we are misunderstanding the heart of Psalm 100, and the heart of the gospel.

You see, Psalm 100 can be a bit deceiving if we don't understand a couple of things. It pairs words like *Joy*, *Gladness*, and *Joyful Songs* with *Worship*, *Thanksgiving* and *Praise*. Immediately it makes us associate praise and thanksgiving with being "happy." And therefore, when we're not happy, we might fail to understand and relate with the verse, and maybe even withhold our praise.

But the misunderstanding here, is that joy and gladness, praise and thanksgiving, actually have nothing to do with "happiness."

First off, joy is deeper than happiness. Joy is peace in stormy seasons, reassurance in doubt-filled seasons, and comes from the unwavering confidence that no matter your circumstances, *God is good*, and *He is faithful*. Psalm 100 knows life will be hard, but it instructs us to be grateful and rejoice with gladness anyways because we have a *good God who loves us*. Even if you had *nothing else* going for you, that is enough.

Second, gratitude should be a discipline, not a just a response to happiness. When practiced regularly, gratitude and thanksgiving have a beautiful and supernatural ability to take our eyes off ourselves and turn them upward toward God. In the seasons of intense upheaval, grief and hardship in my life, it was a struggle to find things to be grateful for. But I had the practice of praise and thanksgiving already in place, and each time I returned to it I felt my soul lifted and comforted and I was reminded of the goodness of my God.

And that's why scripture tells us to do it.

1. Recognizing God's Worthiness to be Praised

It can be hard to praise God in hard times.

Sometimes we want to blame God for our lack, or demand he answer hard questions before we give our praise. But the truth is, as Psalm 100 states, God is worthy of your praise in every circumstance. Not because of what life looks like, but because of what HE looks like. HE is the good and faithful one. HE is the creator of your soul and giver of your breath. HE will never abandon or forsake you. HE is worthy of your adoration and praise, always.

2. Exchanging Happiness for Joy

Happiness is fleeting, but the Joy of the Lord lasts forever. Joy is peace in seasons of storm, reassurance in seasons of doubt, and comes from the unwavering confidence that no matter your circumstances, GOD IS GOOD and HE IS FAITHFUL. Don't wait for happiness to praise God! You have enough to praise right now, just by breathing.

3. Living a Life of Gratitude

Gratitude is a choice. It may be hard to find things to feel grateful for because our flesh will naturally focus on the lack. And yet, Gratitude has power. When we practice a lifestyle of Gratitude and Thanksgiving, we are not only declaring that God is good in every season, but we are actively taking our eyes off our problems and putting them on God. And that is never a bad choice.

Discussion Questions:

1. Where are some areas in your life you can practice and outwork Gratitude and Thanksgiving? Consider where you can implement that practice of praise. Is it

during your morning journaling, at the beginning of your prayers, during a morning walk?

2. Has there been a time where you expected God to bring “happiness” instead of joy? Reflect on past (or present) experiences where you felt (feel) unhappy in life. Is it affecting your ability to praise and worship? Are there areas you can adjust your thinking when it comes to your expectations of happiness?
3. Name some things you can be grateful for today. Once you get started, I’m sure you’ll find many. Think of your most challenging situation right now, and actively search out something to be thankful for within it, even if it’s just the goodness of God over it. Focus on it daily and see how it transforms that experience.
4. How can we further understand how to be grateful in hard times, and cultivate a lifestyle of thanksgiving? Explore verses on joy in hard times and suffering and deepen your understanding of how God is present in all times.

Closing:

Pray for anyone in the group who may be experiencing hard times, or struggling with praise in hard times, be vulnerable and ask for prayer. Often times we need to take steps forward and make intentional choices of gratitude.

WEEK 7: THE TABLE OF FELLOWSHIP

Written by Samantha Ortiz

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” – Acts 2:42-47

Focus: The importance of community and fellowship among believers.

Key Points: The importance of community and fellowship among believers.

For many of us, community can be a hard subject. Some of us have experienced it and know what it ought to be, others still have always wanted it but never found it. Regardless of

what we know or don't know about what community should be, it seems to be one of the primary driving forces of a human being.

And this makes sense, because we were actually designed for community. God created a companion for Adam, because it was not good for him to be alone. And similarly, Adam was created to be a companion for God. It's in our blood and bones to desire fellowship with God and his people.

So, what is fellowship and community, and how do we find it? I will say that some of us overcomplicate this a bit. We have a lot of expectations (maybe from past experiences, or maybe things we've been lacking in our personal life). But it doesn't have to be complicated. Community, in a very basic sense, is a group of people who share life together. This looks very different in different seasons. When I was a young mom with a new baby, "community" was with other mothers. And I would not have made it (healthily) without them ha! As a Christian, I've always craved a community of like-minded believers; odds are you're not that different.

But, how do we share life together?

1. Breaking Bread:

There are few more powerful things than sharing a meal. Don't ask me why exactly, it's biblical for sure, and as old as time. Maybe it's something about uniting over the one thing we all have in common (the need to eat and drink) that reminds us that we're not that different. Regardless, this is a good place to start. Have people over or go out for coffee and croissants. All my deep communities/friendships have begun around the table.

2. Supporting One Another:

To truly have community, there is a level of vulnerability involved. The deeper the mutual vulnerability (yes, I said mutual) the stronger the community. You don't have to get here right away, but people have to feel they can share their struggles and find support in you. Most of the time, you can open this door by asking "is there anything you need prayer for." *Now, the most important part*—actually pray! Then call/text/tell them you've prayed. You will be surprised at the power of a mid-week checkup. Showing up with a coffee, sending a text saying "you're on my mind" those are the things that build more than community, but friendship.

****Yes, I hear you in the back, sometimes these things will go unreciprocated. But there are plenty of times when they won't, and if you commit to community together, I think you'll see progress.**

3. Growing in Faith:

One of the strongest bonds you can create with a community of like-minded believers is committing to growing in faith together. Being in a small group together is a great start! Pat yourself on the back. God meant for us to grow in tandem with one another. Someone a little further on the journey can help you, and vice versa.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some expectations you have around finding/being part of community. Are they realistic? Remember, people are not meant to replace your faith and dependency on God but can be a great support and blessing. Have you perhaps overcomplicated or put too much pressure on a community? Likewise, have you expected a community to come find you, verses creating a community yourself?
2. Write down the names of three people/families to break bread with, in the next month.

3. Does the idea of being vulnerable to find community sit well with you? Have you ever been part of a one-sided relationship? How did that feel? Remember for vulnerability to be effective, it must be mutual.
4. Is there anything on your faith journey that you'd like to help growing in? If you're brave enough, share with the group to see if anyone is on the same journey as you, and whether they have wisdom or will commit to growing with you.

Closing:

Take some time to pray over what you'd like to see your Newsoul group community look like. Ask for input, and commit as a group to grow in faith, mutual vulnerability, and support of one another. Together we can build strong families and lives with Christ.

WEEK 8: THE TABLE AND THE SERVANT

Written by Robby Ortiz

Scripture: John 13:1-17

“It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 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, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!” Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” For he knew who was going to betray

him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean. When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”—
John 13:1-17

Focus: Learning from Jesus servant leadership and his work of making us clean by washing away our past.

Key Points: Finish with a foot washing as a group.

Food washing was needed in every home in Palestine. Why? They didn’t have paved streets or vehicles to drive around in like we do today. They either walked from place to place or rode animals. Not only were the streets dusty and dirty, but they usually contained garbage and the waste from the animals who traveled up and down the same streets. People wore sandals without socks and their feet could

become very dirty. The custom was to recline around the table at the evening meal. Dirty, smelly feet could make the meal and fellowship rather uninviting. Slaves were usually provided to wash the feet of the guests, and it was a mark of honor for a host to provide a servant to wash a guest's feet. If you didn't provide a slave to wash your guests' feet, it was considered a sign of extreme disrespect.

1. Jesus calls us to serve and love others:

What were the disciples doing just before this meeting and during this meeting? Discussing which one of them would be the greatest. Jesus is about to be crucified and they are arguing about who will sit next to him in heaven. Jesus set the ultimate example of how we are to serve and love others by washing the disciples' feet. (Verse 15: I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.) loving people can be hard sometimes, especially when they don't deserve it or have wronged us. But this is the kind of love Jesus calls us to have for the lost and each other.

2. Let Jesus wash your dirty feet:

Not only was Jesus' act of washing the disciples' feet about servanthood it was a demonstration of the

cross and forgiveness. It was meant to show the cleansing and forgiving power of the blood of Jesus. The dirt on the feet is just a symbol of the dirt that's inside the soul. The dirt on the outside is just a picture of the dirt of sin, and the water that washes away the dirt of the feet is a symbol of the blood of Christ which washes away the dirt of sin. Coming to Jesus is having his blood wash away the dirt of your sin. Therefore, having your feet washed is like coming to Christ because all you do is sit there and accept him Jesus does it all. That is what salvation is like.

3. We must submit to Jesus' way not our way

In verse 8 Peter is refusing Jesus from washing his feet. Peter is one of the disciples known for trying to do things his own way and continually pushes back from what Jesus is trying to do. Jesus explains to him that if you do not let me do this you cannot have part with me. In other words, Jesus again was referencing the acceptance of salvation and the cross. We must surrender our hearts, desires, passions, life to Jesus so he can cleanse us of all sin, transform us into a new creation, and so we can have relationship with him.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways can we also practice washing others' feet? What are some practical applications for serving and loving others?
 - a. Think about your workplace, your school, family members.
2. Do you find it easy to trust Jesus? Why or why not?
 - a. Jesus can't save us if we don't allow him to save us. We have to choose to accept him. If we accept Jesus as Savior, we must also accept him as Lord.
3. In what ways does Jesus washing of feet go against today's culture and society's norms?
 - a. Culture tells us it's all about me, my wants, my needs. But Jesus demonstrates serving others first before serving ourselves.
4. Why can it be difficult to serve others the way Jesus demonstrates?

Closing Prayer:

Father God,

Thank you for the opportunity to join together as your sons and daughters and learn more about you. Help us lean into the things we've learned and seek you daily. Thank you for the community you're beginning to strengthen at Newsoul Church

Amen