

FOLLOWING JESUS'
PATHWAY
COMMUNITY

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES HANDBOOK BY ADELE AHLBERG CALHOUN

“In our world full of strangers, estranged from their own past, culture, and country, from their neighbors, friends, and family, from their deepest self and their God, we witness a painful search for a hospitable place where life can be lived without fear and where community can be found.”

Henri Nouwen

What is Community/Fellowship?

The pursuit of community and fellowship is to admit that you cannot make it on your own and commit to an intentional journey of doing life with one another. To engage with others on a deeper adventure to pursue Christ in all that you do through the highs and lows of life.

What does scripture say about community and fellowship?

Proverbs 17:17 “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

Romans 15:7 “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”

Proverbs 27:17 “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

Hebrews 10:25 “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Digging Deeper into Community & Fellowship

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which do you prefer: one on one, small groups, large groups? Where is your growing edge in each of these settings? How do you experience God in each of these settings?
2. Can you imagine Jesus spending his life on a smart phone, rushing to meetings, and never having time to answer a question he didn't refer to an associate?
3. What kind of group relationships did Jesus value?
4. Why did Jesus develop a small band of disciples?
5. How has a face-to-face encounter over a conflict been healing and restoring to you?
6. Where are you tempted to resort to digital communication on hard issues rather than talking face to face?
7. Who models hospitality and welcome for you?
8. How might Jesus want to use your heart and home as a shelter for others?
9. What sort of friend are you to God and others?
10. Do you need to be needed and appreciate?
11. Are there fellow believers you would rather prove wrong than accept as brother or sister? What does this tell you about your heart?
12. When have you experienced a unity of reconciliation that is supernatural? What was that like for you?

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

1. Study the “one another’s” found in Scripture (see below). Begin to live out one of the “one another’s” this week. The following week choose another “one another.” Which “one another” is the most difficult for you?

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2. Study Jesus' prayer in John 17. How does this prayer challenge your thoughts about unity?
3. Craft a blessing for someone you know. Ask God to lead you to a Scripture that can encourage them. Give the gift of this blessing in person or written form.
4. Choose one day this week to bless or encourage as many people as you can. Don't flatter. Ask God to give you divine eyesight. When appropriate, speak your truthful blessing out loud. When you can't speak it out loud, speak the blessing to God and ask God to bless them. At the end of the day, reflect on what it was like to be one who carried the blessing of God into the day.
5. Practice arriving early and staying late at events so you can loiter and have face time with people. What conversations come up because you are there in the flesh?
6. Ask God for grace to practice giving hard communication face to face rather than in the digital form. Watch person's body language and pray for them as you talk. When the conversation is over, talk to God about what it was like for you.
7. Rather than shooting off emails to people in your office, take a moment every day to deliver some messages face to face.
8. Develop the practice of praying for the people you invite to your home. Pray for them as you invite them. Pray for them the day they come. Pray for them as they leave your driveway.
9. Hospitality is not something we do all by ourselves. It invites others in. When you offer hospitality, let your guests help. If you have trouble letting people help you, make this a matter of prayer. What in you needs to be touched to make you receptive and open.
10. Develop a list of standard conversational questions? (Go to <https://www.conversationstarters.com/100.htm> for more ideas)
11. Take a friend inventory: draw a lifeline and divide it into seven-year segments. Put the initials of friends who have been important to you in each segment. What do you notice about your friendships? What kind of friends do you tend to gather around you? What does this tell you about yourself?
12. Draw two columns on a piece of paper. Title one "Characteristics of a Spiritual Friend." Title the other "Characteristics of Myself as a Friend." Now fill the columns with your observations. What did you learn about yourself?
13. The body of Christ is to "rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15). Look back over the past year. Who has rejoiced with you? Who has wept with you? Talk to God about what this meant to you. What is it like for you to rejoice or weep with another?

EXERCISES

July is a busy month in Crested Butte with many amazing activities and events. Use this month to invite people into community, fellowship, and encouragement throughout this month. Some ideas around this idea are:

1. Invite another family/friend to an Alpenglow Concert.
2. When participating in your normal outdoor activities, invite others into the exercise. (Ex. hiking, biking, walking, etc...)
3. Invite others to OBJC's outdoor services on July 3rd and 10th and plan an activity afterwards.
4. Have a "comfort food" potluck. Invite several families or friends over and have them bring their favorite comfort food and share. If you have a patio and outdoor fire pit, eat the food outside. Make sure you share the load and the responsibilities of the evening as well.
5. Invite friends over for a "leftover night." Have everyone bring a leftover dish to share in a simple, easy night which focuses on fellowship over the food.

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THE ONE-ANOTHERS:

1. Love One Another – John 13:24-35, Romans 13:8, 1 Peter 1:22, 1 John 3:11,23, 4:7,11-12, 2 John 1:5
2. Encourage One Another – 1 Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11, Hebrews 3:13
3. Bear One Another's Burdens – Isaiah 41:6
4. Care for One Another – 1 Corinthians 12:24-25
5. Accept One Another – Romans 15:7, 14:1-4
6. Be Kind to One Another – Ephesians 4:31-32, Galatians 5:22
7. Live in Harmony With One Another – 1 Peter 3:8
8. Forgive One Another – Ephesians 4:32
9. Be Hospitable to One Another – 1 Peter 4:9
10. Honor One Another – Romans 12:10
11. Belong to One Another – Romans 12:5, Ephesians 4:25, 2 Corinthians 13:11, Hebrews 10:25, 1 Corinthians 12: 24-25
12. Be Devoted to One Another – Romans 12:10
13. Speak Truthfully to One Another – Colossians 3:9, Ephesians 4:25
14. Teach One Another – Colossians 3:16
15. Agree with One Another – 1 Corinthians 1:10
16. Look Out For One Another – Philippians 2:4
17. Worship With One Another – Ephesians 5:19-20
18. Lay Down Your Lives for One Another – 1 John 3:16
19. Do Not Provoke One Another – Galatians 5:25-26
20. Do Not Grumble Against One Another – James 5:9
21. Do Not Envy One Another – Galatians 5:25-26

Suggestions for putting the scriptural “One Another’s” Into Practice.

Any of the suggestions found below can be done with a prayer partner, accountability partner, mentor or spiritual director. They are also suitable for small group interaction and follow-up.

1. Choose a “one another” that you want to become a hallmark of your life. Consider why this “one another” is important to you. Picture what practicing the “one another” will cost you. It could cost you time, money, and a variety of self-indulgent moods and behaviors. Commit yourself to practicing the “one another” every day for two weeks. At the end of each day, notice where you live your “one another.” Where did you not live your “one another”? See grace to keep to continue to incarnate Christ's self-donating love. At the end of two weeks, consider whether or not you should dedicate two more weeks to intentionally living your “one another.” Do you feel called to move on to a different one?
2. When and how have you received the “one another” love and encouragement found in Scripture? Which “one another's” did or didn't you receive growing up? How have these affected your attitude to “one another” directives? Talk to Jesus about your experiences. Offer him your desire around “one another” living.
3. On a monthly basis focus on a particular “one another.” If you are in a small group, you might call a month “Encourage One Another Month.” During that month, each participant opens his or her heart to encourage others in the group. At the end of the month meet to discuss what this was like for all of you. What touched you most deeply? What was most difficult? How did you find God in the “one another's?”
4. Consider the people in your world that have little experience of the biblical “one another's.” How could you intentionally bring a “one another” experience to these people? Plan a time to do so.

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