**Discipleship Values**

**R Group Lesson – Foundational Value #1**

**THE TRUTH OF GOD’S WORD**

## *The Bible is God’s Word. It outlines the standard by which our attitudes and behavior are to be measured. The challenge is to always bring our lives up to the standard of Truth and not adjust the standard of Truth to line up with our lives. Biblical standards of conduct supersede all other social and cultural standards.*

**Ice Breaker:** What do think about having a standard of truth to live up to? Are standards good or bad? How would you feel about maintaining a Biblical standard of conduct even if it conflicted with accepted cultural norms or social practice?

***2 Timothy 3:16-17*** *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,****17****that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

**Lesson:** The Bible is God’s Word to us and it contains the standards of conduct, attitude, motivation and ministry that God intends for us to strive toward. God has not given His Word to us to limit us but to protect us and guide us toward the patterns of life that will lead us to fullness and fulfillment as His children. There are certain activities that the Bible calls sin that God says will separate us from Him. There are other activites that God says will allow Him to draw close to us. The Bible was inspired by God to provide us with a written explaination of who He is and what He desires for us.

The passage in 2 Timothy details four benefits of God Word and how it is profitable for us.

1. **Doctrine** – The basic principles of who God is, what He requires of us, how we can relate to Him, how to relate to one another, and what we can expect if if we follow His instructions. This is important in ordering our daily lives.
2. **Reproof** – What God disapproves of. The things He finds detestable or unacceptable. This also includes God’s refutation of other god, idols, or other spiritual powers. This is important in knowing what to avoid.
3. **Correction** – These are instructions given to us in order that we can change behaviors, attitudes, or motives that are not in step with God’s desires. God’s desire is that we are conformed into His image and allowing His Word to correct us helps this to happen
4. **Instruction in Righteousness** – These are the detailed ways God desires for us to live our lives, conduct our relationships and find our purpose in Him. It’s not only about avoiding sinful activities but also about embracing the activities that draw us near to God and bing us into His blessings and purpose.

God’s Word as contained in the Bible has been given to us so that we will be equipped for every good work that God created us for. This is profitable for us. It is the standard we as believers in Jesus are to order our lives by.

**Ministry Time:** Pray for one another, allow the gifts of the Holy Spirit to operate. Also, invite each R group participant to develop a plan to study the Bible as part of their daily routine.

**R Group Lesson – Foundational Value #2**

**THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY – THE CONGREGATION**

## *The church is a place to belong. It is like an extended family where each member is responsible to and for other members in accountable relationships. Members of the church care for and serve one another in an atmosphere of love, acceptance, and forgiveness and live their lives together in both small and large group settings.*

**Ice Breaker:** Describe an experience in which you were overwhelmed with a life situation or circumstance and another person came along side of you and supported you, encouraged you, or helped you through it.

***Acts 2:44-47*** *Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,****45****and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.* ***46****So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,****47****praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

**Lesson:** At its core, following Jesus is about relationships. A relationship with God through Jesus Christ and a relationship with other believers who together, form the church. The Bible likens these gathered groups of believers to families; families who care for one another, look out for one another, help one another out in times of difficulties, serve one another.

The early church was just such a gathered group of believers. The Bible tells us that they spent time together and considered their possessions as common to one another. As someone had a need, the resources of the group were at that person’s disposal. They ate together regularly, worshipped together, and cared for one another. The result of this caring community was that it thrived as it grew bigger on a daily basis and enjoyed the favor of the larger community.

This is the kind of relationships we want to promote in our R group. We may not be able to hold things in common as the early church apparently did, but we can provide for one another’s needs as the opportunity arises. We may not be able to meet together daily but we can intentionally develop relationships with one another and care for one another in practical ways. I believe that if we truly care for other people and make their needs a priority, our R group will grow. When we love people for who they are, accept them as they are, and extend forgiveness to them no matter what they have done, the result is that they feel honored and valued as a person. The outgrowth of this is trust. When we extend an invitation to them to join our community of believers, they have a foundation of trust already established that allows them to freely experience the love of Christ through us as believers and enter into it themselves.

**Ministry Time:** Pray for one another and allow the gifts of the Holy Spirit to operate. Ask if there are any practical needs that someone in the group may have and develop a group plan as to how these needs can be met. Do not limit yourself to financial help but also consider personal involvement in another person’s life to help them overcome their present situation.

**R Group Lesson – Foundational Value #3**

**THE FUNCTION OF LEADERSHIP – SPIRITUAL DAD’S & MOM’S**

## *The eldership team has the freedom and responsibility to lead the church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ who is the head of the church. A presiding elder gives overall direction to the eldership and is responsible to manage the daily activities of the congregation. Instead of doing all the ministry, elders are responsible to train and equip the people and release them to engage in their callings and ministries.*

**Ice Breaker:** Have you ever had a mentor? Can you describe someone that took a personal interest in your growth as a person and your development as a leader? Tells us about this relationship; what was good, what was impacting, what benefits have been ongoing in your life?

***1 Corinthians 4:15*** *For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*

**Lessson:** The Apostle Paul speaks of himself in this passage as a father as opposed to an instructor. What is the difference? An instructor teaches from a place of having knowledge to be imparted to others. No relationship is required other than that of a teacher relating to a student. A father has a relationship with those he is relating to that cares about the wellbeing and growth of his spiritual sons and daughters. While a father may impart knowledge, he is more concerned with how that knowledge is applied in the lives of his spiritual children than communicating the details of his teaching. It's about relationship.

Church leadership needs to work the same way. The New Testament model views effective church leaders as spiritual fathers of those God has entrusted to their care and nurture. They are to equip and train their congregations from a position of experience in the ways and values of Jesus. They are to lead by example in all areas of life including marriage, family, finances, spiritual and personal discipline; as well as in the quality of relationships they enjoy. Being a pastor or spiritual leader means embracing this call and encompasses every area of life.

A good spiritual father, or mother, involves sharing their life with those they are caring for. They share what has worked for them but also how they have fallen short. They share both the joys and the hurts they have experienced. In doing this, their spiritual sons and daughters learn what to do and what to avoid. They also walk with their spiritual sons and daughters through their victories as well as their failures. Spiritual fathers and mothers encourage, praise, compliment, correct when necessary, and provide an atmosphere in which the spiritual son or daughter can become all that God intends for them to be. This is true church leadership.

**Ministry Time:** Pray over any of the group members that have situations or needs that have been brought to the attention of the group. Allow the gifts of the Holy Spirit to operate as the group ministers one to another. Also allow for and encourage relationships of spiritual fathers and mothers to emerge with spiritual sons and daughters as appropriate.

**R Group Lesson – Foundational Value #4**

**THE MINISTRY OF WORSHIP**

## *Through worship we bless God and minister to Him. We praise Him for who He is through singing, other worshipping arts, and the spoken word. Our worship services include celebration, adoration, proclamation, and exaltation.*

**Ice Breaker:** Describe a worship experience that you have had, either with a group or individually, in which you experienced the presence of God in a profound way. How did you know that God was present? Were there tangible things that happened that confirmed that you touched God’s heart?

***Psalm 14:2 (RSV)*** *The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any that act wisely, that seek after God.*

**Lesson:** God desires that we seek Him in relationship. Seeking Him and His presence is the way that we minister to Him. We may seek His presence in various ways, including the study of His Word, prayer, fasting, and waiting on the Lord. A primary way, however, that God meets us is through worship.

Psalm 22:3 (NKJV) tells that God is holy and that He is enthroned in the praises of Israel. As New Testament believers, we can experience the same thing. Everytime Israel experienced revival, it was preceded and accompanied by reestablishing praise and worship as a primary focus of the nation. God wants to meet with us; He wants us to seek Him above all else. It is our responsibility as believers to do this. Psalm 100:4 (NKJV) instructs us to enter through the gate of thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. We are to be thankful and bless His Name. James 4:8 (NKJV) invites us to draw near to God and in doing so, He will draw near to you. This happens as we worship Him. As we cleanse ourselves through confession and purify our hearts by focusing solely on Him, we position ourselves to receive from Him. Psalm 96:2 (NKJV) tells us to proclaim the good news of His salvation. His salvation includes not only the saving of our souls but also our healing, deliverance, restoration and blessing. We are to proclaim the greatness and goodness of His ways and of His love toward us as His children. As we respond to the Word of the Lord and bless Him, Psalm 103:1-8 (NKJV) informs us of what God will do for us. His benefits include forgiveness, healing, the turning of our lives from destruction, living in His kindness and mercy, satisfaction with good things and renewed youthfulness. His blessings grow out of our willingness to seek God and to enter into His presence. Our sacrifice of praise and worship position us to both bless God and receive His blessings.

**Ministry Time:** Spend some more time is worship as a group. Invite those with needs to allow the group to pray for them and prophesy over them in this context of worship.

**R Group Lesson – Foundational Value #5**

**THE MINISTRY OF PRAYER**

*Prayer is the foundational work of the church. In prayer, we discover and are led to accomplish the purpose of God in our life, family, church, community, nation and world. Our need to pray reminds us that the vision of God and the work of the kingdom are beyond our own ability to bring to pass and that without His help we can accomplish little.*

**Ice Breaker:** Can you describe an experience which elevated your prayer life? It may have been a traumatic or crisis situation, a challenging set of circumstances, or an unexpected breakthrough into God’s presence.

***Matthew 29:40*** *Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “What! Could you not watch with Me one hour?*

**Lesson:** Prayer is essentially spending time with God. It is a primary gateway into God’s presence. In prayer, we not only have the opportunity to share with God our struggles and concerns but also to listen and hear His heart. It is the place of communication. A time to still ourselves with God and hear Him speak to us. It is through prayer that we discern our calling and purpose. It is through prayer that we gain understanding and guidance for our lives. It is through prayer that we learn how to clearly hear His voice and know the difference between our own thoughts and His communication with us.

There are four keys to hearing God’s voice.

1. We need to quiet ourselves. This means that we get beyond the distractions of life and our tendency to be self focused. This may include praying our list of things we want God to do first, and then spending time listening to Him for answers. Many times God speaks to us through His still, small voice but before He can speak we must quiet our own thoughts and the voices that may distract us from what He is saying.
2. We focus on Jesus. This may involve a short time of worship, meditation on a Psalm or portion of scripture. It may be a time to repent of any unconfessed sin that you may have participated in. It may also involve speaking declarations of praise or thanksgiving.
3. We tune into the thoughts that begin to enter our minds. Many times in prayer we become aware of thoughts that we know are not our own. They may encourage us in a way that we are not used to. They may highlight something in our lives that needs changing. They may involve a burden for someone else. A thought of sudden revelation may come about a problem or situation that has left us confused. God is speaking. Through prayer we have tuned into the awesome presence of the one who loves us and knows us even better than we can love or know ourselves.
4. We write these revelations down. Many times in our humanness we forget what God has spoken. Having a way to chronicle what we sense God is saying allows us to remember it, meditate on it and test it with others.

**Ministry Time:** Spend time praying for the needs within the group. Expect God to speak to you for someone else.

**R Group Lesson – Foundational Value #6**

**LIFE TRANSFORMATION – RESTORATION PRAYER**

## *Lives are transformed by the renewing of our minds. More than simply knowing about God and the Bible, we must personally know Him in an intimate, transparent relationship where we experience forgiveness of sin, freedom from past hurts, and healing of brokenness in our lives through the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit.*

**Ice Breaker:** Share with the group something you have overcome. It may be an addiction, an attitude, an action, a way of thinking or an area of compromise that used to be controlling in an area of your life but is no longer an issue for you. Maybe it is something you have yet to overcome.

***Galatians 5:1*** *Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*

**Lesson:** The work of salvation by Jesus Christ not only saves us from sin but also saves us unto freedom. Being free means that we are no longer under the bondage of accusations, condemnation, unforgiveness, past hurts, tormenting thoughts and perceived inadequacies. This happens as we enter into a relationship with Christ through the Holy Spirit and allow him to transform our thoughts, actions, attitudes and motives. The battle is for our minds. As we accept God’s thoughts toward us, we are able to transform our minds according to God’s Word. As we learn what He thinks about us, we are able to embrace the reality of these thoughts for ourselves and find healing, deliverance, restoration and freedom.

***Romans 12:2*** *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

Renewing our mind may mean forgiving someone who hurt you in the past and finding release from bitterness and resentment. It may mean reevaluating how you think about yourself; instead of despising yourself, realizing you are valuable and fearfully and wonderfully made. It may mean rejecting and renouncing tormenting and accusing thoughts you may have about yourself and standing on God’s promises for your deliverance and freedom. Restoration prayer happens as we become honest about what is really going on in our lives and we allow other people to minister God’s healing into our areas of personal brokenness. As we allow the Holy Spirit to guide our prayers, we experience the freedom and restoration promised in God’s Word. We are able to overcome the plans that the enemy has to keep us in bondage and we are able to experience the liberty and blessing God has for each of us.

**Ministry Time:** Ask the group to share areas that have surfaced during the lesson. Ask permission to focus on these areas in prayer allowing the Holy Spirit to guide the time. Enter into times of healing or deliverance as appropriate. Be sensitive to each person being prayed for. Many times, these kinds of issues are very personal. Make sure the person feels safe and affirm that what is shared with the group in confidence stays within the group.