



CORD GROUPS A PRIMER

*Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*
Ecclesiastes 4:12 (ESV)

Jesus' connection with the Father was the basis of His identity, mission and method; He called His disciples to follow Him not simply to convey knowledge of the truth but to be transformed in close relationship with Him and each other (Luke 6:12-16; 9:23-24; 15:12-17).

Community is where we are transformed.

Healthy discipleship occurs when disciples seek to grow in Christ, in intentional and faithful relationship with other disciples, for the sake of the world.

While we participate meaningfully in worship service and show up regularly for LifeGroup meetings, and though these are key for our spiritual growth, we may find ourselves longing for connection and accountability with a trusted few at a depth of intimacy that does not happen on a Sunday or in a LifeGroup setting.

As disciples who seek to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do the works of Jesus, we encourage you to embark on spiritual friendship.

Spiritual friends who commit to walking together, whether for a set period of time or over a lifetime, encourages obedience to Christ, enables deep change, and nurtures abundant, fulfilled living.

The purpose of CORD Groups is for 3 to 4 disciples of the same gender to commit to walking together for a set period of time, to press into God's presence, will and work in our lives.

Within this context, the integration of our faith with our way of life runs deeper, through friendship marked by transparent trust, mutual accountability around life-change, discernment and encouragement for one another as friends and



fellow-guides on a journey. Not so much extensive bible study, set curriculum or ministry know-how, but intentional nonetheless.

We trust that the following four practices, often overlooked, will produce lasting fruit as you cultivate them. This acronym is to help you better remember them and serve as a guide for your times together:

CONFESSIO
OTHERS
READING
DISCERNMENT

CONFESSIO

To act in the person of Christ; to receive and extend mercy which heals to each other.

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”
(James 5:16)

Sin, especially hidden sin, can be the most painful and exasperating area of our lives. We sometimes wear the mask of external righteousness while our inner worlds are tormented with a heavy-laden conscience. Sin and shame cut us off from genuine connection, rob us of confidence and ultimately, if left unchecked, reap a harvest of spiritual death and lost direction.

An aspect of the Good News is that we no longer bear this burden alone. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, welcomes us into His forgiving embrace with mercy and kindness which lead us to repentance. We too can help to bear this burden with one another through the long overlooked practice of confession.

Instead of causing condemnation or shame, confession is intended to free us from it. Our struggle with sin often involves the areas of deepest depravity in our lives, but also the deepest desires of our hearts. More than giving up information to keep a score, confession invites conversation around the most vulnerable and raw parts of our soul. It keeps us accountable to the abundant life and calling Jesus has made available for us to walk in.



Pope Francis says:

"[Some] believe that sin is a stain, only a stain, something that you can have dry-cleaned so that everything goes back to normal. The way you take a jacket or dress to have a stain removed: you put it in the wash and that's it. But sin is more than a stain. Sin is a wound; it needs to be treated, healed."

Confession is a gift – where we get to act in *persona Christi* to extend and receive mercy for each other.

Questions:

1. Where have you wrestled with temptation since we met?
2. When have you given into this temptation(s)?
3. On further reflection why do you think you gave into it?
4. How do you think God wants to renew your view of Him, yourself and that area of struggle?

OTHERS

To take seriously Jesus' pursuit of the lost, command to neighbour-love, and empowerment for His mission.

Jesus exemplified a life on mission — God's mission. He was the embodiment of truth and grace, and His proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom was in tandem with His lifestyle as well as the signs and wonders that followed. His heart reflected the Father's, to seek and save the lost, the sick, the sinners (Luke 19:10; Mark 2:17). He taught and healed with compassion and mercy. He modeled hospitality to people of different social classes and status, even when it was unpopular or challenging (Matthew 9:36; John 6:44; Mark 3:1-3).

We often feel inadequate or apathetic with regard to pursuing the lost. But we know this is paramount to Jesus, therefore paramount to us. While we do not coerce or argue our way to get people into the Kingdom, we want to embrace the call to lead compelling lives by the Spirit's power and so partner with God to live out the gospel and see people drawn to Jesus.

The following prayers serve as a starting point and stimuli, which we hope provoke you to join God where He is pursuing, and move in faith and obedience:



“Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” (Luke 15:10)

1. I/We pray, Lord, that You draw ___ to Yourself. (John 6:44)
2. I/We pray that ___ seeks to know You and will find You. (Acts 17:27)
3. I/We pray that ___ hears and believes the Word of God, and recognises You by our love (1 Thessalonians 2:13; John 13:35)
4. I/We ask that You prevent Satan from blinding ___ to the truth. (2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Timothy 2:25-26)
5. I/We ask for You to convict ___ of his/her/their sin and reveal his/her/their need for Jesus. (John 16:8; 1 Thessalonians 1:5)
6. I/We ask that You give me/us the opportunity, courage and words to share the truth with ___. (Colossians 4:3-6; Ephesians 6:19-20)
7. I/We pray that ___ will turn from sin and put his/her/their trust in Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; John 1:12; 5:24)
8. I/We ask for ___ to come into knowledge of the truth, and receive Your grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ. (1 Timothy 2:4; Romans 3:24)
9. I/We pray that ___'s eyes be open, to see that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, that there is no other name by which he/she/they can be made right with God. (John 14:6; Romans 3:22; Acts 4:12)
10. I/We ask for ___ to know You, not by human eloquence or wisdom, but through encountering Your Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:1; 1 John 4:6)

Questions:

1. Have you been loving toward ___ this week? Have you been praying for ___ ?
2. Where God has opened up an opportunity to love and share, how have you sensed it?
3. What specific step will you take this week to love and bless ___ ?
4. Spend time praying for the persons God has put on your hearts.

READING

To immerse ourselves in scripture, to know God's heart, hear His voice, and obey His will.

Those who are His sheep know His voice (John 10:10). Abiding in His love means to keep His commandments (John 15:10). The Word of God makes us wise for salvation through faith, and is given for teaching, reproof, correction and training in godly living, in order that we may be fully equipped (2 Timothy



3:16-17). When we allow God's Word to go deep, God transforms us by the renewing of our mind (Romans 12:2). We can be rooted and established in the faith, abounding in thanksgiving, rather than being swayed by worldly ideologies and human doctrines (Colossians 2:6-7; Ephesians 4:14).

One way is to go for a devotional style, where you read a short text followed by reflection and application, that could be either thematic or completing a book of the bible from start to finish. There are ready-to-use devotion books as well as plans on the Bible app. Alternatively, you can simply use the S.O.A.P. tool or O.I.A.! Another way is to go for large chunks of scripture to read through, allowing the massive intake of the word to saturate your mind, multiple times through. This can be by means of a bible reading plan of your choice.

You may choose to do this study of a passage together during your time, or use the time to share from your own personal reading. The aim is to be as a tree that is nourished by the water of the word, giving vitality to its leaves and branches, so that life is produced and shared with others (Psalm 1:1-3).

Questions:

1. What stood out to you in your reading?
2. Where was there a question or point to ponder?
3. Where was there conviction, insight, or invitation from the Spirit?
4. How are you responding to this scripture?

DISCERNMENT

To help each other make wise, loving and biblical decisions; discern gifts, calling, and purpose as we endeavor to live for God.

Following Jesus with our decisions in life can be complex. In our modern, interconnected society where many of us have the privilege of choice, the decisions we make about career, relationships, ministry and how we use our time or money can feel difficult. There are many areas of our 21st-century living that the Bible does not explicitly address, but choices to make nonetheless.

Thankfully, we also have the privilege of counsel and community to help us discern our desires, moral dilemmas and responses.



“Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” (Proverbs 11:14)

In this trusted and deep friendship, we can ask hard questions, offer new perspectives, and keep each other accountable to the decisions we make. This discernment includes helping each other clarify and confirm our gifts, passion and vision in our vocation — in service of God and the world He has called us to serve.

Besides active listening, an essential part of discerning together is asking questions. Good questions push us toward discernment, not formulas. They invite us into the deeper journey with God and into ourselves; rather than confining, they guide us to listen deeper, to pay attention to what is truly in our hearts, to draw out our truer self.

Questions:

1. What do you sense God doing in you that you need to respond to?
2. What is a decision you are struggling to make? What are the tensions or conflicts you feel?
3. Where do you notice God, and how is He inviting you to respond?
4. What do you sense God doing through you that you need courage for?

HOW CAN I START A CORD GROUP?

PRAY – Commit the entire process and outcome of this effort to the Lord. Ask the Lord to bring to mind people who might be potential members of your CORD Group. We recommend a group of three and no larger than four as intimacy tends to be harder to cultivate in larger groups.

INVITE – Reach out to potential members of this group personally, perhaps over a meal, and share the purpose of this relational group and your conviction for it. Invite them to pray and ask the Lord if joining you in a CORD Group is what they desire in this season. This group requires mutual commitment and should be seriously considered. Check in again after an agreed-upon period of time for a decision. If they decline, pray and ask the Lord for new names and repeat the invitation process.



SCHEDULE – Set a date for your first meeting. Following Dr. Tan Soo Inn’s 3-2-1 concept, we recommend your CORD Group to meet for two hours, once a month, at least. This suggestion allots the minimum amount of time needed for meaningful interaction to take place.

REVIEW – We recommend having a review of the CORD Group after meeting for six months. Talk about each other’s experience — what has been life-giving and what can be improved. There may be elements like a book study or project the group might decide to undertake. If all are agreeable, commit to the group again for another six months or year. It may be helpful to have an earlier review after the first two meetings to see if members understand the purpose of the CORD Group or feel it is for them. In any case where a member (or the group) does not want to continue, bless them, pray for them and thank them for their contribution to end well.

HOW DOES A CORD GROUP MEET?

While there is no fixed template or formula for this relational group to thrive, some components, along with the four practices are healthy:

CONNECT OVER A MEAL – At the table everyone has a voice. Spend time connecting and catching up – share about an event, a joy or a struggle that has taken place since the last time you met. Key areas which you could share on could be your life with God, with work, with family or in community.

CORD – Confession, Others, Reading and Discernment. Give time and space for these elements to be explored as expounded in this primer.

PRAYER – Close the time by interceding for each other based on the issues brought up in the conversation. This time could also be spent to pray for others or the wider community.

SCHEDULE – Set the date for the next meeting in your CORD group. The busyness of our modern age can rob us of the intimate friendships we need. Select and commit to a next date all members agree upon.



RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

- Renovation of the Heart, Dallas Willard
- Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, Peter Scazzero
- Life Together in Christ: Experiencing Transformation in Community, Ruth Haley Barton
- 3-2-1: Following Jesus in Threes, Soo-Inn Tan
- Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship and Direction, David G. Benner
- The Pursuit of God in the Company of Friends, Richard W. Lamb
- The Listening Life: Embracing Attentiveness in a World of Distraction, Adam S. McHugh