

PART ONE: THE GRAND DRAMA

SETTLE IN Colossians 1:17

WATCH VIDEO [1. The Grand Drama](#) (5:57)

OPENER

- + What pulls you away from seeing life as a Grand Drama?
- + What draws you toward it?

DISCUSSION

“The Bible has the shape of a story... it functions as the authoritative Word of God for us when it becomes **the one basic story through which we understand our own experience and thought, and the foundation upon which we base our decisions and actions.** In other words, the Bible provides us with the basic story that we need in order to understand our world and to live in it as God’s people.” - Bartholomew & Goheen

- + In your experience or observation, what other influences threaten the authority of the Word of God in shaping our understanding of and participation in the world?
- + While we live in the present reality of Act 4 (Restoration), the preceding Acts (Creation, Fall and Redemption) are just as relevant and implicit in our lives today. Why is it important to remember them? How do they inform and shape our lives in Act 4?

GK Chesterton’s shipwreck illustration sees the Fall like a treasure ship that’s run aground. In the chaos of the shipwreck, the beautiful, treasured cargo of the ship is tossed about and mixed up with sand and seaweed and wreckage.

- + Where do you see the goodness of what God created out of order, misplaced or paradoxically combined with remnants of the Fall?

Read Genesis 3:1-5. The serpent offered two temptations in the garden: **to seek outside of God’s will, and to be like God.** Every temptation we face today is rooted in these two original seductions. We question whether there might be good things that we’re missing out on outside of what God has ordained for us, and we battle for control of our own destiny, taking the role and responsibility of God upon ourselves.

- + What is a temptation that you face today, and can you identify how it is rooted in either of the serpent’s temptations in the garden?
- + How can you respond to these temptations with a ‘Grand Drama’ perspective?

Read Isaiah 46:8-11. In verse 10 God says that he ‘makes known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come.’ In knowing the Grand Drama, there’s a sense in which we know how the story ends.

- + How do you deal with the tension of knowing the whole story while still facing the necessity of daily decisions and uncertainties?
- + What do you find personally challenging or encouraging about this passage? What does it teach you about God?

“The church now lives between the times (of Jesus’ first and second coming), between the acts of a divine drama of redemption... poised between memory and hope.” - Kevin Vanhoozer

- + What does it mean for Red Church to be poised between memory and hope? How can we embrace this posture more in our community?

WRAP UP

- + How does the concept of the grand drama shift your perspective on something from this week?
- + How will you put tonight’s themes into practice this week?

PRAYER

Use this time to pray actively for each other, equipping group members in the responses they have expressed.

FURTHER READING

Psalm 33:11

James 1:16-18

Colossians 1:15-23

PART TWO: SEEKERS V. DWELLERS

SETTLE IN Romans 12:10-11

CATCH UP + How has the Grand Drama invaded your day-to-day life since last week?

WATCH VIDEO [2. Seekers Vs. Dwellers](#) (4:36)

OPENER + Have there been times in your life when you identified more as a Seeker? As a Dweller?

DISCUSSION

Robert Putnam suggests that **“seekers may be believers, but they are not belongers.** Private spirituality gives personal joy but does not contribute to the common good.”

- + Why is it so critical that faith is not only expressed in ‘private spirituality’? Is there ever a time when such private spirituality is called for?
 - + How have you received from or contributed to the ‘common good’ of faith in community?
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“Everyone says they want community and deep friendship. However, because it takes accountability and commitment we run the other way.” - Tim Keller

- + Would you agree that resistance to accountability and commitment are the main factors that hold people back from community? What might other factors be?
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God’s Word tells us that the apparent costs of being committed to community are absolutely worth it; in fact, He has designed us for fellowship.

- + What does the Bible tell us about God’s intention for His people dwelling together? How can we encourage and invite others to be dwellers? Check out **Ephesians 2:19-22** and **Hebrews 10:24-25** to get you started.
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Read Deuteronomy 11:13-21. God promises that a life lived in faithful obedience to His commands will be a life of fruitfulness.

- + What is the warning in verse 16? Are there particular things - personally and in the context of church community - that we need to take care not to be enticed or deceived by?
- + In verses 18-20, a number of practices are outlined to keep rooted in God’s commands. How can you adopt similar practices in your life? What difference would it make being a seeker or a dweller in taking on these practices?

Read Isaiah 55:1-3.

- + Why are we so quick to invest in things that do not satisfy in place of what God offers us (v 2)?
- + The end of verse 3 features words like **covenant**, **everlasting** and **faithful**. What does this tell us about finding our life, delight and satisfaction in God? How do these words encourage a life of dwelling?

Meditate for a moment on Red Church's tagline: **More Than Me.**

- + How do you interpret this? How are you being challenged to live out faith in a way that goes beyond yourself?

WRAP UP

- + Where or how is God asking you to dwell more?
- + How will you put tonight's themes into practice this week?

PRAYER

Use this time to pray actively for each other, equipping group members in the responses they have expressed.

FURTHER READING

Matthew 18:20

Podcast: *We Need Your Presence* (Mark Sayers, Red Church Melbourne 6/09/14. Available on iTunes or at redchurchmelbourne.podbean.com)

PART THREE: HYPERREALITY

SETTLE IN John 10:10

CATCH UP + Have you noticed yourself 'dwelling' more?

WATCH VIDEO [3. Hyperreality](#) (4:20)

OPENER + What one thing, which the world says you need, do you most struggle to resist?

DISCUSSION

NOTE: There is a practical component to this study. Please leave at least 20 minutes to do this.

Hyperreality blends what is real and what is fiction so that there is no clear distinction where one ends and the other begins. It presents us with **fake or unattainable things masked as reality.**

- + Where do you see the effects of hyperreality in society? What about in Christian culture?
 - + Think about the problems that are on your heart and mind at the moment. How many of them can be traced back to what society expects and says life is about?
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Read Proverbs 21:25-26.

- + What do you think the connection between craving and laziness is? Is this something you notice in your own life?
 - + Consider the contrast between the sluggard and the righteous man. How does generosity challenge hyperreality?
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In Mark 4, Jesus tells a parable about a farmer sowing seed. Read Jesus' explanation of the parable in **Mark 4:14-20**, paying particular attention to verses 18 and 19.

- + Even a garden with healthy soil will inevitably have weeds pop up. Considering the kind of weeds or thorns talked about in verse 19, what does it look like for you to guard yourself against them? Are you confident in distinguishing between weeds and good growth?
-

One of the great myths in the Church today is that by being disciples of Jesus, we lose out on the most enjoyable life that is on offer from secular culture.

- + Do you believe that the road of discipleship is richer and more rewarding than the promises of this world? What is one area of your life that you sense God wants you to hand over from the hyperreal to His reality?

PRACTICE

One of the most effective things we can do to guard against hyperreality is to soak ourselves in Scripture, reminding ourselves of what God actually promises us.

Lead the group in a time of Lectio Divina, a meditative practice that centres on internalising and personalising the living Scriptures. Richard Foster (*Celebration of Discipline*) says that “this is not a time for technical studies, or analysis, or even the gathering of material to share with others. Set aside all tendencies toward arrogance and with a humble heart receive the word addressed to you.”

Read John 14:23-27 aloud three times, clearly and slowly, encouraging group members to close their eyes and listen rather than read along. Before each reading, give directions as outlined below, and leave a few minutes' space before the next reading.

- + First reading: hear the words afresh, putting aside what you may already know of this scripture. Imagine yourself in the scene.
- + Second reading: listen out for a word or phrase that stands out to you.
- + Third reading: listen out for that same word or phrase and sit with it, asking God to open that word to you. Don't try to work out what it means, just be still and wait for God to direct your thoughts.

Break into groups of two or three to share what stood out in the passage, and if God revealed anything for you personally or perhaps for the group or the church. **Pray** with and for each other in these things.

WRAP UP

- + How will you soak yourself in Scripture this week? Encourage groups members to choose one practice from the list below (or think of one of their own) to commit to for the next week (it will be followed up on in the next study!). See suggestions for passages on this topic under Further Reading:
- + Pick a passage to do Lectio Divina with at least three times this week
- + Listen to the Bible (you can use audio Bible CDs, or you can listen to the Bible narrated on the YouVersion app) during transit or while walking
- + Memorise a verse or two by heart
- + Read the same passage from a different translation of the Bible each day
- + Write out a passage several times, creatively emphasising different words

FURTHER READING

The Trouble with Paris: Following Jesus in a world of plastic promises by Mark Sayers

John 14-16

1 Timothy 6:17-21

James 1:16-18

Matthew 5:1-12

PART FOUR: THE VERTICAL SELF

SETTLE IN Isaiah 43:1

CATCH UP + How did you soak yourself in Scripture following on from last week?

WATCH VIDEO [4. The Vertical Self](#) (4:05)

OPENER + The table under *Further Reading* highlights basic differences between a vertical and horizontal self. What stands out to you? In the past week, when did you operate out of a vertical sense of self, and when did you operate out of a horizontal sense of self?

DISCUSSION

“The image of Christ is kind of like the picture on a jigsaw puzzle box. Our culture offers us no finished picture to help us complete the puzzle of our identity; instead, it merely offers us a jumbled mess of puzzle pieces, which we constantly configure, reconfigure, and then deconstruct. But the image of Christ offers us the ultimate image of wholeness, pointing us toward our true self-image.” - Mark Sayers

In the video, Mark suggests that we **use others as mirrors to get a sense of self**, constructing our own identity based on the constructed identities of others.

- + How do you see this manifesting itself in your life or in the lives of those around you?
 - + How does using others as mirrors undermine the fact that they are made in the image of God?
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Read John 12:1-8.

- + What is it about Mary's actions that indicate that she is operating out of a vertical view of self?
 - + Have you ever felt called to do something as an act of worship that others have looked down on as foolish?
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The identity that we take up when we choose to follow Christ is no small thing. As C.S. Lewis says, “The goal towards which He is beginning to guide you is absolute perfection; and no power in the whole universe, except you yourself can prevent Him from taking you to that goal.”

- + How do you hold yourself back from the ways that Christ is wanting to make you holy?
-

Operating with a vertical sense of self is a continual process of taking on your new identity in Christ - He is constantly redeeming you and making you new! The Message translates Psalm 51:6 as **“what you're after is truth from the inside out. Enter me, then; conceive a new, true life.”**

- + Reflect on what this means for you personally. In what ways do you sense God is involved with your life, from the inside?

Coming under **God's authority brings freedom, not oppression.** Psalm 37 is an assuring reminder not to be deceived by the apparent freedom of others when we ourselves are feeling oppressed.

- + Take a few minutes to silently and individually **read Psalm 37.** Which verse stands out most to you and why?

While we can take comfort in the promises of following the path of righteousness, we need to be careful not to delight in the downfall of others, which is a symptom of operating from a horizontal sense of self.

- + Think of someone in your life who needs to know their true identity. How can you help speak God's love to them and invite them into a vertical view of self?

WRAP UP

- + What is one area of your life that God wants to transform to reflect your true identity in Him? How will you surrender that this week?

PRAYER

Use this time to pray actively for each other, equipping group members in the responses they have expressed.

FURTHER READING

Genesis 32:22-32 (Read Chapter 11 of *The Vertical Self* to help unpack this passage in the light of this session's themes)

Sayers, M 2010 *The Vertical Self: how biblical faith can help us discover who we are in an age of self obsession.* Nashville, Thomas Nelson.

The table below compares some of the key differences and emphases between a vertical and horizontal understanding of self. For a more detailed explanation of these themes, see pp. 17-20 in *The Vertical Self*.

VERTICAL SELF	HORIZONTAL SELF	VERTICAL SELF	HORIZONTAL SELF
God as Judge	Others as Judge	Contribution	Achievement
Holiness	Status	Goal	Journey
Eternal	Temporary	Satisfaction	Momentary Pleasures
Delayed Gratification	Instant Gratification	Wholeness	Fragmentation
Work Ethic	Play Ethic	Faith	Skepticism
Growth	Experiential	Self-Discipline	Self-Esteem
Character	Attitude	Communal	Individual
Identity	Image	Inner Life	Outer Appearance
Humility	Publicity	Engagement	Distraction
I	Me	Facts	Feelings
Sin	Boredom/Irrelevance		

PART FIVE: IT'S NOT ABOUT WHAT YOU DO

SETTLE IN Spend a few minutes meditating on these words of Jesus: **abide in me.**

CATCH UP + What has God been teaching you about your true identity?

WATCH VIDEO [5. It's Not About What You Do](#) (3:22)

OPENER + Do you naturally tend toward **being** or **doing**?

DISCUSSION

We live in a world where we are defined by the externalities of our performance. How we perform our job, how fit or healthy we are, how much of a fun person we are. However, the Bible asks us to be determined by who we are on the inside. It says that **our doing flows from our being**: being close to the Father, being in Christian community, being within the Kingdom. Culture tells us that through doing we will find a sense of being, but the Bible says it's the other way around.

- + What would those closest to you say if they were asked what you put most of your energy into? What do you think others see as the fruits of your labours - whether it's vocationally, how you spend your free time, family life or otherwise?
- + Consider Jesus' words in **John 15:1-8**. Does your fruit come from remaining in the vine? What do these verses say to you personally?

Thomas Aquinas is considered one of the greatest theologians in history. Later in his life, he spent four years writing a much-anticipated, significant theological work, but did not complete it. He experienced an encounter with God that caused him to set it aside, and when asked why he stopped writing, he replied, "I cannot, for all I have written seems like straw to me".

- + Why does God sometimes ask people to give up things that He had asked them to take on? Would you be willing to give up your greatest accomplishment?

Read Luke 4:1-13. Right at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus undergoes a time of testing. He is removed from the things that people normally rest on, and tempted with opportunities to publicly show off his power.

- + What do you notice about the things that Jesus draws upon in resisting the devil? Do you depend on the same things to fuel what you do?
- + Like Jesus, we often find ourselves tempted to pursue or accept opportunities of public success, visible output or recognition. What does this public success look like for you - in your family, industry or community?
- + When has God called you to do something **significant but unseen**? Keep the example to yourself, but share the feelings or lessons you experienced.

Read Philippians 3:1-11.

- + Write your own list of credentials as Paul does in verses 4-6. Read out your list, then tear it up, and read out verse 7 (depending on the size of your group, you may want to do this in pairs or smaller groups).
- + How is God calling you to lessen your dependence on your 'credentials' and **deepen your dependence in Him?**
- + **How do you think the church would look differently** if people were marked more by what God was doing in them than what they were doing?

WRAP UP

- + Considering this session's discussion, is there something God is asking you to give up? To take on?

PRAYER

Use this time to pray actively for each other, equipping group members in the responses they have expressed.

FURTHER READING

Matthew 11:25-30

Isaiah 40

Matthew 6

PART SIX: SUFFERING AND THE KINGDOM

SETTLE IN John 16:33

CATCH UP + Since the last session, did you stop doing something - or change the way you do it - to make more room for what God is doing in you?

WATCH VIDEO [6. Suffering and the Kingdom](#) (3:16)

OPENER + What is your default immediate response when you encounter personal suffering?

DISCUSSION

Henri Nouwen suggests that we fill our lives with things to avoid the confrontation of being alone and purposeless: **“Our culture has become most sophisticated in the avoidance of pain,** not only our physical pain but our emotional and mental pain as well... When we have no project to finish, no friend to visit, no book to read, no television to watch... and when we are left all alone by ourselves, we are brought so close to the revelation of our basic human aloneness and so afraid of experiencing an all-pervasive sense of loneliness that **we will do anything to get busy again and continue the game which makes us believe that everything is fine after all.”**

- + Would you agree with Nouwen? What kind of things do you find yourself getting busy with, and what might be revealed in their absence?
- + While our culture tends to resist or avoid pain, **Scripture is full of examples of intentional times of lament, expressing pain, and even rejoicing in suffering** (see examples in Further Reading). What does it look like for the church to have a healthy balance of embracing suffering without seeking it out or overemphasising it unnecessarily?

The ‘implicit prosperity gospel’ suggests that doing the right things as a follower of Jesus will ensure a life full of favour. When we find ourselves suffering, we then assume that we’ve taken a wrong turn with our faith.

- + **Read 1 Peter 4:12-19.** How do these verses challenge the idea of the implicit prosperity gospel?
- + Has there been a time when you have suffered on account of following Christ? What does it mean for you personally to ‘bear the name of Christ?’ (v14)?

Think of someone that you have seen suffer ‘well’.

- + What is it that stands out to you about the way they coped? What they did, or said, or didn’t do or say? How did their approach point you toward Christ?
- + Furthermore, consider the ways that Jesus approached suffering (think about his trials in the wilderness (Luke 4); his prayers in Gethsemane (Luke 22; Mark 13; Matthew 26); his torture and crucifixion (Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19)). **What marked his attitude and response toward suffering?**

- + 1 Peter 2:21 says **'This is the kind of life you've been invited into, the kind of life Christ lived. He suffered everything that came his way so you would know that it could be done, and also know how to do it, step-by-step'** (The Message). How do you respond to this invitation?
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"Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." - C.S. Lewis. God doesn't necessarily cause suffering, He sometimes doesn't take it away, but scripture and history show us that **He always uses it to meet and teach us.**

- + In 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 Paul gives us an example of God's perspective on suffering. Paul responds by **bringing his suffering under the authority of God.** How can you bring your own struggles under God's authority?
- + Even in a life marked by constant suffering, we can be sure that God's heart is always for the renewal of all things. **Read Job 36:15-16 and meditate on these verses,** using them as a foundation in your closing prayer time.

WRAP UP

- + If time allows, spend a few minutes in the Psalms. It won't take long to find one that expresses suffering and hardship while also pointing to God's provision of strength, hope and rescue. Have each group member choose a Psalm, and then read them as prayers in small groups together. **Encourage the group to do this during the week.**

PRAYER

Use this time to pray actively for each other, equipping group members in the responses they have expressed. Be particularly sensitive to those bearing burdens of suffering, and allow them to share and receive prayer as they feel comfortable to.

FURTHER READING

Psalms 13

Psalms 42

Matthew 5:1-12

1 Peter 4:1-19

Romans 8:17-25

2 Corinthians 1:3-11

Disappointment With God: Three questions no one asks aloud - Philip Yancey

PART SEVEN: BE A DISCIPLE, GET A DISCIPLE

SETTLE IN 1 Peter 2:9

CATCH UP + Did God use any moments of difficulty or struggle to get your attention since last session?

WATCH VIDEO [7. Be a Disciple, Get a Disciple](#) (3:39)

OPENER + Who passed the baton on to you? Share about one key person who has impacted/is impacting your journey as a disciple.

DISCUSSION

Read Matthew 28:18-20 (try to hear it with fresh ears if you're particularly familiar with this scripture!). Jesus had ministered to and taught his close group of disciples, and now he was charging them with the task of replicating this process with others. **The Church today is a result of disciples following the Great Commission, right up to us today!**

- + Do you feel equipped to take up Jesus' instructions to go and make disciples? If not, why not - what do you need to do in order to move past this?
- + Jesus appears to his disciples again after the scene in Matthew 28, and instructs them to **wait for the Holy Spirit, who will empower them** to be His witnesses and fulfil the Great Commission (Acts 1:4-8). How does the Holy Spirit empower your own life as a disciple and disciple-maker?
- + Do you see your life as worthy of imitation? As you reflect on this question, consider the disciples who Jesus commissioned. What was it about them that made them worthy of the call to make disciples?

"According to Paul [1 Corinthians 13:1-3], every time we try to teach someone with a **loveless mentality**, we can be sure that we have become nothing more than a clanging gong or resounding cymbal; **we have made ourselves both annoying and irrelevant.**" - Francis Chan

- + Why is love so important in discipling others? Does love motivate you in the way you serve and lead those God has placed around you?

"Let praises carry the truth to the next generation, because the aim of truth is praise. The aim of education is exultation." - John Piper. **The gospel message is spread not only by teaching, but by the outflow of praise for what God has done.**

- + How does praise and celebration grow disciples?
- + Read Psalm 145:4-7. How can you personally take on a posture of praise to point others to God?

Part of Red Church's vision is to 'be a Church of passionate and committed disciples...'. This vision is outworked as each member of the body invests in two key things: **their own growth as a disciple, and the growth of others.**

- + What is the next step for you in your discipleship?
- + How can you personally invest in the growth and discipleship of others in the church?

WRAP UP

- + **Read Hebrews 11:39-12:1.** Be encouraged that your discipleship is happening as part of the Grand Drama; that we are a continuation of the great cloud of witnesses, wrapped up in God's promises and plan for His church for all eternity!
- + Write down the name/s of someone that you can disciple, and note down the first steps you can take in investing in them.

PRAYER

Break into pairs and share with your partner someone that you are discipling or sense that God is calling you to disciple. Commission each other in prayer, in the authority of Jesus' name and the power of the Holy Spirit.

FURTHER READING

Matthew 16:18-19

Luke 6:40

John 17

Romans 10:14-15

2 Timothy 2:1-2

1 Peter 5:2-3

Multiply: Disciples making disciples by Francis Chan

The Master Plan of Evangelism by Robert E. Coleman

PART EIGHT: REBUILDERS NOT DECONSTRUCTORS

SETTLE IN Colossians 2:6-7

CATCH UP + How have you taken action in furthering your discipleship - or that of someone else?

WATCH VIDEO [8. Rebuilders not Deconstructors](#) (3:54)

OPENER + Which do you think is easier, and why: rebuilding or deconstructing?

DISCUSSION

“The main problem in life is sin, and the only solution is God and His grace. The alternative to this view is to identify something besides sin as the main problem with the world and something besides God as the main remedy. That demonises something that is not completely bad, and makes an idol out of something that cannot be the ultimate good.” - Tim Keller

- + **When we remove God from the good things He has given us, we expect to get more out of them than what they can give us.** How do you see this playing out around you and in your own life?
- + Christians have a rebuilding role in acting with God to put things back into their rightful place, under the Lordship of Christ. Imagine you have the opportunity to speak into a relationship or situation that is ‘disordered’: what do you need to be a wise and equipped rebuilder? How can we know what God intends or ordains for these relationships and situations?

Long before Google maps, explorers used stars as reference points when navigating their course. They **determined direction based on a fixed point.** God has given us the Bible as our ‘fixed point’ to use in navigating an ever-changing culture. We can be sure that, as James 1:17 tells us, God does not change like shifting shadows.

- + Are there any areas of life that you find hard to navigate from a scriptural perspective or which seem neutral to God’s direction?
- + Read **1 Corinthians 2:6-16.** You may find it helpful to read it again silently and underline anything that stands out. What does this passage say to you about God’s wisdom and our role as rebuilders?

Read 2 Timothy 4:3-5 and Isaiah 30:9-11.

- + These passages portray a kind of ‘junk food’ spirituality, where people pick and choose what sounds good to them. How can we take a stance of rebuilding when faced with this kind of false teaching and false belief?
- + In First and Second Timothy, Paul warns Timothy several times to avoid godless chatter and pointless arguments. What are some ways that these kinds of conversations can be steered in a direction of rebuilding? Share examples from your own experience.

There will be times in every person's life where deconstructing is necessary - where myths need to be broken down, unhealthy habits rejected and doubts wrestled with.

- + How can the Church be a safe and healthy place for people in this season? What are some ways to focus on moving forward to a new place in faith?

WRAP UP

- + It's often easier to declare what we're against or what bothers us rather than what we are for and what we desire to see grow. **Go around the group and have each person share one thing that they are 'for' in the Church community.** Part of this declaration is an inherent commitment to be an agent of rebuilding in that area - encourage each other and keep each other accountable!

PRAYER

Isaiah 30 goes on to say 'In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength' (verse 15). Confession and repentance can be particularly important in keeping a humble and right heart toward the things we feel have let us down, including the Church. Spend time in silent reflection and confession for where you have deconstructed when God has asked you to rebuild, receive His forgiveness and pray for a transformation of the Church community in becoming a place of rebuilding hope, joy and healing.

FURTHER READING

Isaiah 35

Ezekiel 36

Romans 1:21-25

PART NINE: SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

SETTLE IN Psalm 86:11

CATCH UP + How have you been active as a 'rebuilder' since last session?

WATCH VIDEO [9. Spiritual Disciplines](#) (2:48)

OPENER + 'Tomorrow's freedom is today's surrender'. Discuss.

DISCUSSION

In our efforts to become more Christlike, we can sometimes try to be more patient, more gentle etc. without realising that these are actually **fruits of a spiritually disciplined life**. Dallas Willard says that "we can, through faith and grace, **become like Christ by practicing the types of actives he engaged in, by arranging our whole lives around the activities he himself practices in order to remain constantly in fellowship with the Father.**"

- + What kind of disciplines do you see exhibited in the life of Jesus?
- + Suggest any other spiritual disciplines you can think of (see the list under Further Reading for suggestions). Which of these do you practice regularly? Which are you unfamiliar with? Take time to discuss any that you don't understand (Foster's book is an excellent guide for exploring these disciplines).
- + Prayer, Fasting and Study (spending time in God's Word) are three of the more commonly known or practiced disciplines. What are the unique purposes or fruits of these?
- + Why are spiritual disciplines important for the life of the wider Church community, not just individuals' faith?

"Spiritual Disciplines are meant to bring the abundance of God into our lives. It is possible, however, to turn them into another set of soul-killing laws... **Disciplines are not the answer; they only lead us to the Answer.** We must clearly understand this limitation of the Disciplines if we are to avoid bondage." - Richard Foster

- + In your own experience, what is an indicator that a discipline has become a law? How do we steer clear of turning spiritual disciplines into laws?
- + **Read Romans 7:14-25** (it's wordy, so read it slowly, perhaps in one or two different translations). Why is being spiritually disciplined so difficult? Do you identify with Paul's frustration?

The term 'thin places' originates from Celtic spirituality and refers to those spaces or times where we experience deepened intimacy with God; in other words 'the boundary between heaven and earth seems thinner'. Of course, thanks to Jesus, **communion with God is not limited to certain places or times**. But what this concept does do is highlight the sacredness of meeting with God, and the importance of intentionally positioning ourselves to meet with Him. We can see spiritual disciplines as thin places.

- + **Read Hebrews 12:9-13**. What do you find personally encouraging or challenging about this passage?

+ Where in your own life have you seen the fruitfulness of meeting God in thin places? What would it look like for those thin places to extend into the busier or more mundane parts of your day?

WRAP UP

+ Read a section of Psalm 119 every day until you finish the whole chapter. Say the words as a prayer, asking God to take hold of your heart and mind with delight for His Word and commands. Journal your reflections and take note of how God changes your attitudes or habits in the spiritual disciplines.

PRAYER

Lectio Divina is a helpful practice in the discipline of meditation (see Red Core Part Three: Hyperreality). Choose a passage to use as Lectio Divina with the group in closing prayer.

FURTHER READING

Psalm 1:1-3

Psalm 40

Psalm 119

Galatians 5:16-25

Galatians 6:7-8

The Cost of Discipleship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The Celebration of Discipline: the Path to Spiritual Growth by Richard Foster

Foster's book includes a chapter on each of the following disciplines, with accompanying suggestions for extra reading, and scripture and questions for reflection:

Inward Disciplines:

Meditation

Prayer

Fasting

Study

Outward Disciplines:

Simplicity

Solitude

Submission

Service

Corporate Disciplines:

Confession

Worship

Guidance

Celebration

"A farmer is helpless to grow grain; all he can do is provide the right conditions for the growing of grain. He cultivates the ground, he plants the seed, he waters the plants, and then the natural forces of the earth take over and up comes the grain...This is the way it is with the Spiritual Disciplines - they are a way of sowing to the Spirit... By themselves the Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where something can be done." - Richard Foster, *The Celebration of Discipline*

PART TEN: SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

SETTLE IN Psalm 97

CATCH UP + How have you engaged in spiritual disciplines in the past week? What has God been teaching you through them?

WATCH VIDEO [10. Spiritual Authority](#) (3:56)

OPENER + Abraham Kuyper once said that **“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!”**
What do you find personally encouraging or challenging about this statement?

DISCUSSION

NOTE: Being the last session of Red Core, allow the group time to pause and reflect on what God has been saying to them. Leave 15 minutes for the Wrap Up and Prayer time at the end.

“The modern world detests authority but worships relevance. Our Christian conviction is that the Bible has both authority and relevance, and that the secret of both is Jesus Christ.” - John Stott

- + What is the difference between authority and relevance? How do you see culture emphasising the value of relevance?
- + If someone asked you to explain how the Bible, written two thousand years ago, has authority and relevance today, what would you say?

Read Matthew 16:13-19. Jesus seems to be delegating a fair bit of authority to Simon Peter, and throughout the book of Acts we see Peter passionately and fruitfully leading the Church and spreading the gospel.

- + What qualified Simon Peter to bear spiritual authority? Later in Matthew 16 we read that Jesus calls him a stumbling block (verses 21-23) - does this interaction disqualify Peter’s authority? Why or why not?
- + Think of someone in your own life who holds spiritual authority, with or without positional authority. How do they steward this? What do you see as the fruit of their spiritual authority?

Bobby Clinton says that “Spiritual authority is delegated by God, and differs from authority that is based on position or force.”

- + **Spiritual authority is not just exclusive to church pastors or ministry leaders.** The entire Church is charged with bringing Jesus’ authority into the wilderness of secular culture. What does it mean for everyday Christians to be ‘in the world’ with spiritual authority?

Each area that Red Core has explored is **underpinned by a firm belief that Jesus is King and Lord; that God reigns in sovereign authority.**

- + Think back over the past nine sessions. Which one has stuck with you the most? How does God's authority practically - not just conceptually - influence this area for you?
- + How is God calling you to further submit to His authority in this area?

WRAP UP

The vision of Red Church is 'to be a Church of passionate and committed disciples, devoted to Christ's alternative for the world'. This vision inherently declares the authority of God, and His way as *the* way, truth and life. This vision becomes a reality as each member of the body passionately commits their way to God's way, in submission and dependence on Him.

Allow the group to spend a few minutes in reflection, thinking back over what has stuck with them through Red Core. Encourage them to note down some reflections for each question below:

- + What has God been saying to me about my personal relationship with Him?
- + What has God been saying to me about my participation in the Church?
- + What has God been saying to me about the gifts or calling He is growing in me?
- + What do I feel is a step that God is asking me to take?

Go around the group and encourage each person to share one thing that they noted down, and ask the group to commit to supporting each other in prayer over what is shared.

PRAYER

Use this time to pray actively for each other, equipping group members in the responses they have expressed. Pray for other groups who have been using this resource, and pray for the wider Church in moving forward in submission and dependence on God.

FURTHER READING

Hebrews 13:17

Romans 13:1-7

1 Peter 5:1-10

1 Timothy 4:1-16

Spiritual Leadership by Henry & Richard Blackaby