

L I F E I N  
C I R C L E S



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# LIFE HAPPENS IN CIRCLES.

Circles of intimacy.

Circles of incarnation.

Circles of influence.



## HERITAGE CIRCLES:

**Intimate Circle:** A very small circle of 3-5 individuals.

**Small Group:** A small circle of 10-12 individuals.

**Affinity Group:** A larger circle of more than 25 individuals.

**Campus:** A larger circle of localized connection.

**Heritage Church:** Our largest family circle at Heritage.



# WALK THIS WAY

## An Overview

Jesus has created and invited us into a new and living way. Heritage is committed to chasing him in this living way within the expanding circles of life we each have. Individually and corporately, we believe these circles are proof of God's favor for each of us—places to thrive and gifts to release for the sake of advancing the Jesus Kingdom.

### HEBREWS 10:19-20

*Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body...*

**This booklet is an invitation** to a journey in which we all create, develop, expand, and release new circles of relationship and impact as never before. In it, you will find opportunities for individual reflection and practice, tools for engagement, and ways to connect with others, all as we choose to live fully in **what is** and prepare for **what is to come**.

## WHAT IS

We are and have always been the Church on mission together. This has meant choosing selflessness for the sake of others—laying aside our own preferences so that others could encounter Jesus and thrive in relationship with him. Heritage's passion and purpose is **connecting people to God, to each other, and to their purpose**.

Across the globe, people find themselves in a crisis unlike any other in our lifetimes—a **global pandemic and accompanying**

**economic upheaval** have devastated families, upended communities, and bruised nations. A greater awareness of racial divides have heightened tension across our nation. Confronted with common adversity, we seem at once more united *and* more divided than ever.

## We are a world grieving what has been lost and anxious for a new day.

These circumstances, however, do not change the fact of Jesus' Kingship. What's more, we as his followers get to be the agents of his love, provision, truth, and reconciliation for just such a time as this.

### HEBREWS 10:21-23

*...and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.*

As Christ followers we know—no matter the outcome—that everything is okay because Jesus is King. Ours is a confident hope and unwavering faith because he who promised his faithful.



Image: [instagram.com/scottstevensons](https://www.instagram.com/scottstevensons)

As we have shifted our environments from physical ones to primarily virtual expressions, we have become more aware of how our living space **is** sacred space. We have seen the truth of this—God has met us in our homes while we gathered even as we have been scattered.

In all of this, we have chosen a posture of submission to the Kingship of Jesus and to the authority he has set in place over us. We know we are positioned to be part of long-term solutions—ones that bring flourishing and thriving for all people— especially in these unprecedented times.

Even as we have longed for the reopening of our physical campus expressions, we have prioritized the rebuilding of our communities. Our consistent priority of living in faithful risk & hopeful partnership in times past has given us opportunity to love our neighbors uniquely in this season:

Our weekend services regularly touched over 13,000 people in their homes each week.

We provided over 50,000 meals.

We partnered Heritage family members as encouragers with over 200 healthcare professionals—reminding them God sees them and we are **for** them.

We were part of over 125 individuals declaring they have entered into new life in Jesus.

All of this pleases the heart of God.

## **WHAT IS TO COME**

**We are committed to reopening our physical campuses**, but we are convinced God has so much more than this. The measure of our selflessness will inform how we live into the next season together, and we believe God is more concerned with **how** we take that journey than **when** it happens.

**We believe the next season is one where God will move in power and authority as we've never experienced in our lifetimes.** We are confident Jesus will be made real to more people, and that he wants to use us—his followers walking in his empowerment—to offer love, truth, and healing as never before.

**We want to be ready, in each of our circles of life, to receive all God has for us while being part of all he has for the world.**

We are asking God for a fresh outpouring of Holy Spirit—the same spirit who raised Jesus from the dead<sup>1</sup>—on and in us. This will mean having a fresh imagination for what life, community, and mission look like. It will also mean renewed commitment to walk in purity, journeying in the way of holiness and godliness with a new intensity.

### **HEBREWS 10:24-25**

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

## **AN EXPANDING RIPPLE**

Heritage's next steps will be to engage incrementally in physical community, creating intentional space where we gauge our health and readiness for more expanded interaction.

This will involve connecting in very small groups, worshipping in larger—but still small—groups in homes, parks, driveways, and other spaces, gathering outdoors for prayer and worship moments, connecting for the sacraments of Baptism and Communion, and then engaging in modified public gatherings in our spaces. Group leaders will be participating in a regular feedback loop informing our progress.

By taking this approach, we can safeguard the physical health and wellbeing of those who gather, monitoring instances of coronavirus infection in these groups and gatherings. We are also

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<sup>1</sup> See Romans 8:11

able to move in greater unity of purpose and activity as we ask God to work in us what only he can throughout this journey.

**For an overview of this timeline of preparation & engagement, go to [heritageqc.com](http://heritageqc.com) and click Life in Circles.**

What follows is our journey of readiness—corporately and personally; in mind, body, and spirit—into the next season.

To get the most out of it, we encourage you to:

**CONNECT IN A CIRCLE FOR THE NEXT 90 DAYS-** Find a small group of people within the Heritage family you are able to journey with. If you're not connected in this way, check out these next steps:

- [heritageqc.com/groups](http://heritageqc.com/groups) lists the 90 Day Life Groups that are open and receiving new members.
- text CONNECT to 309-250-2007; a member of our team will help you get connected.
- call us at 309-788-2030.

**EXPAND YOUR CIRCLE** - Already in a circle? Who can you invite into it? Let us know at 309-788-2030 or [groups@heritageqc.com](mailto:groups@heritageqc.com) if you are interested in leading a group or if your group has more capacity for some new friends.

**CHOOSE TRUST AND VULNERABILITY** - To receive all God has for us in this season, and to live fully into the next, we will need to choose healthy openness and trust with one another—especially in these 90 Day group environments.

There are many perspectives—some passionately expressed—on what moving forward should look like. By choosing empathy (trying to understand where other people are coming from), you're helping to create space where trust and vulnerability can happen.

**BE FULLY PRESENT IN THE FOLLOWING READINGS & INVITATIONS.**



**A circle is only a circle as it remains connected.  
Even the slightest disconnection means what was  
once continuous is severed and it is no longer true  
to itself in form or purpose.**



## CONVERSATION 1: CIRCLES OF INTIMACY

# FATHER - SON - SPIRIT

Created out of community for community.

~ Genesis 1 & 2; Hebrews 10:19-25 ~

**I**n the beginning, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—the community called the Godhead—created everything. Inseparable but distinct, coequal but mutually submitted, it was out of love that God created us to love. From this intimate circle we were made for intimacy with God and others.

### **What is intimacy?**

Intimacy is being truly known and fully loved. It is a space of vulnerability and trust. By its nature, greater intimacy requires a smaller circle; though it is possible to have moments of intimacy in larger circles. *When we're talking about intimate circles, we mean those one or two circles where we are deeply connected with one to three other people.*

### **Beyond ourselves.**

Intimacy is an invitation to selflessness, but also requires us to know ourselves. One of our great temptations is to live fractured personal lives, where we forget **we are made as body, mind, and spirit together**. Jesus heals our fractured selves and brings us into wholeness with him. This is the path to flourishing and thriving—what Jesus called “life to the full<sup>2</sup>” and where we find the fulfillment of our deepest longings for purpose and connection.

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<sup>2</sup> See John 10:10

# INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE & REFLECTION #1

What are your current circles of intimacy?

How readily were you able to identify one or two “intimate” circles? What might this reveal about your level of connection with others?

***Pray and ask Holy Spirit to help you discern answers to these questions; don't rush—take your time to reflect and process:***

Where are the circle(s) you identified thriving?  
Where do you see unhealthy patterns of conversation, activity, or disconnection in them?

If your circle(s) of intimacy could reflect even more of God's love and connectedness, what do you imagine that would look like?

What brokenness are you bringing into your circles?  
What do you think healing might look like?

***Find one or two other people this week who can interact with you in the Scripture reflections that follow.***

# PERSONAL & INTIMATE CIRCLE REFLECTION #1

Read\* the Creation narrative from **Genesis 1:1-2:2**. *Take time to read this passage once through in one sitting. Re-read it as you walk through the following questions as part of personal and group interaction:*

Where do you see the activity of Godhead-in-community in this passage?

How do you see the different days and elements of Creation connected together? In what ways are they dependent upon and impacted by each other? What might this reveal?

What can we learn about our purpose—individually and corporately—as people from this passage? What might we learn about our own need for unbroken relationship with others?

What in this passage stuck out the most to you? What do you suppose Holy Spirit might be speaking to you about you and about God in that space?

\* or listen for free at [bible.com](http://bible.com).

**NOTES \_ QUESTIONS \_ MUSINGS \_ DRAWINGS**

## PERSONAL & INTIMATE CIRCLE REFLECTION #2

Read\* **Genesis 2:4-25**<sup>3</sup>. *Take time to read this passage once through in one sitting. Re-read it as you walk through the following questions as part of personal and group interaction:*

Where do you see the activity of Godhead-in-community in this passage?

What do you think is significant about God breathing into the nostrils of the man and this being the “breath of life?”

What do you think this reveals about our need for a close circle of intimacy with Father-Son-Spirit?

The task of humanity in the story is to take care of the Creation Garden. What does this show us about how we fulfill our own purpose even today? How should our purpose-fulfillment impact the rest of creation?

By creating Eve from Adam’s rib, we get the sense that humanity can never be complete without relationship—a part of us is missing when we’re in isolation. How is this speaking to you about your current circumstance?

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<sup>3</sup> It might be helpful to view this passage as a more “zoomed in” or intentionally focused part of the Creation story—if Genesis 1 is the broad strokes of creation, Genesis 2 gives specific insight on humanity.

**NOTES \_ QUESTIONS \_ MUSINGS \_ DRAWINGS**

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION & PRACTICE #1

Watch & participate in the weekend service together.

Read **Hebrews 10:19-25**.

What about this passage sticks out to you?

The writer speaks about Jesus making a “new and living way” for us.

- What does this seem to mean in the passage?
- What do you think are some of the broader implications for us...
  - ...individually?
  - ...as we live in community?
  - ...for the world in general?

What do you think are evidences we are “drawing near to God”?  
What are symptoms that this is not happening?

There is a very real urgency evident in this passage. What are some things we see we should have a sense of urgency about?

What do we see about the circles of intimacy in our relationship with God and with others?

Share some of the ways you have seen God at work in this season. What has happened that only God can get credit for?

What is an action step God has been calling you to take through your reflections this week? After each person answers this, pray for them to be found faithful in those steps. Check in with each other in the week(s) ahead to see how this is progressing.



**Ever-present God,  
be with us in our isolation,  
be close to us in our distancing,  
be healing in our sickness,  
be joy in our sadness,  
be light in our darkness,  
be wisdom in our confusion,  
be all that is familiar when all is unfamiliar,  
that when the doors reopen  
we may with the zeal of Pentecost  
inhabit our communities  
and speak of your goodness  
to an emerging world.  
For Jesus' sake.**

~ Andrew Nunn



## CONVERSATION 2: CIRCLES OF INCARNATION

# MIND - BODY - SPIRIT

Wholistic flourishing individually and for the sake of others.

~ Genesis 3 & 4; John 10 ~

**S**ome time after humanity came into being—walking in a tight circle of intimacy with God and each other—a fracturing occurred. This fracturing was at once cosmic in scope—a ripple that would influence all of Creation, and also one that would leave us individually disconnected within ourselves. When disobedience, mistrust, and selfishness overruled the loving invitation of God, everything changed.

It was after this breaking of relationship with God, with others, and in self—what some call the Fall— that the first murder would occur; humans would chase hard after their own desires at the expense of other people. It was here in this place of fracturing that humanity knew shame and naked exposure for the first time.

We were made for our mind, body, and spirit to function not as three discrete parts of ourselves, but to live mind, body, and spirit as one—in relationship with God and others. We believe part of Jesus' gift of life in fullness is seeing these things come back into connection, rooted in him, and living out of his abundance.

### John 10:10, AMP

*The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows].*

Living a fractured life is one where we live in what the thief came to bring. Living connected in self and with others as we abide in Christ is the way of “life till it overflows.”

## INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE & REFLECTION #2

Read John 10:10 **out loud** a couple of times, using the translation found on the previous page.

Ask God to help you hold onto the scriptures you've just read; pray for him to speak to you using what you've interacted with.

***Then, go for a walk, run, or other physical activity outside.***

Reflect on John 10:10 as you go. Be aware of where you are. What is happening around you? What colors are you seeing? What are you smelling? What sounds are around you?

Later, settle back down. Turn off any noise or distraction as you're able, and read John 10:10 one more time.

Pay attention to your body. Take deep breaths. Where are you feeling tension? As you move, what sensations are you aware of? Where is there pain or discomfort?

What thoughts keep coming to mind? Where have you been feeling anxious? Where have you experienced contentment?

Reflect back on the past day or so.

- Where were you aware of God's presence?
- Where were you *unaware* of God's presence **at the time** but now are aware of this?
- Where have you lived in disharmony—where have your actions been disconnected from what you believe? Where have you been inconsistent in how you see, treat, and speak to/about others?

Ask God to help you be aware of him—in mind, body, and spirit.

## PERSONAL & INTIMATE CIRCLE REFLECTION #3

Read\* **Genesis 3**. Take time to read this passage once through in one sitting. Re-read it as you walk through the following questions as part of personal and group interaction:

Where do you see evidences of fracturing...  
... in relationship with God?

... individually (in mind-body-spirit)?

... with others?

... with creation?

Where do you see hope?

Take a few minutes to breathe, listen, and pay attention to your mind, body, and spirit using the exercise on the next page.

***Participate in this personal practice alone; then interact with someone in your Circle of Intimacy—preferably an individual who has also used this practice—about your experience:***

Sit upright in a chair. Breathe deeply a couple of times—in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Pay attention to your body.

*Where are you holding tension?*

- *Is your face relaxed or in a scowl?*
- *Take note of the muscles in your neck, shoulders, chest, and torso—are they tense or relaxed?*
- *If you noticed tension in any of these, breathe again.*

Use the Jesus Prayer silently as you breathe again:

***Lord Jesus Christ [breathing in...],  
Son of God [breathing out...],  
have mercy on me [breathing in...]  
a sinner [breathing out...].***

Continue in prayer by reciting Psalm 46:10 in this way:

***Be still and know that I am God.  
Be still and know that I am.  
Be still and know.  
Be still.  
Be.<sup>4</sup>***

Sit in the silence and allow God to calm your anxious thoughts.

Simply “be” for a few minutes.

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<sup>4</sup> The Jesus Prayer and Psalm 46:10 practices are taken from Chuck Degroat’s *Wholeheartedness*, p. 177. (pub. 2016, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.)

## PERSONAL & INTIMATE CIRCLE REFLECTION #4

Read\* **Genesis 4**. Take time to read this passage once through in one sitting. Re-read it as you walk through the following questions as part of personal and group interaction:

Where do you see evidences of fracturing...  
... in relationship with God?

... individually (in mind-body-spirit)?

... with others?

... with creation?

Where do you see hope?

Take a few minutes to breathe, listen, and pay attention to your mind, body, and spirit using the exercise on the next page.

***Participate in this personal practice alone; then interact with someone in your Circle of Intimacy—preferably an individual who has also used this practice—about your experience:***

*If you haven't already done so, discover your Sacred Pathway for connecting with God. A "sacred pathway" is simply part of how God wired you for connection with him—where you experience his presence and pleasure more readily.*

*Take the online assessment here: <https://groupleaders.org/spiritual-pathways-assessment>*

Then, take 10-20 minutes to ***participate in your pathway.***

For explanations of each pathway, see here: [https://media.focusonthefamily.com/fotf/pdf/fof\\_daily\\_broadcast/2014/ffde-20140416-9-sacred-pathways-final.pdf](https://media.focusonthefamily.com/fotf/pdf/fof_daily_broadcast/2014/ffde-20140416-9-sacred-pathways-final.pdf)

Take time to process your experience.

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION & PRACTICE #2

Watch & participate in the weekend service together.

Create space for each person to share how they have processed the *Life in Circles* journey so far.

What from the scriptures of the last week — John 10:10 and Genesis 3 & 4 — has spoken most strongly to you?

What elements of practice—prayer, reflection, mind-body-spirit exercises—have been most beneficial? Most challenging?

What have you discovered about God and about yourself in the past couple of weeks?

Read this passage:

### **John 20:21-22, NLT**

*Again he said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit..."*

How does this tie in with our mind-body-spirit journey?

Identify one way your Group will **live out the presence and activity of God** in the coming weeks by ***servng together as part of our Heritage Live SENT opportunities***. Some options include:

- **Food pantry packing and distribution**
- **Kewanee Encouragers** (*writing cards and sending care packages to Kewanee inmates*)
- **Healthcare Encouragers** (*writing cards and sending care packages to local healthcare workers*)

NOTE TO GROUP LEADERS: Communicate your Group's engagement here to Heritage using [groups@heritageqc.com](mailto:groups@heritageqc.com) or the weekly check-in form.

As an act of closing, recite the declaration on the following page together.



**We are not people of fear:  
we are people of courage.**

**We are not people who protect our own safety:  
we are people who protect our neighbors' safety.**

**We are not people of greed:  
we are people of generosity.**

**We are your people God,  
giving and loving,  
wherever we are,  
whatever it costs**

**For as long as it takes  
wherever you call us.**

~ Barbara Glasson



## CONVERSATION 3: CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE

# SELF - HOME - COMMUNITY

Wholistic flourishing with and for others.

~ Romans 12 & 13, Philippians 2:1-11 ~

**T**hose of us who walk in relationship with Jesus are really only *beginning* to experience the life of abundance Jesus said he came to give. This life of fullness, however, is not given to us only for our own sake—we are called to be free and offer freedom to others; we are invited to *really live* and offer life to others. In the same way as Jesus, we are to give ourselves away<sup>5</sup>.

At once this can sound exciting and exhausting, wonderful and *weird*. After all, most of us have been taught that self-preservation and self-advancement are where we find security and even identity. But the new and living way of Jesus is one where we find security, purpose, and pleasure by resting our identity in *him*; the life we were always meant to live is lived in Christ.

That means God as Father, Son, and Spirit fills us up so we can be poured out... so we can be filled up by him, and he can pour us out again according to his purpose. This circle of being filled up and poured out for the sake of others happens most fully and most beneficially *with* others.

What does it look like for us to experience God in his fullness so that those closest to us can experience some of the fullness of God *through us*? What would it take for those in radiating circles—those we touch beyond the walls of our home—to encounter God through us?

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<sup>5</sup> See Galatians 5:1, Philippians 2:1-11

## INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE & REFLECTION #3

Breathe.

Pray and ask Holy Spirit to speak to you about you and about himself as you spend a few moments in his word.

Read Philippians 2:1-11 **out loud**. Do so more than once.

What did Holy Spirit reveal—what thoughts or impressions came to mind that you didn't place there yourself?

Write this down.

Now, hold onto the scriptures you've just read. Picture your circles of influence, beginning with yourself and slowly moving through the next two to three circles (circles of intimacy, home life, extended family, work, etc.), trying to picture the faces and circumstances of as many individuals in those circles as you can.

As you pictured each circle, what **emotions** were you aware of? What might those feelings reveal about how God wants to speak to you or use you to reveal himself?

What is one meaningful way—beyond praying for them—that you can **serve** an individual or group in each of those circles (including yourself)?

*Note: if you don't have an answer for this yet, re-read Philippians 2:1-11 and ask Holy Spirit to reveal to you how he wants you to choose the posture of Jesus with those individuals.*

Commit to serving each of those 3-4 circles in the ways you've identified. Share this with someone so they can pray for you as you do so.

## PERSONAL & INTIMATE CIRCLE REFLECTION #5

Read\* **Romans 12**. Take time to read this passage once through in one sitting. Re-read it as you walk through the following questions as part of personal and group interaction:

What circles of relationship do you see in this passage?

What do you think it looks like to “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God”?

How is our treatment and pursuit of others in our circles of influence related to our worship of God?

What do you think it means that we belong to one another?

Where are you positioned to “overcome evil with good”?

**NOTES \_ QUESTIONS \_ MUSINGS \_ DRAWINGS**

## PERSONAL & INTIMATE CIRCLE REFLECTION #6

Read\* **Romans 13**. *Take time to read this passage once through in one sitting. Re-read it as you walk through the following questions as part of personal and group interaction:*

What circles of relationship do you see in this passage?

This passage comes out of a conversation of love (in Romans 12). What do **love** and **submission to authority** have to do with each other?

What does the sense of urgency in this passage reveal about our need to live well in circles of influence?

Reread the passage (including Romans 12 if you desire), then go for a walk, run, or other physical activity outside. As you go, pray for the circles of influence in your life, using these scriptures as a backdrop for your prayer. Be attentive to how Holy Spirit may reveal himself as you engage in kinetic activity.

**NOTES \_ QUESTIONS \_ MUSINGS \_ DRAWINGS**

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION AND PRACTICE #3

Watch & participate in the weekend service together.

What in the service most stirred your heart?

Why do you think that is?

What are some examples of circles of influence from your life?

What from the scriptures of the last week —Romans 11 & 12, Philippians 2:1-11— has spoken most strongly to you?

How have you experienced God filling you up and pouring you out in the last week?

Where are you prompted to be more aware and active in this filled up-poured out-filled up-poured out circle?

Read **Galatians 5:13-26** — *consider using a scripture translation different than what you normally choose.*

- What circles of relationship and influence are seen here?
- How are **freedom** and **servng one another** related?
- This scripture seems to indicate we are either bearing the fruit of life or the evidence of death.
  - What are the implications of this for us personally?
  - What are the implications of this in our circles (of intimacy and of influence)?

What are examples of needs around you that your circles of influence may be able to meet, allowing Jesus to be the hero of that story?

As an act of closing, consider using the prayer on the following page together.



**Lord Jesus Christ,  
you taught us to love our neighbor,  
and to care for those in need  
as if we were caring for you.  
In this time of anxiety, give us strength  
to comfort the fearful, to tend the sick  
and to assure the isolated  
of our love, and your love,  
for your name's sake.**

**Amen.**

~ The Church of England



## CONVERSATION 4: HEALTHY CIRCLES

# HEALING

Moving from fracturing to wholeness.

~ Isaiah 61:1-2, Ezekiel 37:1-14 ~

**W**e are all broken, and we bring that brokenness with us into all of our circles. We have inherited—and deepened—our fractured connection with God, within ourselves, and in relationship with others. Along the way, we each seek solutions and salves for the pain of this brokenness but any relief found, we soon discover, is temporary at best and even more destructive at worst.

But Jesus has provided a healing for us we could never find on our own. He is the restorer of what is lost, the healer of what is broken. In fact, the first thing Jesus declares about himself can be found in this reading from the prophet Isaiah<sup>6</sup>:

### Isaiah 61:1-2

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn.*

In many ways, the invitation of Jesus is to receive and offer the gift of *wholeness*. And when—by Holy Spirit—we begin living the life we were always meant to lead, we not only begin to experience the reality of Heaven **here and now**, we reveal Heaven to those around us. This is the new and living way of Jesus; it is what we were made for in each of our circles of life.

Our first step is to receive this gift, and then to continue to live in it<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> See Luke 4:16-21

<sup>7</sup> For how to start or rekindle a relationship with Jesus, see page 43.

## INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE & REFLECTION #4

Breathe.

Ask Holy Spirit to reveal truth in these moments.

Read the Isaiah 61 passage found on the previous page **out loud**.

Breathe.

Sit upright in a chair with your hands in a receptive posture.

Close your eyes and picture Jesus on the day he read the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue. Now, place yourself there in the room with him; visualize what it would be like for you to be the only one in that space with him.

Imagine Jesus speaking the words you just read directly to and over you. Sit in that frame of mind and receptive posture, soaking in what has been spoken.

After some time, use the following questions to process your experience:

What part of the Isaiah passage resonated most within you?  
Where might this reveal that Jesus desires to bring healing and wholeness to you?

What emotions surfaced as you participated in this exercise?  
What is God saying through your feelings?

## **PERSONAL & INTIMATE CIRCLE REFLECTION #7**

**Participate in this personal practice called *THE EXAMEN* alone.**

*Note: This practice was designed as a daily rhythm. Consider taking time daily or weekly to pray the Examen as a means of walking in greater healing.*

Find a quiet space where you can reflect. Ask Holy Spirit to speak to you in these moments. Take your time.

### **ASK GOD FOR LIGHT**

Ask God to reveal what you should recall about your day/week. How does God see your day/week? How does God—who knows you deeply and loves you as one he created—see you?

### **GIVE THANKS**

List events of the day/week—moments of grace, expressions of goodness, and other things you are grateful for. (There are times where this is the most difficult step; don't get discouraged or rush past it. If you are struggling with what you have to be thankful for, **ask God for light.**)

### **REVIEW THE DAY**

Ask Holy Spirit to guide you in carefully reflecting on the events of the day/week. What moments come to mind that need a deeper dive of reflection? Where did you sense God's divine presence? Where did you step away from God's good, pleasing, and perfect will? **Pay attention to your emotions**—what is God saying through your feelings? How should you act in response?

### **FACE YOUR SHORTCOMINGS**

Acknowledge what is wrong in your life. Identify places that are broken or painful; confess what is wrong in you.

### **LOOK FORWARD**

Ask Holy Spirit to show you where you need him in the coming day(s). Ask him to prepare your heart and mind for what's ahead in the next day, week, and month. Pray that he helps you to be aware of and sensitive to his presence, power, and activity.

***Interact with someone in your Circle of Intimacy—preferably one who has also used this practice—about your experience:***

What was energizing for you in praying The Examen?

What did you find particularly difficult?

What possible places of fracturing in your life and relationships were revealed in this exercise?

Where did you experience indications of healing?

***NOTES \_ QUESTIONS \_ MUSINGS \_ DRAWINGS***

## PERSONAL & INTIMATE CIRCLE REFLECTION #8

Read\* **Ezekiel 37:1-14**. *Take time to read this passage once through in one sitting. Re-read it as you walk through the following questions as part of personal and group interaction:*

This passage happens in the context of God's promise of restoration to a lost and broken people—a promise being fulfilled in Jesus.

What are the implications of this in the spaces that we feel are dead—broken beyond the hope of restoration...

... in our relationship with God, including the sins and mistakes of our past?

... in our own mind, body, and spirit?

... in our relationships with others?

What one space of fracturing or brokenness in your life—whether in your past or present—kept coming to mind as you read this passage?

What do you think healing in that broken place might look like?

What is the first step toward healing there?

**NOTES \_ QUESTIONS \_ MUSINGS \_ DRAWINGS**

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION AND PRACTICE #4

Watch & participate in the weekend service together.

As you reflect back on our Life in Circles journey, what are you celebrating? Where have you experienced God at work in you, in your closer-in circles, in the Heritage family?

What are elements of our journey you're continuing to process?

What from the scriptures (Isaiah 61:1-2, Luke 4:16-21, Ezekiel 7:1-14) and exercises (visualizing Jesus' reading of Isaiah, praying the Examen) of the last week has spoken most strongly to you?

Where did you encounter God's healing activity in your life this week?

Where are you still waiting for healing?

What is one next step you've identified toward healing?

Read **James 5:13-16**.

- What does this passage reveal about healthy circles of relationship in our lives?
- Why do you think the writer links prayer, confession, and healing together in connected relationship?
- What does this show us about our need for healthy, safe circles of relationship?

Using this Scripture as a guide, pray for each other and the identified spaces/next steps for healing.

As an act of closing, pray the Lord's Prayer on the following page together.



**Our Father in Heaven,  
hallowed be Your name.**

**Your Kingdom come,  
Your will be done,  
On Earth as it is in Heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory are  
Yours now and forever.**

**Amen.**



# THE WAY FORWARD

## Expanding & Releasing Our Circles

If ever there was a time for the people of Jesus to love, create, and serve with fresh imagination, **these are the days.**

The unprecedented challenges we are all facing bring with them unequalled opportunity as we remain faithful to the new and living way of Jesus. After all, we know it is only Jesus and his people who can bring the fullness of flourishing our world is crying out for.

By choosing Authentic Love and Faithful Risk among our other values<sup>8</sup>, rooted in an intense pursuit of Jesus, we believe Heritage will be used by God to bring this flourishing in our region as never before. The circles of intimacy, incarnation, and influence we have been given will radiate love, justice, reconciliation, and purpose as we entrust them to Jesus for his pleasure and glory.

The temptation for all of us will be to return to what *was*, and to try to hold onto what *is*. The invitation of Jesus, however, is for us to press *onward* into his presence and activity which is **always advancing**. The Apostle Paul put it this way:

### Philippians 3:12b-14

*I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

For the Heritage family, expanding and releasing our circles of relationship will mean walking down paths we have never walked

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<sup>8</sup> See page 48 for a list of all our core values.

before—ministering in new environments and new paradigms. We are people of courage—not afraid or anxious, but energized by all of this. In the end, we know It is not by accident that we find ourselves living in these days—God has known all along that we would be alive here and now, as part of the grand story he is writing.

Being counted among those who are straining toward what is ahead will require us to live with an open-handedness—laying aside personal desire and choosing to chase after greater things. We will establish new circles and invite others, made in the image of God, into growing circles. We will pray for, encourage, and send as we **care** for each other, **serve** together, and **equip** one another, all as we are being made into the likeness of Christ.

Let us Journey on toward the goal together, with full confidence **the best is yet to come.**



Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy;

O Divine Master,  
Grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console;  
To be understood as to understand;  
To be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen.

~ The Prayer of St. Francis



# **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

# STARTING A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

The new and living way of Jesus is where we find relationship with God and the deeper healing we all long for. Jesus opened up this way for us by his life, death, and resurrection. We need only to receive this gift:

- **Admit** that you, like everyone, need the life and healing of Jesus.
- **Ask** God to forgive your sins by the sacrifice of Jesus.
- **Receive** new life from God by trusting Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

**You can do that right now by simply talking to God in a prayer like this:**

*Dear Lord Jesus,  
I know I am a sinner and I ask for your forgiveness.  
I believe you died for my sins and rose from the dead.  
Today, I receive you as my Savior,  
and I put my faith in you as my Lord.  
Help me to live for you all the days of my life.  
In your name, amen.*

**If you just prayed that prayer or one like it, text the word **FAITH** to **309-250-2007** to receive additional information about next steps in following Jesus.**

# BIBLE READING PLANS

One of the best ways to develop your circle of intimacy with God is to spend time with him in scripture; we encourage you to do so alone with him and with a circle of other close friends. The following are some great tools to help you do that:

## **bible.com and the Bible app**

Multiple translations of the Bible—we recommend something you find readable and enjoyable—including several with the option to listen to the text make this a great free resource. Download the Bible app (search for “Bible” by Life.Church in your app store) for ready access to scripture and reading plans on your smartphone or tablet.

## **Suggested reading plans:**

**Scary Close** - Reflections for Finding True Intimacy (7 sessions)  
<https://my.bible.com/reading-plans/1675>

**Who I Am in Christ** (10 sessions)  
<https://my.bible.com/reading-plans/17170>

**Good News:** Encouragement for a World in Crisis (7 sessions)  
<https://my.bible.com/reading-plans/19374>

**Release Healing** (5 sessions with audio prayers and meditations)  
<https://my.bible.com/reading-plans/1717>

**Be the Bridge** - Pursuing God’s Heart for Racial Reconciliation (5 sessions) <https://my.bible.com/reading-plans/16910>

If you need a paper copy of the Bible, stop by the BridgePointe 485 lobby (1 Montgomery Dr, Moline, IL 61265) to receive one for free.

# CHRISTIAN PRACTICES & DISCIPLINES<sup>9</sup>:

## Individual

**Fasting** - Intentionally going without food or some other significant component of our lives to create space for focused pursuit of God, connecting with him differently.

**Meditation** - Reading or listening to Scripture and focusing on it to hear God's word for the individual.

**Prayer** - Conversing with God.

**Secrecy** - Being generous or doing good works without seeking or receiving credit.

(Personal) **Study** - Reading Scripture & discerning its application for life.

**Silence & Solitude** - These two practices are often combined. Silence is when we choose to be quiet and to sit in the quiet so we are able to truly *hear and listen* as God or others speak. Solitude is the practice of being away from others to give God our undivided attention.

## Communal

**Baptism** - The first step of obedience Jesus calls us to, water Baptism is the public declaration of faith in Jesus, witnessed by the gathered church. Going under the water signifies death to the old way of living; coming out of the water signifies resurrection into new life in Christ.

**Communion** - Partaking of bread and cup together as a means of connecting profoundly with God and one another as the death of Jesus is remembered and his return is anticipated.

**Confession** - Shared declaration of who God is as well as the acknowledgement of sin for the sake of restoration.

**Corporate Worship** - Gathering as the church for equipping, serving, and caring, often in moments of teaching, singing, prayer, call-and-response, and sacrament.

**Sabbath** - Regularly and intentionally identifying a day of rest whereby we step away from our ordinary work to enjoy the presence and pleasure of God in community with others.

**Testimony** - Knowing God's story and sharing ours. By doing this we bear witness to God's faithful activity in our lives.

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<sup>9</sup> Not an exhaustive list.

## **QUESTIONS FOR ONGOING REFLECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY:**

What am I trusting God with?

What are areas of growth in my life?

What are obstacles for growth in my life?

Where is God at work in and around me?

Where might I have missed God's presence and activity?

How am I living as an agent of reconciliation?

How am I becoming more like Christ?

How have others encountered Christ in me?

Who is holding me accountable?

Who am I investing in spiritually?

What new rhythms of mind-body-spirit health do I need to explore or implement?

## PREPARING FOR COMMUNION:

Throughout our Life in Circles journey, there may be opportunity to gather in small groups for Communion.

To prepare your heart and mind, we recommend the following—

**Reflect on these scriptures:**

### **1 Corinthians 11:23-29**

*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." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.*

Ask God to **examine** your heart; **confess** and **repent** where necessary. Use the following confession as a guide, if helpful:

*Merciful God,  
I confess that I have not loved you with my whole heart.  
I have failed to be obedient.  
I have not done your will,  
I have broken your law,  
I have rebelled against your love,  
I have not loved my neighbors,  
and I have not heard the cry of the needy.  
Forgive me, I pray.  
Free me for joyful obedience,  
through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.*

## HERITAGE VALUES

We exist to connect people to **God**,  
to **each other**,  
and to their **purpose**.

We do this through:

Authentic **Love**

Intense **Spirituality**

Radical **Generosity**

Faithful **Risk**

Hopeful **Partnership**

Passionate **Mission**

# KEY DATES<sup>10</sup>

## Through August 30

Church online and COZI TV

heritageqc.com - Saturdays @ 5pm, Sundays @ 9 & 11am

COZI-TV (channel 6.3, Mediacom 106) - Sundays @ 10am

**June 10** - 6:30pm

Outdoor Prayer & Worship

Bettendorf Campus

**June 14** - 9am - 2pm

Communion

Rock Island and Bettendorf campus

(By Reservation)

**June 17** - 6:30pm

Outdoor Prayer & Worship

Rock Island Campus

**June 24** - 6:30pm

Outdoor Prayer & Worship

BridgePointe 485

**June 28 & July 5** - 8am, 9:30am, & 11am

In-space corporate gathering

Rock Island & Bettendorf Campuses

(By Reservation)

**July 12** - Time TBD

River Baptism — One Church Expression

Backwater Gamblers Site

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<sup>10</sup> These dates are subject change.

# SERMON NOTES

# SERMON NOTES

# SERMON NOTES



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