



*Conversations around discipleship and call*

**5 Cups of Coffee Small Group Study**  
**Courtesy of Jennifer Chirillo from Community UMC (Columbia)**

**Week 1 (1<sup>st</sup> Cup): The God Conversation**

**Opening:** God, please be with us this week. Surround us with a community of love and forgiveness so that we may grow together. Guide us through our spiritual journey so we may fully engage in the calling you have for each one of us. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

What is 5 Cups of Coffee? It's a tool and vehicle, a way to begin crucial conversations helping people step into God's calling in their life (e.g., Ministry in local church. "Hey I see in you....") How can we guide them to God's voice and answer that. If we engage on this more intentionally we will see people growing in faith and participation. [www.moumethodist.org/5cups](http://www.moumethodist.org/5cups)

**Song of the Day:** We Believe by the Newsboys:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjZ01FcK0yk>

**Quote of the Day:** "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made know through Jesus Christ."  
—Blaise Pascal

**Video of the Day:** Do you believe in God? Social experiment video (**Language may not be appropriate for all audiences.**) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74ZL2KFMhVQ>

There are many differences in the Christian denominations however the most incredible events we agree on. Historically the Nicene Creed and the Apostles Creed have been generally accepted lists of agreed upon Christian doctrine, the creeds basically confirm:

1. Existence of God
2. God created the world
3. Jesus is God's son
4. Jesus was born of a woman and conceived by the Holy Spirit
5. He died but rose on the third day
6. He ascended to heaven
7. He will come again one day
8. God forgives our sins

Personal story: Story of how we found this church

### **Exodus 3:1-15 (NLT): Moses and the Burning Bush**

3 One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro,<sup>[a]</sup> the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai,<sup>[b]</sup> the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. <sup>3</sup> "This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it."

<sup>4</sup> When the LORD saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

"Here I am!" Moses replied.

<sup>5</sup> "Do not come any closer," the LORD warned. "Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. <sup>6</sup> I am the God of your father<sup>[c]</sup>—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God.

<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD told him, "I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. <sup>8</sup> So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live. <sup>9</sup> Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. <sup>10</sup> Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt."

<sup>11</sup> But Moses protested to God, "Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?"

<sup>12</sup> God answered, "I will be with you. And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God at this very mountain."

<sup>13</sup> But Moses protested, "If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' they will ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what should I tell them?"

<sup>14</sup> God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM.<sup>[d]</sup> Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you." <sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: Yahweh,<sup>[e]</sup> the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.

This is my eternal name,  
my name to remember for all generations.

### **Group Conversation**

1. Describe God in one word.
2. What do you believe/know/hope about God?
3. How do you experience God in your life today and/or in the past?
4. Story of the bags for homeless
5. How does belief in God shape how you understand yourself and others?
6. How does your knowledge about God motivate you to action in the world?
7. In Moses' story, God speaks through a burning bush. What does God's voice sound like to you?

8. How does it make you feel when you hear someone say they don't believe in God? Does the feeling change when it is someone close to you?

### **Week 2 (2<sup>nd</sup> Cup): The Gift Conversation**

**Opening:** We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging; let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully (Romans 12:6-8).

Lord, which gifts have You given me? I do not want to waste a drop of my life by being blind to my potential in You. I seek a deeper understanding of Your Word. I want to comprehend how You manifest Yourself through spiritual gifts in Your children. I long to explore the lives of men and women in Scripture who followed You and who actively lived out their gifts. According to the grace given me, I can live a fruitful life. I can share the amazing bounty of Your goodness with others. Help me to pay close attention to the work You are doing in my own heart. I want to see, understand, and cultivate the gifts that come from You. Amen.

**Song of the Day:** He Knows my Name by Francesca Batestelli

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFVZTi2L-VQ>

**Quote of the Day:** "Your talent is God's gift to you. What you do with it is your gift back to God."  
—Leo Buscaglia

**Video of the Day:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6QgkYhEafM>

As a Christian I have always heard about finding my purpose and I think that listening and following your spiritual gifts allow us to do that more efficiently.

These are the list of spiritual gifts, raise your hand if you have the one I read aloud.

List: Mercy, Leadership, Giving, Prophecy (prediction), Helps/serving, exhortation (i.e., the act or process of making a strong urging or appeal), teaching, evangelism (i.e., spread of Christian gospel), wisdom, knowledge, shepherding, faith, discernment (i.e., perception in the absence of judgment with a view to obtaining spiritual direction and understanding), administration, encouragement, intercession (i.e., action of intervening on behalf of another through prayer) and hospitality.

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/exploring-your-spiritual-gifts>

### **1 Corinthians 12 (NIV): Concerning Spiritual Gifts**

12 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.

<sup>2</sup> You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. <sup>3</sup> Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>4</sup> There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. <sup>5</sup> There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

<sup>7</sup> Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. <sup>8</sup> To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,<sup>[a]</sup> and to still another the interpretation of tongues.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>11</sup> All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

### Unity and Diversity in the Body

<sup>12</sup> Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by<sup>[c]</sup> one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. <sup>14</sup> Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

<sup>15</sup> Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup> But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. <sup>19</sup> If they were all one part, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

<sup>21</sup> The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup> and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, <sup>24</sup> while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, <sup>25</sup> so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. <sup>26</sup> If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

<sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. <sup>28</sup> And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup> Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? <sup>30</sup> Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues<sup>[d]</sup>? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup> Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

### Group Conversation

1. Why should we learn about our spiritual gifts? God stresses the importance, part of God’s design to grow the church, meeting the needs of others through our service with the use of spiritual gifts, allow God to work through us.
2. Have you had a problem come up and immediately you thought of someone that would be perfect for the situation?
3. Do you have a sense of your spiritual gifts and natural talents? What are they?
4. Who has affirmed these gifts and talents in you?
5. How have you used these gifts and talents to benefit yourself?
6. How have you used these gifts and talents to benefit others?
7. What do you want to do with your gifts and talents?

### **Week 3 (3<sup>rd</sup> Cup): The Passion Conversation**

**Opening:** Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy (Proverbs 31:8-9).

Lord, I pray for the many people who struggle to make ends meet: the families who face a life of shelters and job-searching, the mothers who care for their children and sacrifice their own health and well-being. Lord, pour out Your mercy on Your children living in poverty and fear of the future. Help me reach out to ease the burden of another person. Am I looking closely at those people within my very reach? Who needs assistance? When I have so much, let me multiply the blessings You give to me by extending them to other people. Your plan is not for a few to prosper. Allow me the willingness to be a steward of kindness and wealth. It is all about speaking up and showing up for Your children in need. Amen.

**Song of the Day:** “Do Something” by Matthew West

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b\\_RjndG0IX8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_RjndG0IX8)

**Quote of the Day:** “You may never know what results come of your action, but if you do nothing there will be no results.”  
—Mahatma Gandhi

**Video of the Day:** <https://youarewhollyloved.com/category/spiritual-passion/>

### **Luke 18:1-8 (MSG): The Story of the Persistent Widow**

18 1-3 Jesus told them a story showing that it was necessary for them to pray consistently and never quit. He said, “There was once a judge in some city who never gave God a thought and cared nothing for people. A widow in that city kept after him: ‘My rights are being violated. Protect me!’

4-5 “He never gave her the time of day. But after this went on and on he said to himself, ‘I care nothing what God thinks, even less what people think. But because this widow won’t quit badgering me, I’d better do something and see that she gets justice—otherwise I’m going to end up beaten black-and-blue by her pounding.’”

6-8 Then the Master said, “Do you hear what that judge, corrupt as he is, is saying? So what makes you think God won’t step in and work justice for his chosen people, who continue to cry out for help? Won’t he stick up for them? I assure you, he will. He will not drag his feet. But how much of that kind of persistent faith will the Son of Man find on the earth when he returns?”

### **Group Conversation**

1. We have all had those times when we feel like we are going through the motions and our spiritual journey may be stale. Did you identify that quickly? How did you get out of it? What set your sole back on fire?
2. What is something that you do well and enjoy doing?
3. What are some things that really fire you up or bother you? (e.g., social justice issues: STDs, Anti-social behavior, poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, prostitution, economic deprivation, unemployment, human trafficking).

4. What are somethings that you could talk about/write about/think about/do for long periods of time and never get bored?
5. Has anyone ever commended you for your enthusiasm about something? What was it?
6. If you could give a million dollars to someone/something, what would it be? Why? What would you want them to do with the money? (e.g., <https://unshackled.org/>)

### **Week 3 Continued (3<sup>1/2</sup> Cups): The Passion Conversation**

**Song of the Day:** Africa by Angel City Chorale, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-c9-poC5HGw>

Seasons of spiritual darkness are common, but it often looks and feels different for everyone:

1. Your daily fear of future tragedy erodes your affection to God.
2. Your experience in worship is empty and distracted.
3. You feel unimpressed, aloof to the things of God.
4. Patterns of repentance crumble and fade.
5. The preached word seems boring.
6. Hymns prompt only an irregular cadence of exhausted sighs
7. Spiritual advice trips over its own triteness on its way to cynical ears.
8. Christian articles online induce more guilt than help.
9. Prayers feel distant and unreceived.

#### **How to get out of a spiritual rut:**

1. **Be honest about your heart.** I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction; out of the miry bog” Psalm 40:1-2. Let’s be honest about what we feel toward God—our tangled thoughts, our slogging feet, our raw experiences, our dulling passions, our disappointed expectations.  
*Sharing: Tell me of a time you have been disappointed and wanted something to go a different way. Looking back now if it went the way you wanted it to do you believe your life would have changed either for the better or worse?*
2. **Shed an old skin.** God may have a design for you that is even better than the life you have been living. A time of darkness may be His signal that you have reached the end of one stage in your life. Be flexible enough to turn over a new page and start the next chapter. That doesn’t mean that the in between stage isn’t frustrating and the next chapter might be more commitment than you wanted. Take those frustrations to your prayer life, complain to this group that is what we are here for. You don’t have to start a new chapter alone. When I have these instances I have a simple but intentional morning prayer “God, please show me what you have for me to practice today.” Warning: You may receive answers that make you uncomfortable, take you out of your element.
3. **See the good, expect the best.** Your mind is a powerful tool. Don’t waste it brooding over what you don’t have, aren’t experiencing, didn’t receive. That kind of negative thinking will only leave you feeling more discouraged, depressed and dissatisfied. A healthier approach is to see the good and expect the best.  
Apply to your experience the promise of God spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: “‘I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jer 29:11).

4. **Always choose faith over understanding.** Sometimes, when an urgent prayer is not answered, darkness descends. If that is the case, always choose faith over understanding. Christian author Catherine Marshall tells of a time when she emerged from six months of spiritual darkness following the death of her second granddaughter, for whom she had prayed that God would heal.

In spite of her fervent prayers, the infant died, plunging Mrs. Marshall into a spiritual black hole. After great depression and much soul searching, insight came. “When life hands up situations we cannot understand, we have one of two choices,” she wrote. “We can wallow in misery, separated from God. Or we can tell Him, ‘I need you and your presence in my life more than I need understanding. I choose you, Lord. I trust you to give me understanding and an answer to all my Why’s — only if and when you choose.’”

5. **Get out of your own head.** To a certain extent your current spiritual emotions may be the circumstances that you’ve been given- the cards you’ve been dealt-being faithful doesn’t mean you won’t have unrest or grief. Let those feelings lead you into being more comfortable in your own skin, and as an extension a deeper more real relationship with the God who made you and gave you this story. Turn off your phone, go to an open field, kick off your shoes, sit under a shade tree. Don’t fear boredom, embrace it, use the time to listen. You are fortunate to know and believe openly in your father as some in other countries don’t have that luxury. Find a grateful place. I don’t know if anyone has seen the movie war room where she had a praying space and this where she connected with God. Find something like that for yourself.
6. **Let your gifts and talents lead you.** During a dark time it is difficult to know what to do or which direction to move. Let your God-given gifts and talents provide a cue. Father John Catoir explains: “If you have a beautiful voice, then use it some way for God’s glory, and for your happiness. If you are a good teacher, than presume that God wants you to teach. Put your gifts at the service of others.”
7. **Look for the lesson in the darkness.** The saints and mystics of past ages were profoundly aware that some of the most powerful spiritual lessons are gleaned during times of darkness and dryness. Observe, study and analyze your condition, thus gleaned new insights.
8. **Use the three healing words.** “I forgive you” are three of the most powerful words a person can speak. Ask yourself if your current spiritual situation is connected to feelings of anger, resentment and hostility over someone who has hurt you. If that is the case, consider extending forgiveness.
9. One good way to do that is by writing a letter to the person who hurt you. Without blame, judgment, hostility or anger, spell out the truth of what happened as you experienced it. Say “I forgive you.” Only mail it if you feel there is a reasonable chance that good would come from the recipient’s reading your words. If the person who caused your pain is deceased or incapable of hearing you, burn the letter. As you watch it become consumed by flames, let your anger symbolically go up with the smoke.

How many of you feel like you need to do this? Would anyone like to share? (e.g., Story of father with bipolar disorder, alcoholic, drug addict. Many times he forgot to pick me up, when he did he put me in danger by his rapid highs and lows. I remember things that he did as early as age 2 multiple nights of staying up all night due to him thinking someone was

following us motorcycle gang, drug dealer, mafia. That wasn't even the biggest issue, the largest was when Aspen was born he was in the mental institution and decided to leave and come to my home. With a new born in my house he rang the doorbell at 1am, he was manic when I answered the door. For my newborns safety I shut and locked the door behind me and told him that he needed to find a place to stay for the night and I could help with that, he didn't take that as an answer as he wanted to stay in my house. I told him no which was not well received and said his two options were to go back to Illinois – home was 5 hours away or to go sleep somewhere other than here. He stayed in his car and called me at 5 am. By this time I was awake for the day and took him to breakfast. I never forgave him for my previous experiences as a child and I have not forgiven him for putting me in that position with Aspen. Just writing this helped, but I still feel guilty to not really be able to fully forgive at this point.)

10. **Be an angel.** “Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve?” declares the writer of Hebrews (1:14). Nothing expands the capacities of the soul as does reaching out and helping another person. Be the individual who stands up for justice when an unjust action or word is committed. When others act cowardly, be the one who responds with courage and conviction. Where there is cruelty and unfairness, be sure to soften those blows with kindness and understanding.

St. Paul urged Christians: “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also the interests of others” (Phil 2:4). By being God’s angel you not only help others, but also help yourself feel better about your life.

11. **Do the right thing.** Many people — including those in highly paid positions and lucrative careers — are bored, frustrated and unfulfilled by their work. Whether or not you are employed, take time for a spiritual career assessment. Ask yourself: What do I love to do? What am I good at? What activities bring me the greatest spiritual and emotional pleasure? How can I use what I like to do to make a living and a contribution to the world?
12. **Utter blessings.** Even though you may be experiencing darkness, pray that all those with whom you have contact will experience God’s blessings of peace, power, wisdom, love, joy, prosperity and health.

Privately pray these prayers for your spouse, children, friends, neighbors, employer, employees and even strangers. “Blessings keep our awareness of life’s holy potential ever present. They awaken us to our own lives. . .with each blessing uttered, we extend the boundaries of the sacred and actualize our love of life,” writes Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, author of *The Book of Words: Talking Spiritual Life, Living Spiritual Talk*.

(e.g., I know you know one of these people that do this so well. My grandmother is one of those people. She says her prayers like clock work and has her long list that she completes every morning and night. She has been on oxygen for 10 years and is now 90 years old, she says I have no idea why God is keeping me here, but I keep praying because there is a reason why he keeps having me rise every day.)

13. **Have a listening ear.** When you pray, remain still and silent in God’s presence. Maintain a listening ear. God is a friend of silence. It is in solitude and silence that His will is most clearly determined. Be guided by this prayer offered by Dr. Howard Thurman:

“Give me the listening ear. I seek this day the ear that will not shrink from the word that corrects and admonishes — the word that holds up before me the image of myself that causes me to pause and reconsider — the word that challenges me to deeper consecration and higher resolve.”

I especially challenge everyone to have a listening ear after each of our sessions, if you feel a tap on your shoulder from God to go back up to one of our group members in the welcome center do it, they may have something on their mind that they need help with.

14. **Trust God even if you feel lost.** No matter how you feel, continue trusting God for guidance and direction, perseverance and strength. God is not a cold, distant parent. God likes you. He smiles when you come around, he is not mad. God is proud of you because you are his. When you make something art, music a child you are proud of it, a piece of you is woven into it. “That is my kid. Yeah, they screw up, but I am proud of them.” Run to him like he is coming home from work, yell father as you jump in his arms.

Some of the things I brought up were actionable items however remember to pace yourself, you don't need to do all of them right away. Chose one thing that you would like to try, start small. We are in this for the long hall. Take a prayer walk once per week, add 5 minutes of prayer a day, sit and ponder a verse in the Bible. If you climb a mountain with great speed you will take frequent breaks and be winded frequently, when you get to the top and the oxygen is at a lower percentage you could get sick. Stay well, go at a slow pace, find a pace you can live with. Don't burn yourself out. What are you going to choose to do?

#### **Week 4 (4<sup>th</sup> Cup): The Spiritual Growth Conversation**

**Opening:** I will build you up again and you will be rebuilt, O Virgin Israel. Again you will take up your tambourines and go out to dance with the joyful (Jeremiah 31:4).

God, you are rebuilding me right now. I feel the growing pains. I see the unnecessary pieces of my life fall away. I watch as my new life emerges from the dust of construction. It is hard to be carved into a new being, Lord. Be gentle with me as You mold me into a creation that serves You even better. There will be a day in the near future when I will dance. Music will flow through my life and give me a reason to shout with great happiness. God, please keep working on me. Your vision for my life is worth the wait. Amen.

**Song of the Day:** All my Hope by Crowder <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=isxchQqj0MI>

**Quote of the Day:** “All that is gold does not glitter, Not all those who wander are lost; The old that is strong does not wither, **Deep roots are not reached by the frost.**” —J.R.R. Tolkien

When we look at the things we are trying to derive joy, security, and value from, it shows us the direction of our roots. **Are we drawing “sap” from Christ, or is our security in people, possessions, position, and other things?**

**Video of the Day:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kByl1ZWD3pU&t=217s>

## **Romans 12:1-2: A Living Sacrifice**

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

### **Group Conversation:**

In the Wesleyan tradition, we speak of “acts of piety” (e.g., bible study, prayer, fasting, worship, sharing your faith, sacraments, accountability) as ways to grow in our relationship with God. What acts of piety do you practice?

If someone else was objectively examining your life, **where would they see the most growth over the last year or two?**

1. What acts of piety would you like to grow in?
2. What's one sin pattern that through the Spirit you would like to gain control over?
3. What would it look like for you to connect with God daily? How do you make that happen? How would you spend that time?
4. Who in your life could you commit to staying accountable with in spiritual practices?
5. What do you want from God in your spiritual life?
6. What does offering your life as a “living sacrifice” mean?

### **Week 4 Continued (4<sup>1/2</sup> Cups):Accountability**

**Opening:** Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. <sup>4</sup> Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, <sup>5</sup> for each one should carry their own load (Galatians 6:1-5).

**Song of the Day:** Come as You Are by New Respect <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tk-FWY9pSE>

**Quote of the Day:** “Accountability is not primarily others calling you out on your sin but others calling you up to the person you are in Christ.”  
—Luke Gilkerson

**Video of the Day:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhqEFUQbyq0>

I think we can all agree that accountability starts in relationships. It's giving someone permission to help you keep the commitments you made.

1. There are many different types of accountability: **An ongoing accountability group.** You may have a small group of close friends (1-4) who meet regularly for fellowship, prayer, and accountability. Ideally, this group would be a local group so that you could really enter into each other's lives, share your problems, offer support, build each other up, and encourage each other.

2. **A specific purpose, limited-time accountability partner or group.** Sometimes we need accountability for a limited time to work on one goal. Maybe you have a weight loss group where you hold each other accountable to what you ate that week. Or maybe you're married and attracted to someone other than your spouse. You might ask someone to hold you accountable to not even think about that person so you won't fall into temptation. This accountability can take place by email, phone, text, or in person. With this type of accountability, you don't necessarily have to know the person well, you just have to be committed to contacting them each day.
3. **A deep friendship where you talk about spiritual things.** In a sense, a close friendship often becomes an accountability of sorts. If you have a close friend who is willing to talk to you when he or she sees something amiss in your life, she's holding you accountable just by bringing those things up.
4. **A church fellowship.** Ideally, your church should be a place where you feel comfortable in sharing your struggles and asking for help. It should also be a place where your fellow church members aren't afraid to challenge you in a loving, grace-filled way. It's almost impossible to have this happen though unless your church is very small or unless you get involved in a small group in your church. Accountability works best in close relationships.<sup>1</sup>

Last week we talked a little bit about accountability and what it looks like for each of us. Many have their spouse as their accountability partner and no one else. As before mentioned your spouse is a great accountability partner, but we all have times that sometimes we can't be as open or honest with our spouses as we would like or maybe they are not as firm with us when we need them to be. Having at least one more accountability partner is ideal. (For example: I work out very regularly however I don't pressure my husband to work out, I do however hold my best friend, Hannah, accountable for her weight loss journey as we have an understanding with each other to motivate one another. I don't know about you but just having that person there asking me if I did something I said I was going to do, I will be far more likely to do it.)

Why do you think that accountability in church is unpopular?

1. People hate conflict: few people want to call others out
2. People like their privacy: Confessing a spiritual weakness is uncomfortable and can be too personal for some. We may lack quality friendships- you know the ones that stick with us through thick and thin, those who compel us to do what is right. Don't just give an account of sin to another, but instead think of it as receiving an account of God's grace in return from a friend.
3. Christians are not taught about biblical accountability: James 5:16 is not a suggestion but a command. "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed." Moreover, this is a command tied to our health as Christians. In this text James mentions cases where personal sin leads to a serious physical or emotional illness, calling for the elders of the church to administer healing. Before we get to that point, however, we should be in the practice of the regular "preventative medicine" of confessing our sins to each other and praying for each other.
4. Christians falsely believe accountability is only for behavior modification: Some reject the idea of accountability because they believe it is all about fear or shame-based change.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://barbraveling.com/2015/03/04/christian-accountability-partners-a-beginners-guide/>

Accountability for them is about staying away from certain taboo sins so they can avoid an awkward conversation in the future. But the Bible says there's a kind of conversation we can have that actually addresses the heart—not just outward behavior (Hebrews 3:13).

5. Some may have experienced unhelpful accountability. What if we used this excuse for anything in which we engage such as listening to sermons, praying together, taking communion? We don't just give up, instead we strive to do them better next time.
6. An individual may believe accountability in the church is only a crutch for when things get really bad.

As a person seeking accountability here are some steps to help be successful:

1. Know what you need: tied to specific outcomes
2. Make it a priority – create core values to define how we show up for each other.
3. Use a custom tracking system – daily worksheet, weekly worksheet, quarterly goal setting worksheet
4. Prioritize goal setting activities
5. Choose your group wisely.

What makes a good accountability partner in your opinion?

Has time to talk and is present, makes it a priority, listens first, non-judgmental, challenges their accountability partner, praise the small steps, plan preventative steps, tap the power of positive motivations, is also interested in growth, gives grace when you fail, and recognize when others are needed.

How do you find an accountability partner? First pray that God will reveal to you a person or small group. Start asking! Make a list of people you can ask, this maybe out of your comfort zone but it may surprise you that one of them is looking for the same thing. If you do receive a no don't take it personally not everyone wants to open themselves up to that level of vulnerability and not everyone wants to work on transformation.

Once you find your partner how do you get started?

1. Begin by setting a time for how long you plan to hold each other accountable
2. Establish how often you'll report to each other.
3. Establish what you will report each day
4. Establish the method you'll use to report
5. Start holding each other accountable
  - If your partner doesn't report one day be sure to call or email and ask how they did
  - If your partner is giving a fuzzy answer ask them for clarification
  - Always give grace
  - Remember that only God has the power to transform you so don't expect miracles from your accountability partner.
  - Don't expect your spouse to be your accountability partner just because you're married to them.

Accountability is hard work and at times it can be emotionally draining, and that is okay. We all have blind spots, we need someone else to see those and point them out.

## **Week 5 (5<sup>th</sup> Cup): The Opportunities Conversation**

**Opening:** “And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father” (Colossians 3:17).

**Song of the Day:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOBaLrItEyc>

**Quote of the Day:** He who has a why to live can bear almost any how. –Friedrich Nietzsche

**Video of the Day:** <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps>

I think some questions to help start you off:

1. What population do you want to serve? Children/homeless/single moms/elderly/animals
2. Do you want to work alone or with a group?
3. Do you want a one-time volunteer opportunity or an ongoing?
4. What skills can you offer?
5. Are you interested in learning a new skill?
6. What do you want to learn from this experience?
7. How much time are you willing to commit?
8. What is your why for volunteering? This will drive you to keep it up when it gets hard
9. Are you physically or emotionally prepared? Maybe grab a cup of coffee with someone who currently volunteers in the place you want to and talk about the good/bad/and ugly.

### **Group Conversation:**

1. Has anyone ever given you an opportunity that allowed you to use your gifts in leadership and service? Why did they offer it to you?
2. Who do you know that has your dream job/dream service opportunity? What would you say to them if they were here now?
3. What kind of opportunities are available for you in using your gifts, talents, and passion in the world in the month/months ahead?
4. What could 2 or 3 people in your community do about the social justice issue that fires you up in the 2 months ahead?
5. What are you willing to do to open up more opportunities?

## **Week 5 Continued (5<sup>1/2</sup> Cups): Fear of Failure**

**Song of the Day:** Fear is a Liar by Zach Williams  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1srs1YoTVzs>

**Quote of the Day:** “Fear has two meanings: Forget everything and run or face everything and rise. The choice, is yours.”  
–Zig Ziglar

**Video of the Day:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yD6WBe-FU7Y>

What is it that you are most afraid of? Honestly when I first thought of starting this small group I was afraid no one would show up, or worse they would and the next week they would think I did such an awful job that they wouldn't come back.

## **Exodus 17: 8-13: The Amalekites Defeated**

<sup>8</sup> The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. <sup>9</sup> Moses said to Joshua, “Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands.”

<sup>10</sup> So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. <sup>11</sup> As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. <sup>12</sup> When Moses’ hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. <sup>13</sup> So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

The Israelites had a challenging time finding food and water in the dessert as they traveled.

Facts about Rephidim:

1. Is a large wilderness area of about 1000 sq km = 386 square miles
  2. Israel spent 3 days there (day 17-19 from the Red Sea Crossing)
  3. 3 Key events occurred here: complaint of no water, Amalekites attacked, and Moses built an alter
- Did you know Rephidim means resting place? The place where the Israelites were to rest a battle breaks out.
  - How would you describe the Amalekites? They were a tribe mentioned during the time of Abraham (Genesis 14:7) They were an enemy of the Israelites. I imagine them to be an organized military group.
  - Let’s put ourselves in the shoes of a simple Israelite “soldier” – worn out, travelling for 19 days in the dessert, not the best of health, skinny. Scared? Not a skilled fighter?
  - Let’s go to the next character. Moses: How old was he at this time? Leadership and responsibility is tiring.
  - What about Aaron and Her?
  - Some take-aways from this passage all deal with spiritual gifts. Each individual has a calling, they all have active involvement from fighting, to holding the arms, God being there for them. Without one person this amazing event could have gone a different way. Victory may not have been achieved.
  - Success in life is dependent on many others, I couldn’t have a successful career just by myself. Just think of all the things that have to go right to have the life you have now:
  - What if I was born in Africa? Or born in the 1300s?

### **Group Conversation**

1. So who holds up your arms?
2. Is there someone you can name who you think will condemn you if you fail to reach a goal?
3. Who in the church comes to mind as supporting the church?
4. What has been your experience with failure in life?
5. Can fear of failure be paralyzing and motivating? Why or why not?
6. Living in fear keeps us from experiencing our God-given potential. Agree or disagree and why?
7. Was there a time when you were fearful of the future and acted out on that fear (i.e., leading to anxiety, etc.)? What happened?

8. Knowing God and His Word allows us to face our fears with faith. Why? How can you do this in practical ways?
9. Take a minute to list a few scriptures you can think on when you begin to feel fear creeping in. What are practical ways we can trust God with our future?
10. What step do you need to take this week to deal with your fears? How can this group help you in this journey?

God works with us as we give all we have. Don't be afraid of what he is calling you to do, he will provide a way for us all fulfill all of our purposes.

**Extra:** How to hear God better: <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/how-to-hear-god-better-get-your-spirit-in-shape>