

Week 1 – Embodied Faith, Flourishing Communities

COACHING VIDEO: bit.ly/FCWeek1

Introduction (13 min)

WELCOME & ICE BREAKER (10 min)

Introduce the idea of #squadgoals and how we long for deep community, though we don't always know how to get there.

Share in pairs: What kind of community do you long for? What is your picture of #squadgoals? Have you experienced this? Why or why not?

VISION + OBJECTIVE (3 min)

Throughout Scripture we see glimpses of a new kind of community being formed by God: a community that reflects God's character and lives out God's teachings, so all of creation can flourish as God intended. But what is the key to this flourishing community? It starts with embodied faith. When we live as Jesus has called us to live, empowered by the Holy Spirit to love radically and participate in God's work of restoring our broken world, we impact the world through our words and actions. God never intended for our flourishing to be just about us; we are meant to be a blessing to the world.

Pray to transition.

Biblical Reflection (20 min)

PASSAGE INTRO / BACKGROUND

- Earlier in Acts 2, Jewish believers were "filled with the Holy Spirit began to speak with other tongues" (Acts 2:4). A huge, ethnically diverse crowd gathered and heard what was being spoken in their native languages. Peter then interprets what was happening. "They" in v. 37 refers to this multiethnic crowd.
- "Promise" in v. 39 refers to Joel 2:28-29.
- Culturally, eating together was a sign of intimacy and trust.

READ ACTS 2:37-47

Observation:

- What cause and effects do you see in the text? What about patterns or repetition?
- List all the verbs that describe the actions of the community.

Interpretation:

- Why might this community have been radical at the time?
- How does this community embody faith? Where do you see flourishing?

Application & Listening Prayer:

- What inspires you personally about this community? How does this picture of community compare to your #squadgoals?
- How is God speaking to you and inviting you to respond?

Response (27 min)

ACTIVITY (17 min)

Cover Story: Your small group (or broadly the InterVarsity community) has been working towards being a flourishing community in a way that impacts those around you. Imagine years from now, your small group is on the front page of the newspaper. You can choose to do this activity individually or to break up into pairs:

- Invite everyone to use paper and pen (or markers) to draw the front page of the paper.
- What are the headlines, quotes, images, or highlights on the cover? What impact has the community had on others?
- Share your covers with one another.

Pray together over the dreams you have for your community and the impact you could have.

ACTION STEPS (5 min)

- **Collective:** Continue to get to know one another by setting up some video hangouts in pairs or as a group. You could even eat together! Some conversation ideas: what are some of your favorite family traditions? Describe a perfect Saturday. What has your experience of college been like so far compared to what you expected?
- **Personal:** Say "yes" to how God is inviting you to respond to Acts 2.

PRAYER (5 min)

Week 2 – Selfless Love

COACHING VIDEO: bit.ly/FCWeek2

Introduction (15 min)

DEBRIEF THE WEEK (5 min)

Last week, we started our experience with Flourishing Communities and committed to spending time dreaming about what our community could look like.

Share in pairs: Did you do the action step(s) from last week? What was it like? How was God at work in you and through you?

VISION + OBJECTIVE (2 min)

We love selflessly, through our words *and* our actions, because of Jesus' love for us. Embodying our faith through how we love is the foundation of the flourishing community.

ICE BREAKER (8 min)

Discuss how our culture and generation defines love. Brainstorm the different ways we use the word, how love might be expressed differently depending on the relationship, or even how the media depicts what it means to love.

Biblical Reflection (20 min)

CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

- 1 John is an ancient letter written to ancient churches after Jesus' resurrection. This new community is navigating what it means to be Christ-followers as they experience opposition from Jews who don't believe that Jesus is the Messiah.
- The author wrote the letter in hopes of helping the community flourish (1 John 1:1-3). This passage, right in the middle of the letter, digs deeply into the theme of love. John claims that love is a key marker of true Jesus-centered community.

READ 1 JOHN 3:16-24

Observation:

- What words, phrases, images, or ideas did you see repeated? Which of these might you have skipped over if it wasn't repeated?
- How does this passage define "love"?

Interpretation:

- How do the repeated words relate to each other?
- What does this text teach us about God?
- What does this text teach us about love?

Application & Listening Prayer:

- What makes it difficult for us to love each other as described in the passage?
- How is God speaking to you and inviting you to respond?

Response (35 min)

ACTIVITY (10 min activity, 15 min sharing)

Spiritual Journey Timelines: Because love is the foundation of the flourishing community, reflect on how you have personally experienced God's love in your life. Sharing our stories also helps us know one another more deeply.

- Make a list of the significant events in your life and consider times when you felt close or far from God.
- Draw a line graph visually depicting the ups and downs of your spiritual journey and mark the key moments or time periods.

Share your timelines in pairs (if time is limited) or as a whole group (if time and attention allows). Encourage everyone to practice attentive listening to honor the person sharing.

ACTION STEPS (5 min)

- **Collective:** Brainstorm communities that you connect with regularly (e.g. engineering classmates, family, housemates, etc.). As a group, spend a few minutes listening to God asking: "How can we demonstrate your selfless love this week?" Decide on an idea to pursue together.
- **Personal:** Say "yes" to how God is inviting you to respond to 1 John 3.

PRAYER (5 min)

Close in prayer together to commission us to respond to God and rely on him as we take our next steps.

Week 3 – Radical Inclusion

COACHING VIDEO: bit.ly/FComWeek3

Introduction (12 min)

DEBRIEF THE WEEK (5 min)

Last week we discussed how sacrificial love is at the foundation of the flourishing community.

Share in pairs: Did you do the action step(s) from last time? What did God show you? How was God at work in you and through you?

VISION + OBJECTIVE (1 min)

Today, we'll study idea of radical inclusion. Our community should be one of welcome, where all can be seen, heard and honored in the fullness of who God has made them to be.

ICE BREAKER (6 min)

In pairs, share experiences of being the "new" person. How did it feel? In what ways did you feel welcomed or out of place?

Pray to transition.

Biblical Reflection (25 min)

CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

- The early church grows despite persecution, and the good news of Jesus is reaching Gentiles (Acts 10-11). Jewish believers disagree on whether Gentiles should be circumcised, an outward sign of their identity as the chosen people of God (Genesis 17).

READ ACTS 15:1-35

Observation:

- What is the conflict, and what is at stake?
- What are God's actions in the passage? How does that compare/contrast to the various leaders' actions and assertions?

Interpretation:

- What stands out to you about Peter and James' comments? What key words or phrases get at the heart of their message?
- What do you learn about God's intent for his people from this passage?

Application & Listening Prayer:

- What are the unspoken expectations of your community that might be barriers for new people or those exploring faith? Consider this question from a racial/ethnic lens. What costs might non-majority students bear?
- What would help students from different communities feel welcome and included?
- How is God speaking to you and inviting you to respond?

Response (28 min)

ACTIVITY (18 min)

To truly be a welcoming community, we need to better understand one another. Cultural Values give language to principles, beliefs, or norms of a community (and are often, but not always shaped by nationality or ethnicity). Look at the list of Cultural Values (photo summary). For each value pairing, rate yourself from 0 to 5, picturing it as a spectrum with 0 being the left column value and 5 being the right column value.

Read off each set of cultural values and have participants show, "fist to five" with their hand, which values they identify with. Invite 1-2 people to share about their numbers each time.

Discussion Questions:

- What do you notice about your own values and those of the community?
- Where are potential places of conflict or tension based on varying cultural values? What are some opportunities?

ACTION STEPS (5 min)

- **Collective:** Brainstorm ways your next online gathering can be more welcoming and inclusive. Connect with the leaders of those spaces and volunteer to implement 1-2 of those ideas at the next gathering. If your community doesn't have a regular gathering, host a gathering and invite friends! Jackbox, anyone?
- **Personal:** Say "yes" to how God is inviting you to respond to Acts 15.

PRAYER (5 min)

Week 4 – Mutuality

COACHING VIDEO: bit.ly/FCWeek4

Introduction (15 min)

DEBRIEF THE WEEK (5 min)

Last week, we talked about radical inclusion and how to be intentionally welcoming to all.

Share in pairs: Debrief collective and personal action steps. What did you do in your gathering, and what impact did it have?

VISION + OBJECTIVE (1 min)

Access and equity in the flourishing community are not based on ability or influence, but in mutual self-giving, where everyone's joys as well as pains are shared. Mutuality leads to unity.

ICE BREAKER (9 min)

Discuss examples of mutuality. Where you have seen deep commitment and both joys and pains shared in a relationship or community? Consider personal examples, movies, or books.

Pray to transition.

Biblical Reflection (20 min)

PASSAGE INTRO / BACKGROUND¹

- Corinth: A prosperous port city that was culturally diverse with huge disparities between the wealthy and the poor.
- Paul's letter to the church addresses status and class issues. The gifts and skills valued in the church were based on what their culture valued. The goal was for unity through mutuality.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-28

Observation:

- What stands out about the metaphor Paul uses for the church? What is repeated?
- What should be uniting their community?

Interpretation:

- Why might this call to unity be challenging for the Corinthian church? What are the

implications, and what barriers might this community have to address or overcome?

- What is at stake? Why is this message of unity important for the church?

Application & Listening Prayer:

- What does it teach us about the difference between diversity and unity?
- How is God speaking to you and inviting you to respond?

Response (30 min)

ACTIVITY (20 min)

Fellowship Assessment²: Honest acknowledgment of disparities within the community is necessary for true mutuality. As a group, use these questions to help you assess your fellowship's dynamics:

- Who are perceived to be "insiders" vs. "outsiders" of the fellowship? Why?
- Who has decision-making power? How are decision-makers chosen?
- Who *actually* shares life together? Who shares secrets? Are you close enough to tell each other hard truths?
- What gifts or skills tend to be honored or celebrated in your community? Which go unnoticed or seem to be less valued? (Consider other angles as well, such as gender or personality types.)

Discuss: In light of the assessment, what barriers or opportunities exist for your community to truly practice mutuality? What would have to continue or change in order for there to be a culture of sharing one another's joys and pains?

ACTION STEPS (5 min)

- **Collective:** Write notes of gratitude or encouragement to those who are often overlooked or unnoticed in your fellowship.
- **Personal:** Say "yes" to how God is inviting you to respond to Luke 10.

PRAYER (5 min)

¹ IVP Bible Background Commentary – New Testament, Craig S. Keener, 787

² Questions adapted from Alexia Salvatierra's Courageous Assessment Metrics of Power Dynamics

Week 5 – Reconciliation

COACHING VIDEO: bit.ly/FCWeek5

Introduction (16 min)

DEBRIEF THE WEEK (5 min)

Last week's theme was mutuality, experiencing unity as we share one another's joys and pains.

Share in pairs: Did you do the action step(s) from last week? What was it like? How was God at work in you and through you?

VISION + OBJECTIVE (1 min)

Having been reconciled to God through Jesus, flourishing communities engage in the hard work of being in right relationship with one another. Working to right the wrongs we have done, even when costly, leads us and those around us to flourish.

ICE BREAKER (10 min)

Discuss: What situations or circumstances have seemed "beyond" reconciliation? When have you experienced or witnessed reconciliation? What made it powerful?

Pray to transition.

Biblical Reflection (25 min)

CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

- Luke's writing draws attention to the marginalized (women, Gentiles, sinners, etc.). Tax collectors were "a despised group of Jewish people who collected taxes for the government at a profit."¹
- Jesus is well into his ministry and has foretold his suffering and death. In Luke 18, Jesus tells the parable of a rich ruler who wanted eternal life but couldn't give away his wealth to the poor in order to receive it.

READ LUKE 19:1-10

Observation:

- What stands out to you in this passage?
- What were Zacchaeus' actions before and after meeting Jesus?

Interpretation:

- What is significant about Jesus publicly inviting himself to Zacchaeus' house?
- What do you notice about Zacchaeus' response to Jesus? What about Jesus' response in return (v. 9)?

Application & Listening Prayer:

- What can this story teach us about reconciliation, both to God and others?
- How is God speaking to you and inviting you to respond?

Response (24 min)

ACTIVITY (15 min)

Conflict is inevitable in communities. Being able to navigate conflict well and reconcile is what is challenging. Think of a relationship or a recent situation where you experienced (or felt) conflict. Try to break what happened down into 3 parts:

- **Situation:** What's the context of this conflict? Where were you and who else was there?
- **Behavior:** What did this person do that impacted you? Think about their actions, tone, body language, etc.
- **Impact:** How did that behavior affect you? What emotions did it incite?

Write down your responses. Take a few minutes to pray silently. Ask God to meet you in this conflict and give you insight and compassion. Is the Holy Spirit prompting you to take any next step toward reconciliation?

ACTION STEPS (5 min)

- **Collective:** What would it take for reconciliation to truly be a value of your community? How can you practice this, and what can you commit to as a group?
- **Personal:** Say "yes" to how God is inviting you to respond to Luke 19.

PRAYER (4 min)

¹ IVP Bible Background Commentary – New Testament, Craig S. Keener, 787

Week 6 – Costly Compassion

COACHING VIDEO: bit.ly/FCWeek6

Introduction (16 min)

DEBRIEF THE WEEK (5 min)

Last week, we heard a challenge to seek reconciliation in a specific relationship.

Share in pairs: Debrief collective and personal action steps. For those who made a step toward reconciliation, what happened?

VISION + OBJECTIVE (1 min)

Communities flourish when followers of Jesus practice compassion. We see and act, embodying what it means to love God and love our neighbors. We extend compassion to all, even when it is costly or risky.

ICE BREAKER (10 min)

Reflect individually, then share:

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word “compassion”?
2. Who is it easy to have compassion for? What keeps you from feeling compassion toward others?

Pray to transition.

Biblical Reflection (20 min)

PASSAGE INTRO / BACKGROUND

- Samaritans: non-Jewish and viewed as irreligious. There was deep hatred and tension between Jews and Samaritans. “Samaritan” was even considered a derogatory term to Jews.
- Road to Jericho: an infamously dangerous road, often beset by bandits.
- Expert in the law: someone who loved the Scriptures, memorized them, and tried to put them into action in his life.

READ LUKE 10:25-37

Observation:

- What stands out to you in the passage?
- How do the actions of the Samaritan compare and contrast to the actions of the priest and the Levite?

Interpretation:

- What is significant about Jesus highlighting the Samaritan as the hero of the passage?
- What might Jesus be trying to teach the expert by answering a different question?

Application & Listening Prayer:

- If our community was known for showing costly compassion to all, how would it impact others?
- What is God saying to you through Luke 10? How is he inviting you to respond?

Response (24 min)

ACTIVITY (15 min)

What would it take for action-driven, costly compassion to become second nature? Too often, we hesitate or get stuck in our heads when faced with an opportunity to show compassion. As a group, discuss where you see a need for compassion. Make a list of common situations where you could act (examples: a friend struggling in a class, someone makes a racist comment in an online group discussion, etc.).

- In pairs, choose two situations and brainstorm multiple actions you could take to show compassion.
- Name the barriers that stand in the way of doing these actions. Individually or as a group, commit to one action this week.

This activity is not about cheap charity or feeling good about ourselves. We have to practice overcoming barriers for small acts, so when faced with an opportunity to show costly and risky compassion, we say yes.

ACTION STEPS (5 min)

- **Collective:** Someone in the group may have a prompting from God about a person or group of people for whom they feel strong compassion. Join together to support them and respond as a community.
- **Personal:** Say “yes” to how God is inviting you to respond to Luke 10.

PRAYER (4 min)

Week 7 –Justice

COACHING VIDEO: bit.ly/FCWeek7

Introduction (20 min)

DEBRIEF THE WEEK (9 min)

Last week, we studied costly compassion in Luke 10, and committed to responding as a community to extend compassion.

Share together: What was that experience like for you as we joined together to show compassion? What was fun and what was challenging?

VISION + OBJECTIVE (1 min)

We have all been complicit in upholding and contributing to unjust systems and practices, but we acknowledge reality, repent, and work for justice. We are called to mirror God's heart and participate in God's mission to make all things right in our world. Pursuing justice is integral for true flourishing.

ICE BREAKER (10 min)

Watch the [Bible Project Video about Justice](#). Afterwards, discuss in pairs:

- What did you take away from the video?

Pray to transition.

Biblical Reflection (20 min)

PASSAGE INTRO / BACKGROUND

- Amos is a prophet, speaking on behalf of God, condemning the Israelites for not living rightly. This is during a time of relative peace, but their idolatry has led to neglect and exploitation of the poor.

READ AMOS 5:4-24

Observation:

- What are the charges? The invitations? The consequences? The promises?

Interpretation:

- The Israelites are religious, yet God despises their religious practices. Why?
- What does God's anger towards the Israelites' actions (and inaction) teach us about God's character and view of justice?

Application & Listening Prayer:

- How do we today practice religion yet neglect justice? What would it look like to do what God values and desires from us?
- What connections do you see between the video and this passage?
- How is God speaking to and inviting you to respond?

Response (50 min)

ACTIVITY (40 min)

Invite someone to join your video call and share about a justice issue that impacts your community (campus, city, etc.). Ask about ways that college students can address these injustices.

Guest Sharing: ~20 min

Open Q&A: 10 min (after, thank the guest and let them leave)

Debrief Questions: 10 min

- What stood out in the presentation? Did anything surprise you? Confuse you?
- Who are the major parties involved in this injustice and what are their interests?
- How is this speaker/organization addressing the injustice?
- How do their efforts and mission line up with God's desire for justice?
- What new questions did it raise?

ACTION STEPS (5 min)

- **Collective:** Brainstorm how your community can address a particular justice issue long-term. Engagement can vary: educate, protest, fundraise, advocate for policy, volunteer, mobilize others, etc. Partner with others addressing this issue; invite your friends to join you.
- **Personal:** Say "yes" to how God is inviting you to respond to Amos 5.

PRAYER (5 min)