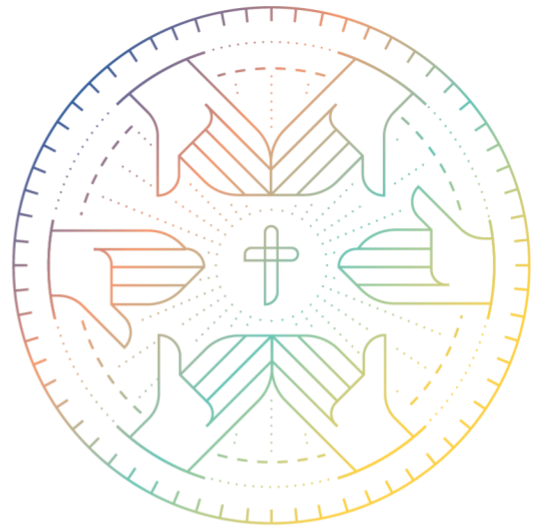


# Group Life.

WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER



## ICEBREAKER (10 MINUTES)

What was your favorite book for 2022 or one that's on your list for 2023?

OR

What was the highlight of your Christmas holiday? A particular gift? A certain experience? Time with family or friends?

## INTRODUCTION (5-10 MINUTES)

In the next four weeks, we will be considering how small, significant changes to our spiritual practices can transform us. Developing and growing healthy spiritual habits is vitally important to our walk of faith.

When you feel yourself becoming spiritually weak, what do you do to turn that feeling around? In other words, where do you find your daily spiritual strength?

**Read Isaiah 40:12-27.** In this passage, Pastor Paul highlighted the following indisputable truths for the supremacy of God: 1) God is supreme over the created world, 2) over the nations, 3) over idols, 4) over kings and rulers, 5) over the stars, 6) over all discouragement.

Which of the six gives you the greatest comfort and why?

When you consider your own life and the things you are anxious about or fearful of, what might you like to hear God say to you in finishing this sentence, "I am supreme over \_\_\_\_\_?"

## INTO THE WORD (25 MINUTES)

How does **Isa. 40:11** contrast with the Isa. 40:12-27 passage we just read? Contrast Isa. 40:11 with **Matt. 11:29-30**. What are the similarities? How do these two passages comfort or encourage you?

### HOST GUIDANCE

Both passages are full of gentle encouragement. Both emphasize the welcoming, compassionate nature of God, and the divine invitation God give us. He calls us to himself at the deepest level of our need. The Isa. 40:11 verse sounds so much like the words of Jesus, that it reinforces the sameness of the character of God in both O.T. and N.T.

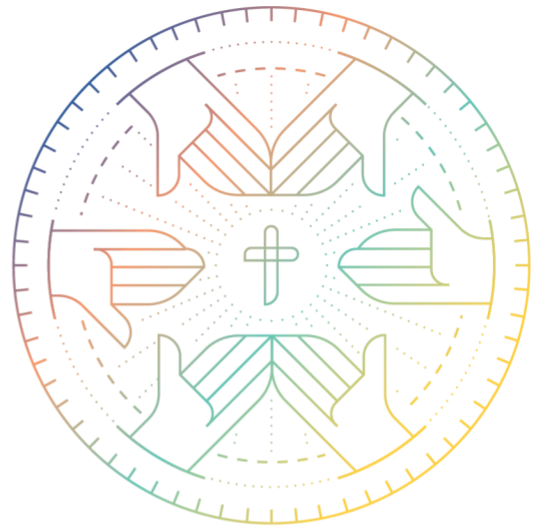
**Read Heb. 12:1-3.** What additional insight and encouragement does this passage give us regarding spiritual endurance?

### HOST GUIDANCE

We are not alone, but are surrounded by those who have endured before us. They are our cheerleaders, cheering us on! With such examples, we should be willing to throw off every sin that slows us down. Our ultimate example is

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Jesus, who endured far more than we ever could imagine. His example alone can lift our eyes off our problems and keep us looking to the heavens, to Jesus, our Lord.

**Read 2 Tim. 3:14-17.** According to this passage, what are a few of the practical benefits of knowing the Word of God?

#### HOST GUIDANCE

The Word of God sets people apart as godly examples to others. The Scriptures make us wise in the things concerning salvation and faith. It's the source of good teaching, practical guidance and righteous living. The Word of God prepares us for every good work God will Has for us.

**Read Eccl. 4:9-10.** How does this familiar passage shed additional light on the benefit of being in community?

#### HOST GUIDANCE

Friends in community are there for us to make the load lighter and the work easier. They help us up when we falter and are there to encourage us to keep going.

### APPLICATION (25 MINUTES)

How would you like to see yourself different on Dec. 31, 2023 from who you are today? Share one of your spiritual goals for the coming year with your group.

Pastor Paul cast the vision of coming to the end of this year and being able to say of yourself:

- I ran the race with endurance, because I learned how to rest in God.
- I lived wisely, because I hid God's Word in my heart.
- I grew in grace, as I spent time with God in prayer.
- I'm stronger now, because of the circle of friends around me.

Which of these do you find most inviting and why? Which one seems the most difficult and why?

In what ways can your small group help you to grow in these four ways over the next 12 months? Have each person share a thought.

### PRAYER (10 MINUTES)

*Dear Father, you have shown your faithfulness to us over the past year and we are grateful for the many blessings you have showered on us. In the coming year, make us more aware of your presence in every situation and help us*

*grow in our faith and love for one another. Lord, we ask for your wisdom in decisions we will make; we ask for endurance for the trials we will face; we ask for grace in our relationships with others; we ask for the courage we will need to make small changes that draw us closer to you day by day. Amen.*