



Soul Sisters 3

PREPARING TO BE MISSIONAL





INTRODUCTION

- Please complete Soul Sisters 1 and Soul Sisters 2 before starting these sessions. We want mission to flow out of the abundance of our walk with God so the spiritual formation practices we cover in those sessions need to be embedded first. Those earlier sessions are also designed to help you gradually increase vulnerability with each other.
- Soul Sisters 3 has a dual focus: Each session will include a spiritual formation practice and a mission exercise.

We pray that as you turn your focus outward, you will continue to strengthen the core of your relationship with God and that you will become carriers of the loving presence of God.



WHAT IS SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP?

Safe space

What we say in this context matters. Remember to be absolutely disciplined about not sharing anything you hear in this group outside of the group. Let us honour the vulnerability that it takes to share our souls with one another.

Grace and Compassion

We each come to this group having different backgrounds and perspectives. When we receive each other with grace and compassion we are able to learn from one another and grow.

Deep Listening

Unhurried, non-judgemental listening creates an environment that supports people and gives them space to see where God is.

What does this look like?

- We don't interrupt but instead offer the gift of our full attention.
- We don't give advice or try to fix someone's problem. Although our desire is to help others, our suggestions may cause the person to feel unheard or even undermined. The goal of deep listening is to listen well to each other and to learn to listen to what God might be saying to them as well.
- We don't evaluate (especially not to criticize or judge) but trust the Holy Spirit to do His work.

God is here

God is present with us. As we learn to listen, let us remember that we are here to bring ourselves and our sisters to Christ, and let him speak truth and life.

Session 1

STRENGTHENING OUR CORE

Part 1: Larger Group

1. Welcome back!

2. Reminders

Theme of Soul Sisters 3 - Preparing to be missional
Reaffirm commitment to confidentiality

3. Spiritual Practice - Visio Divina

Read Visio Divina
Go through the practice together and go directly into silence for 2 minutes.

4. Missional Focus - Mission as worship

Mission from the core outward. We want our mission to be built upon continuing encounter with God. In other words, we don't graduate from spiritual formation to do mission—but rather, mission flows out of communion with God.

Mission as worship. We offer love to others as an intentional, conscious, act of worship to God. Jesus identifies so closely with hurting people that He says what we do for them, we do for Him (Matthew 25:40).

Wholistic mission. Rather than being compartmentalized, we are consistent and integrated in who we are, what we say, and what we do. We proclaim a gospel of righteousness that has implications for all of life.

Part 2: Breakout Groups

1. Sharing

Share your answers to the questions for this session. For each one:

- Read the question
- Let one person answer while the others listen without comment.
- Pause: take a few deep breaths. Let what they said sink in.
- Continue until everyone has had a chance to share while the others listen, pausing after each one.

Questions for this session:

- How is your soul?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how have you been since the last time we met?
- What has been the most significant thing in your spiritual life since we last met?

2. Pray together & homework

Spend some time reading and meditating on Matthew 10:42.

Spiritual Practice

VISIO DIVINA

In Soul Sisters 2 we learned about Lectio Divina (which means divine reading). It is an ancient Christian practice of focusing on a small part of Scripture so as to let it penetrate our hearts. There is a similar practice called Visio Divina.

With this practice, you look at a picture while meditating on a piece of Scripture. Visual learners may find this especially meaningful. If you feel uncomfortable, simply close your eyes instead and listen to the verse. The idea is to let God speak to you.

- Facilitator, please open in prayer.
- Slowly read Matthew 10:42.
- Observe a few minutes of silence, reading the verse at least one more time.
- Facilitator - close with a quiet "Amen."
- Then ask: What came to mind as you looked at the picture?



Session 2

MAKING ROOM

Part 1: Larger Group

1. Welcome back!

2. Reminders

3. Spiritual Practice - Silence

Invite the presence of God. Spend several minutes in silence.

4. Missional Focus - Sabbath

Read and reflect on Genesis 2: 2 - 3.

Consider the following quote by Ruth Haley Barton -

"The point of the Sabbath was (and still is) to honour the body's need for rest, the spirit's need for replenishment and the soul's need to delight itself in God for God's own sake. It begins with the willingness to acknowledge the limits of our humanness, taking steps to live more graciously within the order of things—and the first order of things is that we are creatures and God is the creator. God is the only one who is infinite. I am finite which means that I live within the physical limits of time and space and the bodily limits of strength and energy. There are limits to my capacities relationally, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. I am not God. God is the one who can be all things to all people. God is the one who can be two places at once. God is the one who never sleeps. I am not."

Part 2: Breakout Groups

1. Sharing

Questions for this session (share an answer to one or both):

- What is your experience of Sabbath?
- Where could you pare down your schedule to reduce stress and create margin to reach out to other people?

2. Pray together

Pray for each other that God would begin to align our hearts to his, to open our eyes to what he is doing around us, and how we can join him in his mission.

3. Homework

Write down the elements of a typical church service in your church, begin to think about how a newcomer might see it or experience it.

Session 3

DEVELOPING AWARENESS

Part 1: Larger Group

1. Welcome back!

2. Reminders

How was your experience of sabbath over the last week?

3. Spiritual Practice - Sacred Pathways

- Read Sacred Pathways
- Begin by saying a simple prayer, offering the group to God and inviting the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- Play a worship song. Invite everyone to close their eyes, listen and reflect.

4. Missional Focus - Recognizing our own culture

Read James 2:1-9.

- Imagine someone comes to church for the first time in their lives . . . and they choose yours. Let's imagine how they might feel.
 - What might confuse them?
 - What might make them feel uncomfortable?
 - What could we do to offset that? Are there more effective ways to meet people where they are?

Part 2: Breakout Groups

1. Sharing

Questions for this session:

- How would you describe Christian culture? In other words, what language and patterns do church people use that differ from those who don't usually come to church?
- How would you describe your own local church culture? (e.g. traditional, casual, intellectual, family etc.)
- What are you proud of? What things upset people?

2. Pray together

Pray for each other's churches. Pray for the experience new people will have there and invite God to impress upon our hearts a better idea of our role in this welcoming.

3. Homework

Research definitions of ethnocentrism

Spiritual Practice

SACRED PATHWAYS

Our personalities and gifts often make it easier to connect with God in certain ways. Some have called those differences sacred pathways. For example:

- I. Naturalists: feel closest to God outdoors
- II. Sensates: worship God experientially
- III. Traditionalists: love God through ritual and symbol
- IV. Ascetics: love God in solitude and in simplicity
- V. Activists: love God by advocating for justice
- VI. Caregivers: love God by loving others
- VII. Enthusiasts: celebrate a miraculous God
- VIII. Contemplatives: adore God
- IX. Intellectuals: love God with their minds

On one hand, we want to make best use of the pathway that suits how God has made us. On the other hand, sometimes it's good to try other paths to broaden our experience of God.

(adapted from "Sacred Pathways," Alpha Discipleship Tool)

Session 4

LEARNING TO SEE

Part 1: Larger Group

1. Welcome back!

2. Reminders

3. Spiritual Practice - Gospel Contemplation

Read Gospel Contemplation and do the practice together.

4. Missional Focus - Your definition of the gospel

The first and most important task of any missionary is to understand and truly respect the host culture. That requires a willingness to set aside judgement.

- Spend some time discussing your definitions of ethnocentrism.
- Is there anything God is highlighting for you?

Part 2: Breakout Groups

1. Sharing

Questions for this session:

- What might God be emphasizing to you?
- Was there anything new that you realized?
- How can you apply this in your own life?

2. Pray together

Begin in prayer by asking God to show you a circumstance where you have evaluated or judged someone. Wait in silence for several minutes.

Close with a prayer, offering confession for the past, and asking the Holy Spirit to remind and empower us to forsake judgement in the future.

Spiritual Practice

GOSPEL CONTEMPLATION

The parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector Luke 18: 9–14

Very closely related to Lectio Divina is Gospel Contemplation. The goal of both is to deeply interact with a short passage of Scripture, but in this case, we also add the benefit of imagination to help us notice things we might otherwise miss.

- Have the group close their eyes and imagine the scene as the facilitator reads Luke 18: 9–14. - What does it look like and sound like? How do you feel?
- For the second reading ask the group to pay attention to a word or phrase that seems to stand out for them.
- For the third and final reading, ask God what He wants to say to you through that word or phrase.

Session 5

BECOMING MORE RELATIONAL

Part 1: Larger Group

1. Welcome back!

2. Reminders

3. Spiritual Practice - Healing Prayer

Spend some time reflecting on the following verses:

- Psalm 103:2-4 Praise the Lord, my soul and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion.
- Mark 10:51 What do you want me to do for you?

Enter into a time of silence. Meditate on Mark 10:51. Spend some time silently responding to the question Jesus poses - "what do you want me to do for you?"

4. Missional Focus - Reflective Listening

When we listen to others, what are we paying attention to? Do we listen without surprise or shock? Are we slow to speak? Do we allow space for God to speak?

Here are some examples of positive ways to reflect back what we are hearing:

- I heard you use this word several times
- I hear excitement/frustration etc. in your voice
- I hear you asking a lot of questions
- This particular phrase stood out to me...
- Can you tell me more about what you meant when you said...

Part 2: Breakout Groups

1. Share & Pray together

Share as you feel comfortable a desire or hope for healing.
Pray for each other.

2. Homework

Between sessions, look for verses on mission. Choose one that especially resonates with you as something you want to ask God to do through you. Write the verse on a card and bring it to the next session.

Session 6

UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL CHANGE

Part 1: Larger Group

1. Welcome back!

2. Reminders

3. Spiritual Practice - Learning to receive promises from God's word.

Homework last week was to find verses on mission and choose one that resonated.

- Take turns reading the verse you chose.
- Before our next session, continue to consider:
 - How would you like God to use you?
 - Is there a promise in this scripture for me?
 - Pray and listen for God to affirm the promise to you.

4. Missional Focus - Understanding Postmodernism

There has been a massive cultural shift in recent generations - Modernism vs. postmodernism.

Here are some examples of what that might look like:

- Moderns strive for order and control - i.e. want to use Robert's Rules of Order
- Postmoderns strive for relationship and connectedness - i.e. aim for consensus building
- Moderns - Knowledge is most valued - i.e. believe that truth is made up of clear, objective facts. Therefore, science and rationality are the best ways of determining truth.
- Postmoderns - Experience is most valued - i.e. believe statements are influenced by perspective. Even statistics can reflect unintended bias. Therefore, multiple perspectives give a fuller picture of the truth.

Part 2: Breakout Groups

1. Sharing

Discuss:

- How do these differences come out in your church/home/community?
- As a group, try to think of examples for modernism and postmodernism.
- What other differences have you seen?
- Which group do you feel you belong to? Where might you need to grow in order to connect well with the other group?

2. Pray together

3. Homework

Consider, what is hospitality? And where is it currently present in my life?

Session 7

STRETCHING

Part 1: Larger Group

1. Welcome back!

2. Reminders

3. Spiritual Practice - Hospitality as a Spiritual Discipline

Read Hebrews 13:2.

This verse uses the word stranger to emphasize that hospitality extends beyond those we are already familiar with.

Spend some time quietly reflecting on the passage.

Consider,

- How does God show hospitality?
- What is God inviting you to? What is your response?
- How does our hospitality become missional?

4. Missional Focus - Learning to notice

How does the specific language we use in church affect hospitality?

- What are some words and phrases we use that people in our local coffee shop would never say?
- Consider how you might be able to make these phrases more accessible.

Part 2: Breakout Groups

1. Sharing

Discuss:

- Do you have relationships with people outside of the church?
 - If yes, how might you extend hospitality as Jesus exudes?
 - If not, why do you think that is? Are there places you could be more open to this?
- Do you sense God inviting you to extend hospitality to someone in specific?
 - What is one step you might take this week?

2. Pray together

Close by praying Zephaniah 3:17 ESV over the group.

3. Homework

Practice hospitality

- Invite a stranger (someone you do not know well at church or in neighborhood) for coffee or a meal. Incorporate what we have learned this session (cultural awareness, reflective listening, etc.)

Session 8

COMMISSIONING FOR MISSION

Part 1: Larger Group

1. Welcome back!
2. Reminders
3. Spiritual Practice -Liturgy

Liturgy: a specific order of service; sometimes includes a prewritten prayer, readings, the eucharist and giving thanks

- Invite volunteers to read:
 - Romans 1:1 - "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God."
 - Romans 12:1 - "Present your bodies a living sacrifice holy, well pleasing to God which is your reasonable service."
- Moment of Silence
- Read blessing adapted from Every Moment Holy.
- Invite volunteers to read:
 - John 20:21 - "Jesus said, Peace be with you as the Father has sent me, I am sending you."
 - Genesis 16:8,13 - "Where have you come from and where are you going? ... The God who sees El Roi."
- Play the song by Nicole C. Mullins; The God who sees
- Read final blessing by St. Teresa of Avila

Part 2: Breakout Groups

1. Sharing

- Consecration: the solemn dedication to a purpose or service - association with the sacred.
 - Have each person take a turn sharing their mission verse.
 - Spend some time encouraging them with the ways you see God at work in them. Celebrate who God created them to be.
 - Pray over and bless them. Pray that God will fulfill his promise in their life.

Spiritual Practice

BLESSING

**ADAPTED FROM EVERY MOMENT HOLY
BY DOUGLAS KAINE MCKELVEY**

"We are gathered here because we believe that we are called together into a work we cannot yet know the fullness of.

Still, we trust the voice of the One who has called us.

And so we offer to you, O God, these things: Our dreams, our plans, our vision. Shape them as you will. Our moments and gifts. May they be invested toward bright, eternal ends.

Richly bless the work before us, Father. Shepherd us well.

Let us listen for Your voice,

our hearts ever open to the quiet beckoning of Your Spirit in this endeavour.

Let us in true humility remain ever ready to move at the impulse of your love in paths of your design.

We cannot know the end of another person's story. Our lives so often only briefly intersect. So let me be content to minister regardless of visible outcomes, trusting that the small mercies I extend will be woven into the larger theme of redemption at work in the lives of others as you woo them to yourself, drawing their hearts by graces offered, and shaping my own heart too, in this process of learning to serve well,

And by learning to serve well, learning to love well.

We praise you Lord and thank you for the commitment and time given by this community of women you have so uniquely charged and gifted for the specific ministries they have served. We pray blessing and abundance over their lives—that they may receive all that they continue to pour out, and then some. Continue to walk with and lead us all as we tune into your continued promptings through the Spirit.

May the Lord bless you and keep you;

the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;

the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. (Num 6:24/25) Amen!

Spiritual Practice

**BLESSING
BY ST. TERESA OF AVILA**

"May today there be peace within.

May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.

May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be content knowing you are a child of God. Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. It is there for each and every one of us."