

The background is a solid magenta color. Overlaid on this are three thin, white, horizontally-oriented ellipses. The top ellipse is the largest and contains the word 'CORE'. The middle ellipse is smaller and contains the words 'THE BRIDGE CHURCH'. The bottom ellipse is the smallest and is empty. The ellipses overlap in the center of the image.

# CORE

THE BRIDGE CHURCH



## **Contents**

CORE	p. 4-5
Confession	p.6-9
Others	p.10-13
Reading	p. 14-17
Encouragement	p. 18-20
Summary	p. 21
Helpful hints for meet-up	p.22-23

# core

*noun*

the part of something that is central to its existence or character.

**'Go and make disciples...'** said Jesus. And He wasn't messing around.

The goal for CORE is to gather regularly with 4-5 people of the same gender, to help each other make disciples of Jesus.

Practising these disciplines of the Christian life, in community, with a desire to become more and more like the Saviour, will produce incredible spiritual fruit in the context and time of our lives. We will be transformed by, and for, Jesus.

Our hope is that this acronym, borrowed from Church in the City New York, will help us remember these practices, and by actually doing them, create a disciple-making culture that flourishes in our Church and community.

**C**onfession

**O**thers

**R**eading

**E**ncourage

# CONFESSION

**'Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed...'** James 5:16

Jesus, through His death and resurrection, has utterly dealt with sin. He removed its punishment and broke its power. Followers of Jesus are recipients of His salvation and are now children of God: people who are no longer under the controlling desire to ignore, rebel and rage against God. As His children, we're to live in the joyful freedom of relationship with God, and to be authentic people of truth. We recognise the great change Jesus has already done in forgiving and healing us, but we also know that there's a wrestle in our souls: the wrestle with sin. We're to be people that recognise, confess and repent of our struggles with sin, keep our hearts pure and humble, our relationships strong and real, and our mission to the world, on track.

Confession of sin is not intended to create guilt, shame or condemnation, but rather to free us from it.

Sin, particularly secret and unconfessed sin, robs us of joy, peace and confidence, and so coming to God, at His invitation, to receive His grace and walk in freedom and forgiveness, is life-altering. Living in 21<sup>st</sup> century Ireland, it is so easy to be unaccountable while habits and patterns that move us away from our calling as children of God, set in; confession is a gift we'd be foolish not to use.

In the normal life of a Christian, honesty, truthfulness and purity of heart involve continual admission and confession of sin to appropriate people and will result in genuine, physical and spiritual health. When secret sins lurk, our body and our soul groans.

We get to make disciples of each other by helping us move away from brokenness and into holiness.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said 'Nothing can be more cruel than the leniency which abandons others to their sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than the severe reprimand which calls another Christian in one's community back from the path of sin.'

The guide that follows is a starting point for walking in holiness together.

**'If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness'** (1 John 1:8-9).

So where's the sin in our lives right now?

If you struggle with:      Ask God for:

Lust	Integrity
Pride	Humility
Sloth	Devotion
Envy	Gratitude
Wrath	Gentleness
Gluttony	Self-control
Greed	Generosity

Our lives were created for full and forever joy and not the fleeting 'pleasures' that we often settle for. The above list of sin, that can be easily added to, are the dreadful substitutes for the pure wonder, joy and brilliance of God. Living in and with sin robs, numbs and kills us. We were made for joyful freedom from sin!

**'When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.**


**But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control' (Galatians 5:19-21 NLT).**



## **Discussion**

- Where have you wrestled with temptation this week?
- Have you given into temptation this week?
- What steps will you take to avoid temptation?

## **Worship**

- Spend time in confession and then, together, thank and worship God for His salvation, His mercy, His grace and forgiveness.
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# OTHERS

**'Go and make disciples...'**

Becoming disciples of Jesus means making His priorities, our priorities. And what is paramount to Jesus is clear: pursuing the lost.

**'Salvation has come...for the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost'** (Luke 19:9-10).

As we read the Gospels we see that Jesus was on mission; moved with deep compassion at the lostness of a human soul, far from God. Jesus is still on mission, patiently inviting all, through the message of the Gospel, to come and be found.

We may often feel inadequate, ill-prepared or fearful to share the Gospel. Where do we even start? The goal of this section is to help each other identify a person whom Jesus maybe seeking out and pursuing with love. We can pray for that person to come to know Christ. Our role is not to manipulate or coerce people but to watch the Holy Spirit draw and make real the Gospel of Jesus.

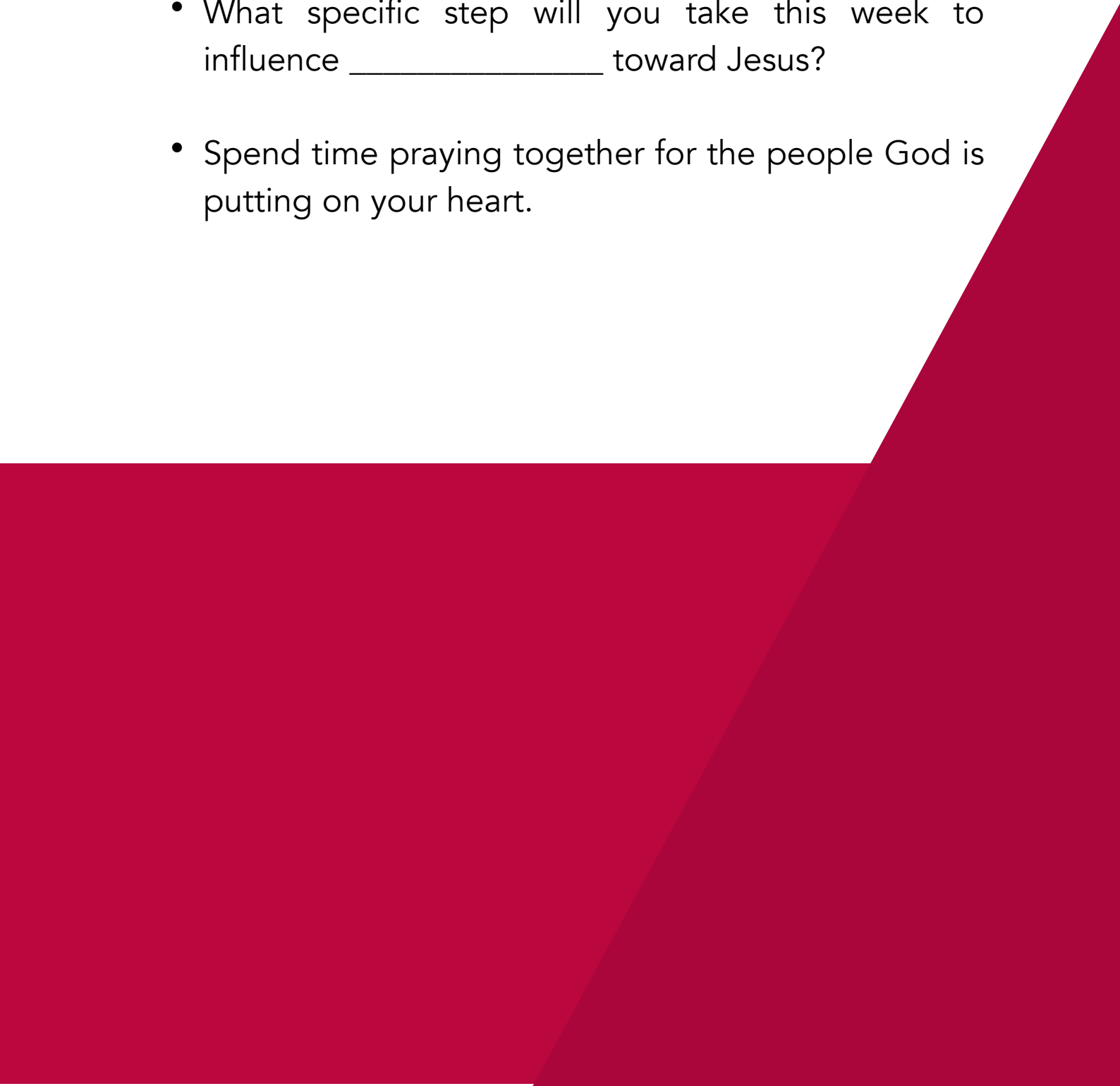
We can help and strengthen each other be useful in God's hand to show and share Jesus: telling others the Good News.

The prayers below are all Bible-prayers and are given here to help us form our own words and conversation with God.

- Lord, I pray that You draw \_\_\_\_\_ to Yourself (John 6:44).
- I pray that \_\_\_\_\_ seeks to know You (Acts 17:27).
- I pray that \_\_\_\_\_ hears and believes the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13)
- I ask You to prevent Satan from blinding \_\_\_\_\_ to the truth (2 Cor. 4:4; 2 Tim. 2:25-26)
- Holy Spirit, I ask You to convict \_\_\_\_\_ of his/her sin and reveal his/her need for Christ's redemption (John 16:8; 1 Thess. 1:5)
- I ask You to send someone who will share the Gospel with \_\_\_\_\_ (Matt. 9:37-38)

- I ask that You give me the opportunity, the courage, and the right words to share the truth with \_\_\_\_\_ (Col. 4:3-6; Eph. 6:19-20)
- Lord, I pray that \_\_\_\_\_ turns from his/her sin (1 Thess. 1:9-10)
- Lord, I pray that \_\_\_\_\_ would put all of his/her trust in Christ (John 1:12; 5:24).
- Lord, I pray that \_\_\_\_\_ will confess Christ as Lord of his/her life, take root and grow in his/her faith, and bear much fruit for your glory (Rom. 10:9-10; Col. 2:6-7; Luke 8:15)

## Discussion

- Have you been loving toward and praying for \_\_\_\_\_ this week?
  - Have you sensed God bringing you opportunities to love and share?
  - What specific step will you take this week to influence \_\_\_\_\_ toward Jesus?
  - Spend time praying together for the people God is putting on your heart.
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# READING

Immersing ourselves in the Bible will help us know God's heart, hear His Voice and follow His will.

Jesus says that if we are His disciples we will **'abide in His Word'** (John 8:31, Matt. 4:4). Jesus wants us to study, meditate upon, memorise, obey and fully live out the Scriptures – the Holy Word of God. It is the Bible that makes the Christian **'wise for salvation'** and it is sufficient for 'teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness' so that we are **'thoroughly equipped for every good work'** (2 Tim. 3:15-17). Likewise, the writer of Hebrews says that the Bible is like a sword with which the Spirit does deep, intricate soul-surgery.

With this in mind, we advocate two approaches done in tandem.

**First**, we encourage a massive intake of Scripture (e.g. a book a week, read, or listened to, multiple times) to saturate our minds with truth, so that we think and value what Christ does. A verse a day does not do that sufficiently. You may decide to read the same Bible-reading within your CORE group, or not. 'All Scripture is God-breathed' and so He wants to speak when we read and apply, in the right way, God's Word to our lives.

This may read like a burden too heavy to carry. Don't be put off. All of our lives are saturated with different pressures and these encouragements are not to be legalistic or burdensome. They are however meant to aim high. We have the privilege of access to the Word of God, let us not take that for granted.

**Second**, we encourage you to pick a small section from each day's reading to study more in depth – by immersing yourself in the context and meaning, meditating on the truth in these verses, and then bringing these verses before God to seek the immediate application for your life.

**'For the Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart'**

Hebrews 4:12

**'But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the Word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop'**

Luke 8:15

**Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked**

**Or stand in the way that sinners take**

**Or sit in the company of mockers,**

**But whose delight is in the law of the Lord,**

**And who meditated on his law day and night.**

**That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,**

**Which yields its fruit in season**


**And whose leaf does not wither –**

**Whatever they do prospers.**

Psalm 1:1-3



## Discussion

- Tell us about your reading this week.
  - What stood out to you in this week's reading?
  - Where were you convicted/challenged by anything in this week's reading?
  - Where were you encouraged in this week's reading?
  - Are there any immediate changes that you need to put into place following what God's Word has said?
- 

# ENCOURAGEMENT

If we're to live out the call of God on our lives we need encouragement. If confession is accountability for what we don't want to do, encouragement is fuel for what we are called to do.

To encourage is (literally) to put courage into someone. In our culture, we are often down beat, criticised and challenged with discouraging circumstances and situations that cause us to lose heart, turn back or give up.

This is a time to call out the gifts, passions and vision that God has placed in our hearts to see His fame and deeds renewed and known in our time.

Use this time to 'put courage' into one another and to affirm the work God is doing and will continue to do in each of your lives.

See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the end.


Hebrews 3:12-14

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, 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 unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. 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

Hebrews 10:19-25

## Discussion

- What do you sense God doing in you that you need to respond to?
  - What do you sense God doing around you that He is inviting you into?
  - What do you sense God doing through you that you need courage for?
  - As you listen to the Holy Spirit, what words or verses is He giving you to encourage the other members of your CORE group?
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CORE is all about Jesus: knowing Him, making Him known, seeing Him in others and having Him change us to become like Him. He's glorious!!

CORE is not about comparing ourselves with each other or with our world, it is lifting our eyes to become more and more and more like the One who sets us free.

CORE is about us, together, responding to Him, seeking Him, following Him, becoming a bit more like Him.

CORE is about change.

# Helpful hints for the meet-ups

- Meet together and agree a regular time and day. Choose your environment: a coffee shop, a restaurant, the beach, a home; your call. But make it regular – we would recommend a weekly frequency of no less than one hour.
- Honour the time and voice of each other. Each group member must have time to speak without one individual hogging it all. Actively listen well, which means doing so without interruption, or without working out what you're going to say next in your head. Listen. Allow space for others to speak and don't gossip what's said. This is a love and trust environment, and so gossiping outside of the group is unacceptable and breaks trust links. These aren't confidential spaces, but they must be safe spaces. We must honour each other in what we say, hear and share.
- Don't minimise, or relativise sin. Don't 'okay' it. Instead listen to each other, recognising the seriousness of sin, and the sufficiency of our Saviour, who invites us to come to Him for forgiveness and change. We are not comparing each other to each other, we're standing together, in front of Jesus.

- Join well, stay well, leave well (if you must). Our desire is to become like Jesus in all ways and we're doing so by committing to each other in our CORE group – don't drift away, communicate well with your group. Let us make the most of this opportunity to walk this journey together; simply not showing up or regularly missing the agreed meet-ups, dishonours the other group members.
- Our Leadership Team will provide oversight of the CORE groups and so there's always accountability and care on hand for everyone.

# Notes