

Pray together:-
*May the God of love
bring us back to himself,
forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

Go in peace

Conclude by having one person in your group say this prayer which is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi:
*O divine Master, grant that I might seek
not so much to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
and not so much to be loved, as to love another.
Amen.*

For the Coming week

Read chapter 9, "Learning to Live Without Avarice."

The soul-training practice for the week is de-cluttering.

The Good and Beautiful LIFE

8

Learning to live without pride

WELCOME – Breaking the ice

OPENING TO GOD – Opening to God (5 minutes)

Read *Colossians 3:1-17* together

5 minutes of silence

Prayer to end the silence

You may offer a prayer of your own, ring a chime, or say "Amen" to end the silence.

Soul training [10-15 minutes]

If you are in a group of six or more people, divide into groups of three or four. Use the questions below to discuss your experience of serving in secret.

1. What was the most challenging aspect of serving in secret?
2. How did you feel as you were doing your secret acts of service? How did you feel after they were finished?
3. What did you learn about God or yourself from the exercise?
4. Discuss with your partners any previous soul-shaping exercises that continue to shape you.

Engaging the Chapter [20 minutes]

The main idea of this chapter is that pride is the need to be thought well of by others; it is driven by the notion that the opinions of others determines our worth. When this vice is fully grown in our hearts we find ourselves more interested in others' opinions of us than actually being a genuinely good person, or doing good for the sake of doing good.

Read through the following questions before you begin your discussion. Note any questions you especially want to discuss. Depending on your group size and the conversation, you may not have time to discuss all of these questions.

1. The author writes, "The world measures our worth on the basis of our appearance, production and performance—which seem to be the only thing that counts. This narrative says, 'Your value is determined by others' assessment'" (p. 139). With a partner, discuss ways you allow your value to be determined by others.

2. Have you ever caught yourself doing some good deed not for the sake of helping others but for the prize of praise? If you are comfortable, talk about it with your group.

3. The author gives us this great insight into Jesus' teaching: Giving money to the poor. Praying. Fasting. All three activities are some of the most spiritual activities a person can do. So what about Jesus' harsh words? Actually, he is not speaking against these practices. He is attacking the way in which they are being practiced. He is not concerned with the method but the motive. Jesus starts with the world's standard of rightness and then peels off the veneer to see if the heart is good. He takes three righteous and holy actions and then shows how the condition of a person's heart determines whether or not the discipline is a blessing or a hindrance (pp. 144-45).

To explore our motives, have individuals write down their three favourite spiritual practices. Then have them silently consider these questions:

Do you long for approval and praise through any of these practices? Based on this chapter, what could you do to purify your motives regarding these disciplines?

How could you apply the saying to "live for an audience of One" to your spiritual practices?

Invite the group to discuss their insights.

Engaging the word [10 minutes]

The author writes, "No matter how many worldly 'trophy' we acquire, we won't be able to lay our head down in peace because we are only as good as our last success. But our loving Father—the only One who matters—tells us that we are loved, that we are of immeasurable worth" (pp. 148-49). Utilizing a group lectio divina approach, follow the steps listed below to read Isaiah 42:3-4 and encounter God's love for you.

1. Have a volunteer read aloud Isaiah 42:3-4. Simply hear the words and spend a minute in silence following the reading.

2. Have a second volunteer slowly read Isaiah 42:3-4 again. As you listen to the passage, pay attention to any word or phrase that resonates in the deepest places of your heart. Repeat this word or phrase to yourself during a few minutes of silence.

3. Have a final volunteer read the passage once more. When the reading is over, spend a few minutes in silent conversation with God. Give thanks, share concerns, or just listen. Savour this time of being with God.

4. End the silence by having someone in the group say a prayer or simply say "Amen."

Experiencing transformation—Confession

Confession is a powerful tool against pride because it gives us the opportunity to be honest and open about our struggles. At the same time we are reminded of God's forgiveness, turning the focus away from ourselves and turn towards God and His grace.

We are going to have a time of silent confession, inviting each person to write down the sins the Holy Spirit brings to mind and then if possible burning them in a chimnea, open fire or wood burner?

The general rule of thumb is that we should only confess what the Holy Spirit brings to mind, and no more.

Your confession does not need to some giant sin, but neither should it be so trivial as to have no effect.

Spend 10 minutes in silence, asking God to bring your sins to mind, write them down and then if possible bring them forward to be burnt.