

Guidelines for Confessional Community Facilitators

IMPORTANT: Direct all those in attendance to the “Readings” Tab at **CONFSSIONALCOMMUNITY.COM** for access to all readings and meetings

Prior to beginning of meeting, please ask for the following (Thank Each Person):

1. **Only if Newcomers are Present:** Someone to read **THE NEWCOMERS WELCOME** OR you may read this yourself (“Thank You”)_____
2. Someone to read **THE 6 PRINCIPLES OF Everyday Discipleship** (“Thank You”)_____
3. Someone to read **RULES FOR SHARING** (“Thank You”)_____
4. Someone to be the **TIMER FOR OUR MEETING TODAY** (Tell them to use their phone or timer for three minutes and to interrupt the speaker when three minutes are up with the words “*Gentle Time*” (“Thank You”)_____
5. Someone to read **TODAY’S READING** (Devotional) (“Thank You”)_____
6. Someone to read **THE CLOSING** at the end of the meeting (“Thank You”)_____
7. Someone to read **THE PROMISES OR THE DECLARATION** - end of the meeting (“Thank You”)_____

***PLEASE REMEMBER TO Thank Each Person after they volunteer AND after they read**

Welcome: Hi, My name is _____, and I’m a grateful member of the Confessional Community (or grateful follower of Jesus, etc.). In this meeting we will be making use of our standard readings which can be found on our website at ConfessionalCommunity.com under the readings tab (If in Zoom: “the link has been pasted into the chat box”)

Prayer: As we begin our meeting, would you please join me in a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer (The Prayer is on Website - **Start the prayer aloud as the Spirit leads**)

Newcomer’s Welcome: Facilitator asks “Are newcomers to the meeting? (SKIP THE REST IF NO ONE IS NEW) If so, would you please introduce yourself by first name only”. After greeting the newcomers saying “Welcome....., Welcome...” he/she then asks for a non-newcomer member to read the Newcomer’s Welcome. (After Reading “Thank you”)

How It Works: (Facilitator says) “We are a group of men and women who share in the effects of sin, as well as the goodness of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Along with our struggles and pain, triumphs, and victories, many of us suffer from a deep sense of shame, believing that we need to keep our problems and sins hidden from those around us. As a result of this shame, we may have learned 3 rules for survival: *don’t talk, don’t trust, don’t feel.*”

In this meeting, we allow Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit to break those rules. We believe that Jesus' death on the cross and His blood shed for us provide the perfect shelter, and the abundant grace needed to be honest about the true state of our souls. We talk about what happened in the past, and what's happening now. We share the truth about ourselves and the truth about God. We trust the people in this meeting to respect our thoughts, feelings, desires and what we say here as confidential.

We are here to honor God and one another. We are not here to fix or advise one another. We do not tell anyone what they should do, think, or feel. Instead, we share about our journey with Jesus, trusting that God will somehow use our life experience to draw others deeper into His loving presence.

The 6 Principles – Can we now have the reading of the 6 Principles? (After Reading “Thank you”)

Introductions:

IN PERSON ONLY:

Facilitator says, “It is our custom to introduce ourselves by our first name only. I’ll start and then we’ll go around to my left. Hi, I’m _____, and I’m grateful follower of Jesus (or... grateful member of the Confessional Community).

ZOOM: Ask someone to say “Welcome NAME” to each person in the Zoom room by going through the list of participants.

Rules for Sharing: Facilitator asks for a member to read the Rules for Sharing. (After Reading “Thank you”)

DESIGNATED READING: Facilitator ask someone to read the designated reading for that day (Devotional).

(After Reading “Thank you”)

AFTER READING Facilitator says, “You may share today about the reading we’ve just heard, any related scripture, any other readings from our resources or what you are dealing with at this moment. Just a reminder to please keep your sharing focused on your own experience, strength, and hope. The meeting is now open for sharing”.

END OF MEETING

At 5-7 minutes before the hour: We have a little time for one more share. Would anyone else like to share before we close our meeting?

The Promises OR the Declaration: After conclusion of sharing, Facilitator asks for a member to read the Promises OR the Declaration

(After Reading “Thank you”)

Closing: Facilitator asks for a member to read the Closing.

(After Reading “Thank you”)

Prayer: The Lord’s Prayer (if in person, hold hands. If Zoom “you may unmute to join us as we pray”)

Facilitator at the hour: Thank you everyone for joining the Confessional Community today! We are grateful for your presence and hope that you will keep coming back. If you would like to stay for questions, conversation and prayer, we’ll begin now.

After the meeting:

The 6 Principles of Everyday Discipleship
(Adapted from the “6 tenants of the Oxford Group”)

1. All people sin

I admit, I am my own worst problem

2. All people can be changed

There is hope for me, by God’s grace I can be changed and set free

3. Conviction, Confession and Repentance are most often necessary for change

I must listen to God through His Spirit, His word, and His people, even if it hurts.

I must be honest with Him and other people about the true state of my soul and take the “next right step” in following Him to freedom.

These steps will most likely evoke fear in me. I am safe in Him.

4. The changed soul is more aware of their direct access to God

As I begin to follow Him in the ways above, I will become more aware of His daily presence and love in my life. My prayer life will grow into a continuous ongoing dialogue with Him.

5. We live in an age of miracles

The greatest miracle is a changed heart and life. God is changing me from the inside out. I can trust Him to continue and complete His work.

6. Those who have been changed will grow stronger as they are used by God to help others change

God’s love, forgiveness and grace come to me, so that they can freely move through me. When I get outside of myself and help someone else grow closer to Him, I am richly blessed and my walk in Him is strengthened.

Rules for Sharing

During this meeting, we do not cross-talk. This means that we do not dialogue with each other, ask one another questions, or directly respond to what others say. We focus instead on our own thoughts, feelings, struggles, and victories. This creates a safe environment for all of us to share.

We do this for two primary reasons:

First, some of us have been told what we're supposed to think and feel. Some were told that our thoughts and feelings are wrong. Our meeting is intended for people to commune with God and others so that they discover what they truly think and feel, ultimately leading them to take all their thoughts and emotions to Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, some of us have become accustomed to caretaking others, and in doing so, have avoided taking responsibility for our own lives. In this meeting we keep the focus on the work that Jesus needs to do in each one of us individually. Most of us find that letting Jesus do His work in us equips us to better help others in the appropriate ways and times.

Many of us find it helps to share with others after the meeting and exchange phone numbers with others in the group. After the meeting, if other members are willing, we can exchange specific ideas and thoughts more freely.

We ask that you limit your share to 3 minutes and refrain from sharing a second time until everyone has had a chance to share. _____ is our timer for today's meeting and will say the words "gentle time" when your 3 minutes are up. Please wrap up your sharing when you hear these words.

No one here is required to talk, nor will anyone be asked to talk. If you'd like, you may participate in silence.

We also ask that everyone refrain from using offensive or sexually-explicit language.

Closing

The things that were spoken here, were spoken in confidence, and should be treated as such. What was said was strictly the experience and opinions of others. Take what you liked and leave the rest. Whom you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.

Please know that there is no situation too difficult that it can't be improved, and no pain too great that it can't be lessened. We aren't perfect. The welcome we give you may not reflect the love that we have for you. And although you may not like all of us, you may find that you begin to love us in a very special way, the same way we already love you.

Pray for each another. Talk to one another. Reason things out with someone else, but let there be no gossip or criticism of one another. Instead, let the love, joy, and peace of Jesus Christ grow in you one day at a time.

Would all who care to join me, join me in saying the Lord's Prayer

Newcomer's Welcome

As a newcomer to the Confessional Community, we offer you a special welcome. In these meetings, we share confidentially and freely about our experience, strength, and hope in Jesus Christ. We also pray for one another. We suggest that you attend at least six meetings to give yourself a fair chance to decide if this group is for you.

While the way we do things has been carefully thought through and is done with a very specific purpose in mind, some of customs may strike you as “odd” or too structured. While at first some find this structure inhibiting and even annoying, those who stay around discover the beautiful freedom provided by God in the ways we walk together.

In addition, we embrace silence as a part of our practice in Confessional Community. There may be extended moments of silence in between sharing in our meeting today. Please accept this silence as a gift from God, and consider using it for times of personal reflection, prayer, and meditation.

We encourage you to exchange phone numbers with other members of the group for support between meetings (or in the chat box for Zoom). If you have any questions, please talk to the Facilitator after the meeting. Again, welcome to the Confessional Community.

The Promises of Everyday Discipleship

Promise #1: God Is Always with Me - I Will Not Fear

Promise #2: God Is Always in Control -I Will Not Doubt

Promise #3: God Is Always Good -I Will Not Despair

Promise #4: God Is Always for Me - I Will Not Worry

Promise #5: God Always Wins – I Will Not Fight Him Any Longer

The Declaration of Everyday Discipleship*

"I have great worth apart from my performance because Jesus Christ gave His life for me, and therefore, imparted great value to me. I am deeply loved, fully pleasing, totally forgiven, accepted, and complete in Christ. I am a Child of God!"

Because of justification, I am completely forgiven and fully pleasing to God.

I no longer have to fear failure.

Because of reconciliation, I am totally accepted by God.

I no longer have to fear rejection.

Because Jesus died for me, I am deeply loved by God.

I no longer have to fear punishment, nor do I have to punish others.

Because of regeneration, I have been made brand-new, complete in Christ. ***I no longer need to experience the pain of shame.***

*Adapted from "Search for Significance" by Robert S McGee

The Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the Serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
The Courage to change the things I can,
And the Wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,

Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.

Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it.

Trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to Your will.

That I may be reasonably happy in this life, And supremely happy with You forever in the next.

Amen.