

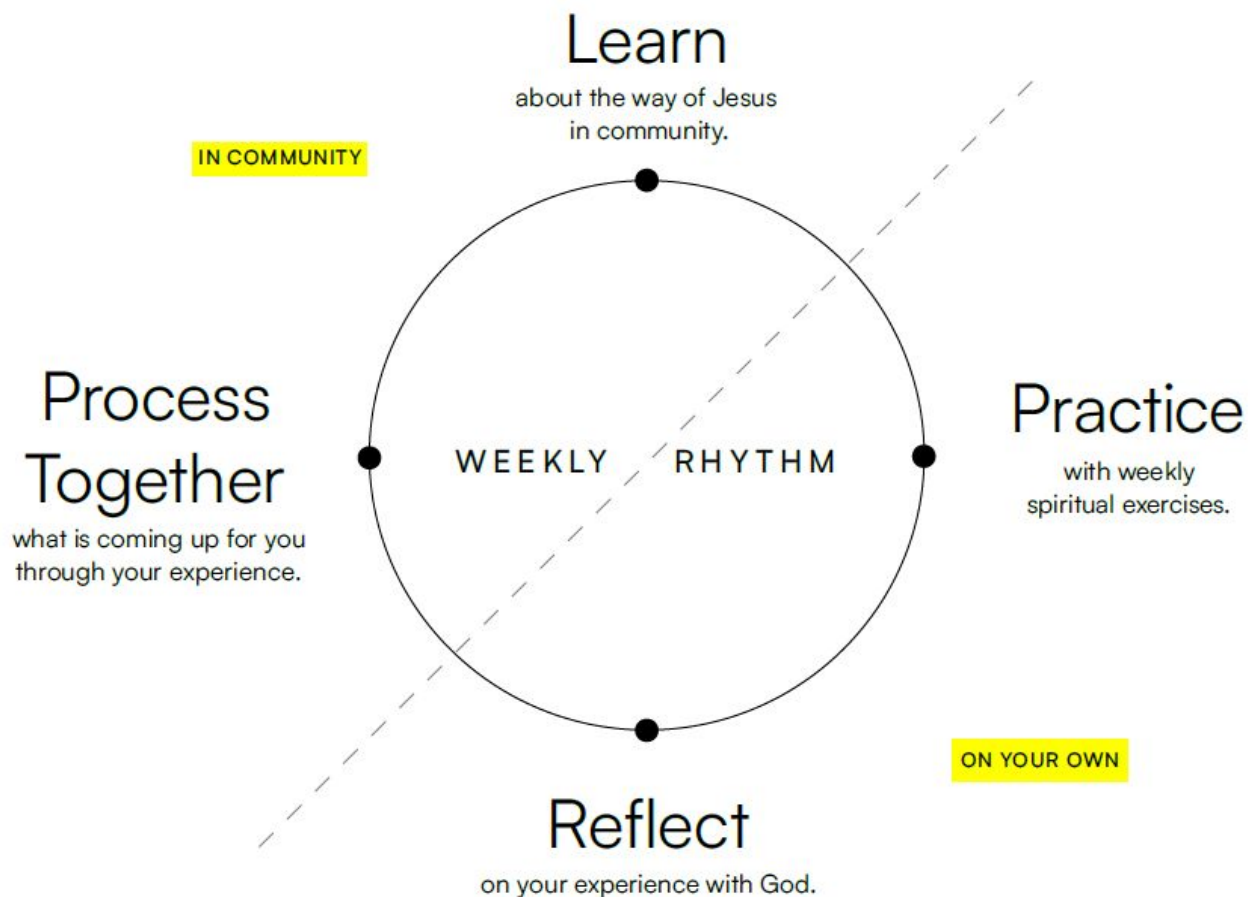
The Community Practice

Practicing the Way

WHAT IS THE PATHWAY?

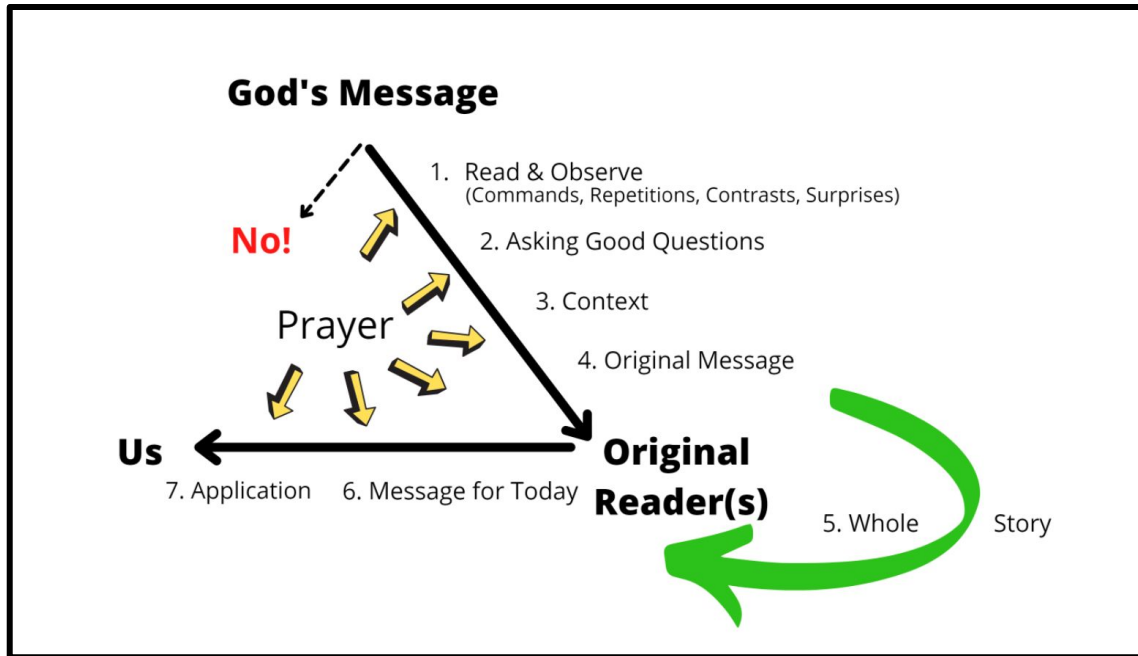
The Pathway is an important part of Paseo del Rey Church's method of discipleship. As a community, we want to follow Jesus as "the way, the truth, and the life." We LEARN together from Jesus how to live by following his example and teaching through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus modeled for us what a Spirit-filled life looks like. In our daily lives, we seek his words and ways and "put them into PRACTICE." Being *on the pathway* with your Growth Group is important because it allows us to REFLECT on the joys and difficulties of following Jesus and PROCESS TOGETHER so we can experience the Jesus-filled-life more fully.

The Pathway uses the following model:



CAREFUL BIBLE STUDY

Each week your group will study a passage of Scripture together. Make sure to use the Careful Bible Study method illustrated below to discern God's message.



Remember: The Bible was not written to us, but it was written for us. To understand what God is saying to us through His word, we need to first understand what He was saying to the original readers in their context. Then we filter that understanding through the gospel of Jesus Christ to discern God's message for us today and how it applies to our lives. Take your time and follow these steps as you study God's word:

- Start with prayer. Be still and know that God is sovereign, holy, and available to us through Christ. Pray Psalm 119:18, *"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law."*
- Read the passage of Scripture. Read it again, slowly. Take your time. Read it a third time.
- Make observations from the text. Look for commands, repetitions, contrasts, surprises. Ask good questions of the text, questions that make you think and ponder.
- Think about the context and the Original Readers. What was God saying to them?
- Apply the gospel of Jesus to the text. How does the good news about Jesus shape our understanding of what is written in the passage?
- Once you have worked through each step above, ask: What is God's message through this text for us today? How does this apply to your life? What changes in thoughts and deeds should you make?

DISCUSSION GUIDES

We have created weekly guides to help you establish a rhythm and to maximize the learning experience for your group as you explore the practice of *Community* over the coming weeks.

Each weekly discussion guide has the following five sections:

Reflect

These questions will help you understand where each person is starting from and keep track of how it's going as you move through each week of the practice.

Overview

This section provides a helpful introduction to important reasons and ways this practice can help us faithfully follow the Way of Jesus.

Bible Study

Using the Careful Bible Study method outlined above, these passages and questions help us deepen our biblical convictions regarding the practice.

Practice

This is where the rubber meets the road. We don't want to only talk about and study Jesus. We want to follow and be transformed by him. This section gives simple instructions on how to get the most out of the Community practice.

Pray

Each week we want to be praying with and for one another. We also want to celebrate the good things God is doing among us. Take time at the end of your weekly gatherings to pray together.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION

WEEK 1: BE FAMILY AROUND A TABLE

REFLECT

1. What are you hoping to see God do in your life through this practice?
2. What comes up when you think about living in deeper community? Do you feel excited? Unsure? Maybe a little nervous?
3. Can you think of a time when you really felt like you belonged? Like you were part of a group or community? What made that experience stand out?

OVERVIEW

All through the Scriptures, there's a recurring image: a feast. A table overflowing with food, where people from every tribe, tongue, and nation gather as one family... laughing, worshiping, and giving thanks to God.

It's a powerful picture of God's kingdom! And it's meant to shape how we live today.

But most of us today are being formed in the opposite direction: away from the table, away from family. We're trained to live as individuals. The result? We're more connected than ever... but lonelier than ever, too.

That's why living in intentional community isn't just helpful. It's formational. When we gather regularly with others who are following Jesus, it pushes back against the isolation of our age and becomes a witness to the world around us.

But critically, this isn't just about Sunday services. It's about sharing life together. Meals, stories, struggles, and joy. It's about stepping into a new kind of family. Not built on background or blood, but on our shared apprenticeship to Jesus.

What is the starting point of that family? It's simple. It's ordinary.

It's the table.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION

BIBLE STUDY

Read and reflect on Genesis 1:26-27 and Mark 3:13-19, 3:31-35

1. The pronoun “us” is used in Genesis 1:26-27 by God to refer to himself. What does this teach us about God being a God of community, of relationship? What meaning does it hold for those of us who are made in his image?
2. Jesus did not call people to follow him as individuals. He called individuals to follow him in community. Why do you think Jesus called 12, and not 21 or 120? (see Mark 3:13-15)
3. What we call “Church” is not a building or an event; it’s a new kind of family, not based on blood, but on apprenticeship to Jesus. What lessons do you see from Mark 3:31-35?

PRACTICE

This week’s exercise is to **share a meal together**.

If at all possible, begin each of the next three sessions by sharing a meal together.

01 Choose Your Place: Decide on the location where you will host your dinner.

02 Set a Consistent Day and Time: Choose a specific day and time each week that works for everyone, ideally before each of the remaining sessions.

03 Organize a Potluck Style Meal: Have everyone sign up for specific elements (mains, desserts, drinks). Be mindful of any dietary restrictions in the group.

04 Encourage Contributions Beyond Food: Participants can also help with setting and cleaning up.

PRAY

Whether in smaller groups or all together, take time to pray for one another and to ask Jesus to help you grow in sharing community with your fellow believers this week.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION

WEEK 2: SHARE YOUR JOYS AND SORROWS

REFLECT BACK ON WEEK 1

1. What did your experience of sharing a meal together this week look like, and how was it for you? What were some highlights? What challenges or resistance did you experience?
2. How social do you consider yourself to be, and how does that influence your desire or capacity for sharing a weekly meal in community?
3. What is one thing you can do to improve your preparation and planning for the next meal you share?

OVERVIEW FOR WEEK 2

The Lord's Supper didn't start as a ritual, but as a shared meal. This meal was centered on Jesus, celebrated in community, and filled with joy as His people remembered His life, death, and resurrection. And at the center of it all was real connection—with God and each other.

But let's be honest: many of us have sat at a table with other believers and felt the *opposite* of that. Instead of deep connection, conversations stay surface level. We're not really sure how to bring up the real stuff of life—our struggles, questions, or even our joys.

BUT... we were made for more than small talk. We were made to share life.

Our wins and our wounds. Our celebrations and our burdens.

The table can be more than a place for good food. It can be a place of communion. A place where we're fully present with each other, fully open before God.

A place where we're reminded that we're not alone.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION

BIBLE STUDY

Read and reflect on Mark 14:22-24, 14:32-34 and 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

1. This is the practice Jesus left his disciples to organize their life, together, around: sharing His meal together. Why do you think sharing this meal was made central to our life of community?
2. For the earliest Christians, this meal was called “the love feast” (Jude 1:12). It was meant to be an experience of remembrance and joy. How can we practice sharing meals that have Jesus at the center?
3. Jesus shared his joy, but also his sorrow, with his closest disciples. How can you invite others to share their highs and lows with you?

PRACTICE

This week’s exercise is to **go around the table and share the highs and lows of the week.**

- Your highs could be what you’re grateful for, excited about, or something that is currently bringing you joy.
- Your lows could be what you’re grieving, what you’re fearful about, or a moment that was difficult for you during the week.
- Regardless of what your high or low is, be honest and let your community into what you’re celebrating and what you’re finding challenging.

Allow adequate space for this time of sharing. Focus on keeping eye contact with each person as they are sharing, and truly listening as they share.

PRAY

Whether in smaller groups or all together, take time to pray for one another and to ask Jesus to help you grow in sharing community with your fellow believers this week.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION

WEEK 3: CONFESS YOUR SINS

REFLECT BACK ON WEEK 2

1. Was sharing your highs and lows a challenge? What did you find most difficult about this exercise?
2. How did this exercise shift the dynamic or sense of connection in the group for the remainder of your time together?
3. This week's skill for living in community is confessing your sins. How would you describe your experience with confession?

OVERVIEW FOR WEEK 3

There's a barrier to living life in community that's older and deeper than social media, busyness, or dislocation and frequent moves.

We see it all the way back in the garden, in Genesis.

It's shame.

Shame disconnects us from God and from each other. It makes us hide. It's the voice that whispers, "If they really knew me, would they still love me?" Even though Jesus has already answered that question with a loud and clear "Yes!" we often struggle to hear it in our own lives.

That's where confession comes in.

Confession isn't just about admitting sin... it's about bringing what's in the dark into the light. It's how we break shame's power. It opens the door for healing and reminds us that we're not alone.

It's not a quick fix. But it is one of the most powerful practices we've been given to fight against shame and to experience the grace of God and the love of community.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION

BIBLE STUDY

Read and reflect on Romans 7:21-8:2

1. What stands out to you from this passage? What questions do you have?
2. Scripture tells us, "There is now no condemnation." Yet we often still feel shame. Confession brings healing. Read James 5:16. How does confession lead to freedom from shame and hiding?
3. We all struggle with sin and past wounds. We all know the feeling of shame. How does confession help us live in community?

PRACTICE

This week's exercise is to **find a confessor and confess your sins**. This can be any fellow believer you feel safe with and believe would love you no matter what.

01 Ask them to get together and let them know you want to share how you're really doing

02 Start small by just naming an ongoing struggle in your life. Or, depending on the level of trust and the relationship, you can lay it all bare and tell them something you've been hiding for years, like an addiction, abortion, or affair.

03 Be discerning in what you share, but we invite you to be courageous in taking this step deeper into community and towards healing.

If you're the one receiving the confession:

01 Listen with attention and a heart of compassion. When they are done, you can say, "In Christ's name, you are forgiven."

02 Confession is a trust. If someone has confessed a sin or deep wound with you in confidence, keep that confidence and trust. Do not share with others what has been confessed to you unless you have been given permission.

PRAY

Whether in smaller groups or all together, take time to pray for one another and to ask Jesus to help you grow in sharing community with your fellow believers this week.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION

WEEK 4: STAY TOGETHER TO GROW

REFLECT BACK ON WEEK 3

1. How did the act of confession change your sense of shame or your feeling of being disconnected from God?
2. What has this experience shown you about how to confess and how to receive someone else's confession well?

OVERVIEW FOR WEEK 4

In the first century, no one had ever seen a community like the church.

They weren't connected by race, class, or family, but they lived as if they were. At their tables, men and women shared life. They gave freely. They bore witness to the risen Christ.

And... they were a mess.

The letters of the New Testament are full of drama, division, and immaturity. These early believers were real people with real problems. Just like us.

Sometimes we paint a picture of the early church that's more ideal than real. And sometimes we do the same with our own communities. We expect things to be close to perfect. And when it isn't, we pull away.

But here's the truth: *there is no version of church without broken people*. That's actually the point. Because the only place we learn to love like Jesus is in the middle of the mess.

What we need isn't a perfect church.

We need a deeper vision.

A vision to *stay*.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION

BIBLE STUDY

Read and reflect on 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 and Ephesians 4:1-6

1. The church in Corinth was full of drama. They were highly dysfunctional! What were some of the challenges to community that Paul lists in these verses?
2. How does living a life worthy of our calling connect to our commitment to live in community with one another? How does it honor God? (Ephesians 4:1-6)
3. What are the primary challenges or temptations that work against you staying in community?

PRACTICE

This week's exercise is to **reflect and determine what are the next steps for living into community?** What is the Spirit stirring in your heart?

01 Start by closing your eyes and imagining your life 3-5 years from now.

02 What's your ideal vision of living in community?

How do you imagine living more relationally? What kind of close friends do you have? What does your circle of people look like? What rhythms shape how you live together? Take a few moments to dream and write down the kind of future you hope for.

03 What next steps do you sense the Spirit inviting you to take to move toward this vision?

This could be as simple as grabbing coffee with someone to see if friendship could grow, inviting a family over for dinner, asking friends about starting a table group, or meeting with someone for confession. These steps are usually small. Write down 2-3 you could take next.

04 Take a quiet moment to bring your dreams, questions, and fears to God. Ask Him to lead you into deeper community and to shape you into a person of love.

PRAY

Whether in smaller groups or all together, take time to pray for one another and to ask Jesus to help you grow in sharing community with your fellow believers this week.