**Micro-Group (MG) Moment: Considering**

**Why**

MGs

***“Making the most of every opportunity”* as a**

**case for participating in Small and Micro-Groups:**

Opening conversation:

* How have you been doing with *slowing down*? Where are your successes? Where are your recurrent challenges?

Leader: Let’s discuss some quotes from our Lenten book *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by J.M. Comer: *(Have someone read)*

“For now think about Genesis, the opening book in the library of scripture. Our defining narrative says that we’re made in the image of God, but also we’re made from the dust. *Image and dust.* To be made in the image of God means that we are rife with potential. We have the Divine’s capacity in our DNA. We are like God. We were created to image his behavior, to rule like he does, to gather up the raw materials of our planet and reshape them in the world for human beings to flourish and thrive. But that's only half the story. We're also made from the dirt, “ashes to ashes dust to dust”: we are the original biodegradable containers. Which means we're born with limitations. We're not God. We're mortal, not Immortal. Finite, not infinite. Image and dust.” p. 63

* What do you like about this quote?
* What do you NOT like about this quote?
* How are you currently *like* God?
* How are you currently limited as a biodegradable container?

*Have someone else read:* One of our limitations in life is time (the author writes). Which limitations do you feel the most:

* **your body
* your mind
* your giftings
* your personality and emotional wiring
* your family of origin
* your socioeconomic origin
* your education and career
* your season of life and responsibilities that go with it
* your lifespan
* God's call on your life?

What if these limitations aren't something to fight but to gratefully accept as a signpost to God's call on our souls? I love Peter Scazzero's line: "we find God's will for our lives in our limitations." pp. 65-69

* What catches your attention in this quote?
* How might you expand your list of current limitations in light of what Comer listed?

*Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil.*

(Ephesians 5:15) The next-to-last phrase can be translated from the Greek in a few ways:

* Redeeming the time
* Making the most of every opportunity
* Making the most of every chance you get
* How does knowing that “*the days are evil”* change the way you view your day-to-day life?

A quote from Frederick Dale Bruner: “A yoke is a work instrument. Thus when Jesus offers a yoke, he offers what we might think tired workers need least. They need a mattress or a vacation, not a yoke. But Jesus realizes that the most restful gift he can give the tired is a new way to carry life, a fresh way to bear responsibilities... Realism sees that life is a succession of burdens; we cannot get away from them; instead of offering escape, Jesus offers equipment. Jesus means that obedience to his Sermon on the Mount [his yoke] will develop in us a balance and a “way” of carrying life that will give more rest than the way we have been living.” You see the genius of Jesus’ invitation?

There is an emotional and spiritual weight to life… \**Why do you think there’s so much addiction in this world?... People all over the world – outside of the church and in – are looking for an escape, a way out from under the crushing weight of life this side of Eden. But there is no escaping it. The best the world can offer is a temporary distraction to delay the inevitable or deny the inescapable. That’s why Jesus doesn’t offer us an escape. He offers us something far better: “equipment.”\** He offers his apprentices a whole new way to bear the weight of our humanity: with ease. At his side. Like two oxen in a field tied shoulder to shoulder. With Jesus doing all the heavy lifting. At his pace. Slow, unhurried, present to the moment, full of love and joy and peace. **An easy life isn't an option; an easy yoke is.** pp. 86-88

* Discuss Comer’s view about addiction (between asterisks): do you agree or not? What are your choices for distraction?
* Discuss Comer’s final comment (in bold print). Do you agree with this characterization of life and Jesus’ offer?

Jesus’ invitation is to take up his yoke – to travel through life at his side, learning from him how to shoulder the weight of life with ease. To step out of the burnout society to a life of soul rest. Now, this sounds great, but let me call out the elephant in the room: how many of you read this invitation of Jesus and think... *I* think *I'm a follower of Jesus, as far as I can tell*. *But honestly, I* am *tired. I* am *worn out. I live in a low-grade fatigue that rarely goes away. And honestly? I* am *a little burned out on religion. What gives? Am I missing something?* It took me a lot of years – many of them tough sledding – to figure out, yes, I *am* missing something. Something that was staring me in the face for most of my life. p. 80, 81

* As for the elephant in the room: Have you been there in the past? Are you there now?
* Have you resigned yourself to thinking this weariness to life is the way it is going to be?

It's often quoted that “the definition of *insanity* is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” But that's exactly what we do. We get a vision of the kind of life that is possible in Jesus; we go to church or read a book or listen to a podcast; we catch a glimpse of the kind of life we ache for – of emotional health and spiritual life. Our gut immediately says, *Yes*. *God, I* want *that life.* We head home from church with all the willpower we can muster and set out to change. But then we go right back to living the exact same lifestyle. And nothing changes. It's the same cycle on repeat: stress, tiredness, distraction. We feel stuck yet again. And then we wonder, what am I missing? This method of change simply does not work. What does? Honestly, the solution is very, very simple. If you want to experience the life “to the full” of Jesus,

 his non-stop, conscious enjoyment of God's presence and world, all you have to do is adopt not only his theology and ethics *but also his lifestyle*. Just follow his way. That's it. Just take his life as a template for your own. Take on his habits and practices. As an apprentice, copy your Rabbi’s every move. After all, that's the whole point of apprenticeship. pp. 85, 86

**Apprenticeship:**

1. State or condition of learning from a master in an art, trade, or business

2. systematic training of a new generation of practitioners in a basic set of skill and tools

* Does the notion of “nothing changes” hit home for you or it is different for you?
* Does the idea of being an apprentice make sense to you?

Because [Jesus] said yes to the Father and his kingdom, he constantly said no to countless other invitations. Then he turned around and said, “Follow me.”

Again: what does it mean to follow Jesus (or, as I prefer, apprentice under Jesus)? Its very simple. It means you live the way Jesus lived. You take his life and teaching as your template, your model, your pattern.

If a vine doesn’t have a trellis, it will die. And if your life with Jesus doesn’t have some kind of structure to facilitate health and growth, it will wither away. Following Jesus has to make it onto your schedule and into your practices or it will simply never happen. Apprenticing to Jesus will remain an idea, not a reality in your life. p. 93

* Does this excerpt convict or affirm your current life structure?
* Would you say that you have a structure that supports a healthy and fruit-bearing life under Jesus?

Share the following prayer experience as you conclude the material for today. It is adapted from John Eldredge’s *Wild at Heart* book. It mixes in the Apostle Paul’s Armor of God description from Ephesians 6:10-20 with prayer language that you can use to “put on” each piece God provides to prevail in battle against the forces of Satan. The prayer helps you understand the meaning of each piece as well.



Leader: Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with

the belt of truth buckled around your waist...”

**People: Lord, I put on the belt of truth. I choose a lifestyle of honesty and integrity. Show me the truths I so desperately**

**need today. Expose the lies I’m not even aware that I have been believing.**

Leader: Put on “the breastplate of righteousness.”

**People: Lord, I put on your righteousness today sustaining me against all condemnation and corruption. Let me live and battle out of your holiness and purity and defend me from all attacks aimed at my heart.**



Leader: “fit your feet with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.”

**People: I rejoice in the peace I have with you God through Jesus Christ my Lord; I resolve to let that peace drive my relationships with others as well as being ready to battle with enemies, not of the flesh, but of the spiritual realms.**



Leader: “In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one...”

**People: Jesus, I lift against every lie and assault of the enemy the confidence that you are good, and that you have good in store for me. Nothing today is coming that can overcome me, because you are with me. Give me discernment to recognize attacks for what** **they are and deflect them in your name.**

Leader: “Take up the helmet of salvation...”

**People: Thank you Lord for my salvation. I receive it in a new and fresh way from you and I declare that nothing can separate me from the love of Christ (Romans 8:38-39) and the place I will always have in your kingdom.**

Leader: “and take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

**People: Holy Spirit, show me specifically the truths of the Word of God that are needed to counter the assaults and snares of the Enemy toward me and others. Bring the Word to mind throughout the day. Remind me that Jesus faced the devil’s temptations with, “It is written...” (Matt. 4:1-11)**

Leader: “And pray in the Spirit with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert, and always keep on praying for all the saints.”

**People: Holy Spirit, I seek to walk in step with you in everything, communing with you in prayer throughout the day.**

Leader: Jesus’ goal for his original disciples was to make more disciples; I believe I am one of those disciples.

**People: Having been baptized and being taught to obey all Jesus commanded, I carry on His mission to make disciples of others (also known as “fishing for men”or “saving what was lost”). This was God’s plan from the beginning, that as God’s workmanship in Jesus, I would share the good news of Jesus wherever I go in life.**

Leader: Let’s pray this prayer in unison as well:

**People:** **Lord God, in view of your mercy, I offer my body as a living sacrifice, an act of worship — may it be holy and pleasing. Transform me by renewing my mind that I will be able to test and approve what Your good, pleasing, and perfect will is.** (adapted, Romans 12:1-2)

*Bonus material if you have time:*

Let's come back to *another* invitation of Jesus. The one we started this book off with, from Matthew 11. It doesn't get much airplay, but it's my favorite by far. Do me a favor: reread it, but this time slowly, giving each word time to metabolize into your system:

 *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will*

 *give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,*

 *for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest*

 *for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

Okay, let's read it one *more* time. Even slower. Breathe deeply; don't rush this part; God has something for you in this moment:

 *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will*

 *give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,*

 *for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest*

 *for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

Now read Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of those same verses in *The Message*. Again, slowly:

 *Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to*

 *me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show*

 *you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me*

 *– watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I*

 *won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company*

 *with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.*

“Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.” How good is that line? This is an invitation – for all the tired, the burned-out, the stressed, and all those stuck in traffic and behind on their to-do lists, reaching for another cup of coffee just to make it through the day. Anyone like that out there? Let me rephrase that: anybody *not* like that out there? pp. 78, 79