

GOD'S GYM

Developing Your Spiritual Fitness



A Seven Week Small Group Discussion Guide
Hope Lutheran Church

Help For The Facilitator!

Covenant: At your first meeting have a copy of the Hope Covenant Form for everyone so you can go over it together. A group covenant is a valuable tool that can help make sure every group member has the same idea of what the group is about. The process of filling this out at your first meeting should involve everyone in the decision making. Later on when new members join your group you can go over the covenant with them.

Be Prepared: Read through that week's whole lesson so you are familiar with it before you show up.

Interact: Don't have your group read the Bible verse or questions to themselves, always read them out loud.

Share Responsibilities: Don't do everything yourself, you are facilitating this meeting so it is okay to ask, "who would be willing to read the Scriptures?" or "who would be willing to read the discussion questions?" etc. Always end your meetings by deciding who is going to do what at your next get-together. By taking turns facilitating different aspects of your group time you make for a more interesting discussion as well as not making one person feel like they have to shoulder the whole load.

Make Allowances: Don't force people to respond to questions or pray by "going around the circle", allow people to answer as they are moved to do so.

Nonstop Talkers: If someone is dominating the meeting and won't let anyone else speak, it is okay to gently nudge the conversation away from them by saying something like, "thank you, does anyone else have something to add because we want to be sure everyone gets a chance to take part in the discussion."

You Are Not The Answer Guru: Don't feel like you have to have the answer to every question or need to be the first to speak. A little silence is okay after the question is asked and will encourage the quieter members of your group to join in.

It's Not Counseling: It is one thing when someone asks the group to pray for an upcoming operation or tells about how their children or spouse are driving them crazy that week. It is entirely another thing when someone wants to dump shocking emotional problems on the group or wants to dominate meetings by talking about their ongoing problems. Unless you are a trained counselor and this is a group therapy meeting neither you nor your group members are there to solve each other's problems. If someone divulges sensitive personal information in a meeting certainly support them as the moment dictates but then point them toward professional counseling and do not try to fix their problems yourself.

You Are Not Alone: If you are encountering a problem and are not sure what to do about it feel free to give Hope a call and they can connect you with an experienced small group leader. Be sure to attend small group leadership meetings so you can share ideas, problems, and otherwise be supported in this ministry.

Get Training: Periodically Hope will have training sessions for small group leaders. If your group gets going before you have had a chance to attend training it is okay, go ahead with your group. Just be sure to watch for and attend the next available training session.

Prayer: Prayer is an important reminder each time that these meetings have God at their center. Begin and end meetings with a simple prayer; it is okay to write it down beforehand and read it. Any concerns or praises the members want to share can be written down in a notebook as a reminder to pray for them each day and as a journal to help us see how God answers our prayers over time.

To Finish or Not To Finish: Any questions your small group study has are there to help you think about what God is saying to you in the Bible verses. Some questions will not click with the group, feel free to move on but don't rush things if a good conversation lingers over one question. You are being guided by the Holy Spirit and not a list of questions, so don't worry if you can't get through them all.

Help For The Facilitator!

(Continued)

Size Matters: The ideal size for a small group is 6 to 8 members though a few more or a few less is just fine. You should not let the group get to over 12 people in size because it starts to lose many of the advantages small groups have to offer. If your group has grown in numbers to this point it is time to have a conversation about splitting into two distinct groups.

Explanation of Terms

Icebreaker: These help your group get to know each other better in a fun and interactive way. Feel free to use one of your own. You shouldn't spend more than 15 minutes on this.

Opener Questions: These are used to get the brain warmed up and thinking about the days subject in a different way. Don't spend more than 10 minutes on these.

Bible Readings: the Contemporary English Version is used unless otherwise noted. Have someone read the verses out loud.

Discussion Questions: These are here to help you think about what God is saying to you in these verses. Some questions will not click with the group, feel free to move on but don't rush things if a good conversation lingers over one question. You are being guided by the Holy Spirit here and not a list of questions, so don't worry if you can't get through them all.

Details: taking turns facilitating different aspects of your group time makes for a more interesting discussion as well as not making one person feel like they have to shoulder the whole load. Be sure to make these decisions before you leave each week.

GROUP COVENANT

A group covenant is a valuable tool that can help make sure every group member has the same idea of what the group is all about. The process of filling this out at your first meeting should involve everyone in the decision making.

We will meet for 6 weeks, after which we will decide if we wish to continue as a group. If we do decide to continue we will reconsider this covenant.

We will meet on _____ (day of the week)

Our meetings will start at _____ and end at _____ and we will strive to start and end on time.

We will meet at _____ or rotate house to house.

We will take care of the following details before ending our meeting each week: Childcare, Refreshments, and Leadership.

We will agree to the following rules for our small group:

- **PRIORITY:** While we are in this group we will give group meetings priority.
- **PARTICIPATION:** Everyone is given the right to their own opinion and all questions are encouraged and respected.
- **BE APPROPRIATE:** We acknowledge that this is not a counseling session and we will not use these meetings as a way to solve serious personal problems.
- **CONFIDENTIALITY:** Anything said in the meeting is never to be repeated outside the meeting.
- **EMPTY CHAIR:** The group stays open to new people as long as group size and space requirements allow.
- **SUPPORT:** Permission is given to call each other in times of need
- **Other:**

Signature: _____

SPIRITUAL FITNESS

Week 1: Spiritual Fitness: Why bother?

"Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried." G. K. Chesterton

Icebreaker: Would You Rather: read the paired choices below out loud then each individual in the group chooses one and explains why. Yes, for some of these choices you will want to say "none of the above" but you are not allowed to do so. You must choose one or the other! Would you rather:

Be deaf or blind?

Live as a dog or as a cat?

Not be able to read or be incapable of doing math?

Get a promotion at work or win the lottery?

Have a third leg or a third arm?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, we praise you as our Lord and Savior; by your presence you change the world. Give us what we need each day for life, forget our sins and help us forget what others have done to us. Keep us safe from ourselves and the devil. Amen

Opener:

- Tell about a time when your view of the world was changed and what caused it?

Bible Reading: Romans 12:1-2 and Matthew 7:13-14 (The Message)

¹⁻² So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

¹³⁻¹⁴ "Don't look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with surefire, easygoing formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don't fall for that stuff, even though crowds of people do. The way to life—to God!—is vigorous and requires total attention.

Discussion Questions: *Remember, you don't have to finish all these questions.*

- Have you ever made a commitment to improve yourself? How did that work out?
- What caused you to desire that improvement?
- What does it take to accomplish a commitment?
- Hope's Mission Statement is: Called by Jesus to go and do likewise, we love, we experience and we discover God and what God is doing in the world. Is it possible to love, experience and discover anything, let alone God, passively?
- Do you think it's possible to improve yourself spiritually?
- What, if any, benefits do you believe would result from spiritual improvement?
- What does it take to keep a commitment to God?
- What are the reasons, motivation, the drive to improve your spiritual health?

Prayer Journal: *This is everyone's chance to share a **Praise** and a **Problem** with the group. You are not sharing deep dark personal matters here and no one is required to share if they don't wish to. By jotting down everyone's Praises and Problems in the space below you can look it over later this week and pray for everyone. There is nothing better than knowing that a group of people are lifting up your needs to God in prayer!*

Ending Prayer: Dear God, encourage us to begin to exercise our faith in new ways and to let you strengthen our commitment to these disciplines. Thank you for being willing to stick each of us as our loving trainer. Remind us to keep our goals focused on you and to rest in the assurance of the salvation your Son has won for us. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Don't forget the...

Details: For next week: Where will we meet? _____ Who will facilitate? _____
Who will provide refreshments? _____ Who will pray? _____ Who will contact a
babysitter? _____ Who will read the Bible passage? _____

SPIRITUAL FITNESS

Week 2: Prayer: A healthy communication with God

"Ten minutes spent in the presence of Christ every day, aye, two minutes, will make the whole day different." Henry Drummond

Icebreaker: What kind of prayers were you taught as a child and can you recite one?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, we praise you as our Lord and Savior; by your presence you change the world. Give us what we need each day for life, forget our sins and help us forget what others have done to us. Keep us safe from ourselves and the devil. Amen

Opener: *pick one*

- Do you see God giving you the things you need for life?
- If you could ask Jesus a question about prayer what would you ask?

Bible Reading: Luke 11:1-13

¹When Jesus had finished praying, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his followers to pray."

²So Jesus told them, "Pray in this way:

 `Father, help us to honor your name.

 Come and set up your kingdom.

³Give us each day the food we need.

⁴Forgive our sins, as we forgive everyone who has done wrong to us.

 And keep us from being tempted.' "

⁵Then Jesus went on to say:

Suppose one of you goes to a friend in the middle of the night and says, "Let me borrow three loaves of bread. ⁶A friend of mine has dropped in, and I don't have a thing for him to eat." ⁷And suppose your friend answers, "Don't bother me! The door is bolted, and my children and I are in bed. I cannot get up to give you something."

⁸He may not get up and give you the bread, just because you are his friend. But he will get up and give you as much as you need, simply because you are not ashamed to keep on asking.

⁹So I tell you to ask and you will receive, search and you will find, knock and the door will be opened for you. ¹⁰Everyone who asks will receive, everyone who searches will find, and the door will be opened for everyone who knocks. ¹¹Which one of you fathers would give your hungry child a snake if the child asked for a fish? ¹²Which one of you would give your child a scorpion if the child asked for an egg? ¹³As bad as you are, you still know how to give good gifts to your children. But your heavenly Father is even more ready to give the Holy Spirit to anyone who asks.

Discussion Questions: *Remember, you don't have to finish all these questions.*

- What happens to a relationship when you stop communicating and what usually causes that?
- What does the story about the neighbor pestering for bread tell you about prayer and God and have you ever pestered God?
- What are your expectations in prayer and do you think prayer makes a difference?
- Do you think God cares about your regular everyday life?
- Do you feel selfish if you ask for things for yourself? Why/why not?
- Have you ever sat down to pray and found your mind blank or wandering or you can't focus? Is this connected to your expectations of prayer and God?

- What do you think God expects from prayer?
- What motivates you to pray most: worry, praise, anger, need or something else?
- Who is the easiest person for you to talk to, what makes them so easy and can you see God that way, as a person you can talk to?

Prayer Journal: *This is everyone's chance to share a **Praise** and a **Problem** with the group. You are not sharing deep dark personal matters here and no one is required to share if they don't wish to. By jotting down everyone's Praises and Problems in the space below you can look it over later this week and pray for everyone. There is nothing better than knowing that a group of people are lifting up your needs to God in prayer!*

Ending Prayer: *Read Ephesians 1:15-20 in unison and so pray for each other as Paul prayed for the people in Ephesus.*

¹⁵I have heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all of God's people. ¹⁶So I never stop being grateful for you, as I mention you in my prayers. ¹⁷I ask the glorious Father and God of our Lord Jesus Christ to give you his Spirit. The Spirit will make you wise and let you understand what it means to know God. ¹⁸My prayer is that light will flood your hearts and that you will understand the hope that was given to you when God chose you. Then you will discover the glorious blessings that will be yours together with all of God's people.

¹⁹I want you to know about the great and mighty power that God has for us followers. It is the same wonderful power he used ²⁰when he raised Christ from death and let him sit at his right side in heaven. Amen.

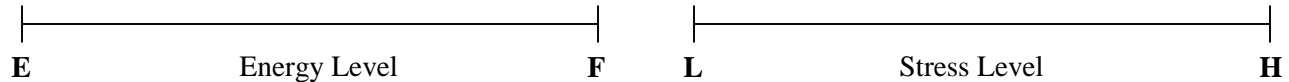
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SPIRITUAL FITNESS

Week 3: Worship: Coming to a realization that God is real

"The Church is the Church in her worship. Worship is not an optional extra, but is of the very life and essence of the Church. ...Man is never more truly man than when he worships God. He rises to all the heights of human dignity when he worships God, and all God's purpose in Creation and in Redemption are fulfilled in us as together in worship we are renewed in and through Christ, and in the name of Christ we glorify God." James B. Torrance

Icebreaker: How is your day going? Place an X on the lines below to represent how you are feeling and then share it with the rest of the group if you wish.



Prayer: Dear Jesus, we praise you as our Lord and Savior; by your presence you change the world. Give us what we need each day for life, forget our sins and help us forget what others have done to us. Keep us safe from ourselves and the devil. Amen

Opener:

- How did you worship as a child?

Bible Reading: Psalm 63:1-8

¹You are my God. I worship you. In my heart, I long for you, as I would long for a stream in a scorching desert. ²I have seen your power and your glory in the place of worship. ³Your love means more than life to me, and I praise you. ⁴As long as I live, I will pray to you. ⁵I will sing joyful praises and be filled with excitement like a guest at a banquet. ⁶I think about you before I go to sleep, and my thoughts turn to you during the night. ⁷You have helped me, and I sing happy songs in the shadow of your wings. ⁸I stay close to you, and your powerful arm supports me.

Discussion Questions: *Remember, you don't have to finish all these questions.*

- What is worship to you?
- How does God meet you in worship?
- What is meaningful worship to you?
- Do you have to be in church to worship?
- Why do you worship? What's in it for you? What's in it for God?
- How does Psalm 63, describe worship?
- In Psalm 63, King David seems to believe that God is real, do you feel that God is real in your life?
- If you worship, do you feel as if God owes you?
- Tell about a special time of worship?
- Is there a difference between worship and thankfulness?

Prayer Journal: *This is everyone's chance to share a **Praise** and a **Problem** with the group. You are not sharing deep dark personal matters here and no one is required to share if they don't wish to. By jotting down everyone's Praises and Problems in the space below you can look it over later this week and pray for everyone. There is nothing better than knowing that a group of people are lifting up your needs to God in prayer!*

Ending Prayer: God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, 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 He will make all things right if I surrender to His will; that I may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with Him in the next. Amen (Reinhold Niebuhr)

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babysitter? _____ Who will read the Bible passage? _____

SPIRITUAL FITNESS

Week 4: Generosity: Blessed to be a blessing

"Think of giving not as a duty but as a privilege." John D. Rockefeller

Icebreaker: What is an act of outstanding generosity that stands out in your mind and what do you think prompted the generosity?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, we praise you as our Lord and Savior; by your presence you change the world. Give us what we need each day for life, forget our sins and help us forget what others have done to us. Keep us safe from ourselves and the devil. Amen

Opener:

- Winston Churchill said: "We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give." Do you believe this to be true? Why or why not?

Bible Reading 1: Matthew 25:14-29

¹⁴The kingdom is also like what happened when a man went away and put his three servants in charge of all he owned. ¹⁵The man knew what each servant could do. So he handed five thousand coins to the first servant, two thousand to the second, and one thousand to the third. Then he left the country.

¹⁶As soon as the man had gone, the servant with the five thousand coins used them to earn five thousand more. ¹⁷The servant who had two thousand coins did the same with his money and earned two thousand more. ¹⁸But the servant with one thousand coins dug a hole and hid his master's money in the ground.

¹⁹Some time later the master of those servants returned. He called them in and asked what they had done with his money. ²⁰The servant who had been given five thousand coins brought them in with the five thousand that he had earned. He said, "Sir, you gave me five thousand coins, and I have earned five thousand more."

²¹"Wonderful!" his master replied. "You are a good and faithful servant. I left you in charge of only a little, but now I will put you in charge of much more. Come and share in my happiness!"

²²Next, the servant who had been given two thousand coins came in and said, "Sir, you gave me two thousand coins, and I have earned two thousand more."

²³"Wonderful!" his master replied. "You are a good and faithful servant. I left you in charge of only a little, but now I will put you in charge of much more. Come and share in my happiness!"

²⁴The servant who had been given one thousand coins then came in and said, "Sir, I know that you are hard to get along with. You harvest what you don't plant and gather crops where you haven't scattered seed.

²⁵I was frightened and went out and hid your money in the ground. Here is every single coin!"

²⁶The master of the servant told him, "You are lazy and good-for-nothing! You know that I harvest what I don't plant and gather crops where I haven't scattered seed. ²⁷You could have at least put my money in the bank, so that I could have earned interest on it."

²⁸Then the master said, "Now your money will be taken away and given to the servant with ten thousand coins! ²⁹Everyone who has something will be given more, and they will have more than enough. But everything will be taken from those who don't have anything.

Discussion Questions: *Remember, you don't have to finish all these questions.*

- Who do you think the Master is that the parable is referring to and where is the generosity coming from?
- How has God been generous to you?.
- Would you call us owners or stewards of what we have been given?
- Like the Master in the parable what do you think Gods expectations are of us in how we use what we have been given?

Bible Reading 2: 2 Corinthians 9:11-13

¹¹You will be blessed in every way, and you will be able to keep on being generous. Then many people will thank God when we deliver your gift.

¹²What you are doing is much more than a service that supplies God's people with what they need. It is something that will make many others thank God. ¹³The way in which you have proved yourselves by this service will bring honor and praise to God. You believed the message about Christ, and you obeyed it by sharing generously with God's people and with everyone else.

Discussion Questions:

- “As you bless others you will be blessed.” How do we bless others and is it our place to do so?
- Can you recall a time in your experience where you have been blessed by blessing others?
- Is this an act of generosity?
- Do you allow others to bless you? If not, what can be the consequence?

Prayer Journal: *This is everyone's chance to share a **Praise** and a **Problem** with the group. You are not sharing deep dark personal matters here and no one is required to share if they don't wish to. By jotting down everyone's Praises and Problems in the space below you can look it over later this week and pray for everyone. There is nothing better than knowing that a group of people are lifting up your needs to God in prayer!*

Ending Prayer: "Lord teach me to be generous. Teach me to serve you as you deserve; to give and not count the cost; to fight and not heed the wounds; to toil and not seek for rest; to labor and not ask for reward, except that I am doing your will. Amen" (St Ignatius of Loyola)

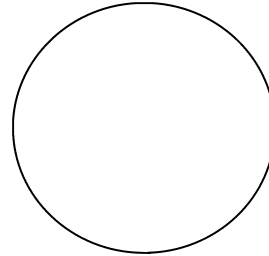
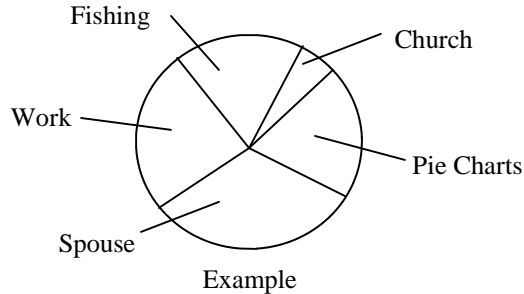
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SPIRITUAL FITNESS

Week 5: Serving: Becoming a servant of all

"If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one." Mother Teresa

Icebreaker: People Pie: Of all the relationships and activities in your life who and what gets the most time? Use the circle below to make a pie chart which shows where your time is spent.



Prayer: Dear Jesus, we praise you as our Lord and Savior; by your presence you change the world. Give us what we need each day for life, forget our sins and help us forget what others have done to us. Keep us safe from ourselves and the devil. Amen

Opener:

- How does service to others fit into the Golden Rule?

Bible Reading: John 13:12-17 and Matthew 20:25b-28

¹²After Jesus had washed his disciples' feet and had put his outer garment back on, he sat down again. Then he said: Do you understand what I have done? ¹³You call me your teacher and Lord, and you should, because that is who I am. ¹⁴And if your Lord and teacher has washed your feet, you should do the same for each other. ¹⁵I have set the example, and you should do for each other exactly what I have done for you. ¹⁶I tell you for certain that servants are not greater than their master, and messengers are not greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷You know these things, and God will bless you, if you do them.

²⁵You know that foreign rulers like to order their people around. And their great leaders have full power over everyone they rule. ²⁶But don't act like them. If you want to be great, you must be the servant of all the others. ²⁷And if you want to be first, you must be the slave of the rest. ²⁸The Son of Man did not come to be a slave master, but a slave who will give his life to rescue many people.

Discussion Questions: *Remember, you don't have to finish all these questions.*

- How can you serve others in (1) your family, (2) your community, (3) church?
- Does serving others make you feel like a doormat? How can you overcome this feeling?
- Tell about a time when you were joyful while serving others?
- If others do not appreciate your service, are you actually serving?
- Why do you think Jesus choose foot washing to demonstrate serving? What would Jesus chose today?
- Jesus says that in order to be great you must become a servant, how does this statement make you feel?
- Can you be a leader and servant at the same time? How does that work?

Prayer Journal: *This is everyone's chance to share a **Praise** and a **Problem** with the group. You are not sharing deep dark personal matters here and no one is required to share if they don't wish to. By jotting down everyone's Praises and Problems in the space below you can look it over later this week and pray for everyone. There is nothing better than knowing that a group of people are lifting up your needs to God in prayer!*

Ending Prayer: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy;
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen
(St. Francis of Assisi)

Details: For next week: Where will we meet? _____ Who will facilitate? _____
Who will provide refreshments? _____ Who will pray? _____ Who will contact a
babysitter? _____ Who will read the Bible passage? _____

SPIRITUAL FITNESS

Week 6: Community: Working together to fulfill God's plan

"At the heart of my politics has always been the value of community, the belief that we are not merely individuals struggling in isolation from each other, but members of a community who depend on each other, who benefit from each other's help, who owe obligations to each other. From that everything stems: solidarity, social justice, equality, freedom." Tony Blair

Icebreaker: What was the most fulfilling job you ever had?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, we praise you as our Lord and Savior; by your presence you change the world. Give us what we need each day for life, forget our sins and help us forget what others have done to us. Keep us safe from ourselves and the devil. Amen

Opener:

- Share a skill or gift God has given you.

Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

¹²The body of Christ has many different parts, just as any other body does. ¹³Some of us are Jews, and others are Gentiles. Some of us are slaves, and others are free. But God's Spirit baptized each of us and made us part of the body of Christ. Now we each drink from that same Spirit. ¹⁴Our bodies don't have just one part. They have many parts. ¹⁵Suppose a foot says, "I'm not a hand, and so I'm not part of the body." Wouldn't the foot still belong to the body? ¹⁶Or suppose an ear says, "I'm not an eye, and so I'm not part of the body." Wouldn't the ear still belong to the body? ¹⁷If our bodies were only an eye, we couldn't hear a thing. And if they were only an ear, we couldn't smell a thing. ¹⁸But God has put all parts of our body together in the way that he decided is best.

¹⁹A body isn't really a body, unless there is more than one part. ²⁰It takes many parts to make a single body. ²¹That's why the eyes cannot say they don't need the hands. That's also why the head cannot say it doesn't need the feet. ²²In fact, we cannot get along without the parts of the body that seem to be the weakest. ²³We take special care to dress up some parts of our bodies. We are modest about our personal parts, ²⁴but we don't have to be modest about other parts.

God put our bodies together in such a way that even the parts that seem the least important are valuable. ²⁵He did this to make all parts of the body work together smoothly, with each part caring about the others. ²⁶If one part of our body hurts, we hurt all over. If one part of our body is honored, the whole body will be happy.

²⁷Together you are the body of Christ. Each one of you is part of his body. ²⁸First, God chose some people to be apostles and prophets and teachers for the church. But he also chose some to work miracles or heal the sick or help others or be leaders or speak different kinds of languages. ²⁹Not everyone is an apostle. Not everyone is a prophet. Not everyone is a teacher. Not everyone can work miracles. ³⁰Not everyone can heal the sick. Not everyone can speak different kinds of languages. Not everyone can tell what these languages mean. ³¹I want you to desire the best gifts. So I will show you a much better way.

Discussion Questions: *Remember, you don't have to finish all these questions.*

- How have you used your gifts or skills to bring glory to God?
- Do you see yourself as an important part of the body of Christ?
- Where do you see yourself fitting in the body of Christ here at Hope?
- What do you consider a spiritual gift?
- What are your attitudes toward spiritual gifts?

- Do you desire to use your gifts more or are you content to continue to use them as you do now?
- What is God's plan for the world and how does your skills and gifts aid in that plan?
- Take turns affirming each person in the group with which spiritual gifts and Christ-like qualities you have noticed in them.

Prayer Journal: *This is everyone's chance to share a **Praise** and a **Problem** with the group. You are not sharing deep dark personal matters here and no one is required to share if they don't wish to. By jotting down everyone's Praises and Problems in the space below you can look it over later this week and pray for everyone. There is nothing better than knowing that a group of people are lifting up your needs to God in prayer!*

Ending Prayer:

Take my life that I might be consecrated Lord to Thee.
 Take my moments and my days; Let them flow in ceaseless praise.
 Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of your love.
 Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee.
 Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from Thee. Amen
 (Frances R. Havergal, Hymn 406 Lutheran Book of Worship)

Details: For next week: Where will we meet? _____ Who will facilitate? _____
 Who will provide refreshments? _____ Who will pray? _____ Who will contact a
 babysitter? _____ Who will read the Bible passage? _____

SPIRITUAL FITNESS

Week 7: Devotions: Opening your heart to God

"God gives every bird its food, but He does not throw it into its nest." J. G. Holland

Icebreaker: What was the last good book you read and why did you enjoy it?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, we praise you as our Lord and Savior; by your presence you change the world. Give us what we need each day for life, forget our sins and help us forget what others have done to us. Keep us safe from ourselves and the devil. Amen

Opener:

- Tell about a time you dedicated yourself to a task. What did it do for you and what sacrifices did you have to make?

Bible Reading: 2 Timothy 3:15-17 and John 1:1-2, 14

¹⁵Since childhood, you have known the Holy Scriptures that are able to make you wise enough to have faith in Christ Jesus and be saved. ¹⁶Everything in the Scriptures is God's Word. All of it is useful for teaching and helping people and for correcting them and showing them how to live. ¹⁷The Scriptures train God's servants to do all kinds of good deeds.

¹In the beginning was the one who is called the Word. The Word was with God and was truly God. ²From the very beginning the Word was with God. ¹⁴The Word became a human being and lived here with us. We saw his true glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father. From him all the kindness and all the truth of God have come down to us.

Discussion Questions: *Remember, you don't have to finish all these questions.*

- What is the best time of day for you and would that be a good time for you to read the Bible?
- What do you believe devotion time should consist of and does that stop you from doing it?
- What are some tools that would be helpful for you (ie. music, songs, devotional booklets, etc.)
- Can you be dishonest with God when you are spending time with Him?
- What can spending time with God do for you?
- What does it do for God?
- Is it ever too late to begin the practice of daily devotions?
- Can you spend daily time with God anywhere or do you have to be in a specific location?
- Reflecting over the past lessons of this study what is God leading you to do or change when it comes to your spiritual health? Write them down below.

To strengthen my prayer muscles I will:

To strengthen my worship muscles I will:

To strengthen my generosity muscles I will:

To strengthen my servant muscles I will:

To strengthen my community muscles I will:

To strengthen my devotions I will:

Prayer Journal: *This is everyone's chance to share a **Praise** and a **Problem** with the group. You are not sharing deep dark personal matters here and no one is required to share if they don't wish to. By jotting down everyone's Praises and Problems in the space below you can look it over later this week and pray for everyone. There is nothing better than knowing that a group of people are lifting up your needs to God in prayer!*

Ending Prayer: Thanks be to you, our Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits which you have given us,
for all the pains and insults which you have borne for us.
Most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother,
may we know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly,
day by day. Amen (St. Richard)

Details: For next week: Where will we meet? _____ Who will facilitate? _____
Who will provide refreshments? _____ Who will pray? _____ Who will contact a
babysitter? _____ Who will read the Bible passage? _____