

# Gospel Community Guide

**THE CIRCUS** is a picture of our culture and the rhythmic flow of our lives in which we are entertained at one moment and mechanisms for entertaining the next. Passive observers and mastered performers who live in a life of constant motion, yet going now where, telling no story other than the ever repeating story of consumption. **THE GARDEN** is a picture of life in the presence of God. A life in which we are participants in the various activities of the Garden. A life that has seasons, requires attentive work, and which has purpose in life, death and rebirth.

In order for us to remain in the Garden life, we must stop being observers or performers; rather we must become participants. We must **CULTIVATE**. Cultivating is the act of fostering a healthy environment for growth, for life, for flourishing in participation with the elements of the garden—the seeds, the soil, the weather, the tools, the insects, the animals, and other gardeners. *Cultivation begins when we recognize that our participation is in someone else's garden, namely God's!*

Our **FAITH PRACTICES** of **Praying the Psalms** and **Practicing Repentance** awaken us to the setting of the Garden as well as prepare us for *cultivating grace* through tools like **Listening**.

## 1 DISCOVERING OUR FAITH PRACTICE OF *LISTENING*

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Listening is the primary act by which we **participate attentively** to what is going on right in front of us. For listening requires both seeing as well as hearing—an intimate, relational exchange. Listening allows us to recognize God in the ordinary context of the Garden Life, and respond with humility, empathy and care.

*Think about a time when you were listened to, and to which you listened to another. How did you feel, what did you experience?*

## 2 PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

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Listening can happen in almost any conversation with any person throughout the day. It just requires you and I being attentive to the Spirit and caring for the person to whom we are listening; regardless of what you might be talking about! To help us get more comfortable with Listening, practice the following exercise in your GC or DNA group:

- 1) Break into groups of two (same gender).
- 2) Before you start the conversation, both of you pray for ears to hear and eyes to see.
- 3) One person share something about your day/week. It could be something positive or difficult.
- 4) The person listening should be praying as the other speaks, listening to the Spirit as well.
- 5) Once the first person is done, switch roles and repeat.
- 6) End your time together praying over one another; speaking back to God the grace he showed you within and through one another.

While this may not be a “normal” conversation, this practice should help you make the spiritual discipline of Listening more normal!

## 3 CULTIVATING GRACE THROUGH *LISTENING*

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Listening is the primary act in cultivation. So, **commit over the next three months to practicing Listening weekly**. Perhaps start with your spouse / roommate, then a co-worker, neighbor or someone you see on the train to work. Prayerfully converse, engage in conversation full of the Spirit! **Don't forget to write** down what you hear, experience, think, feel, question, are convicted by etc.!