

THE SACRED

US

A CALL TO RADICAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

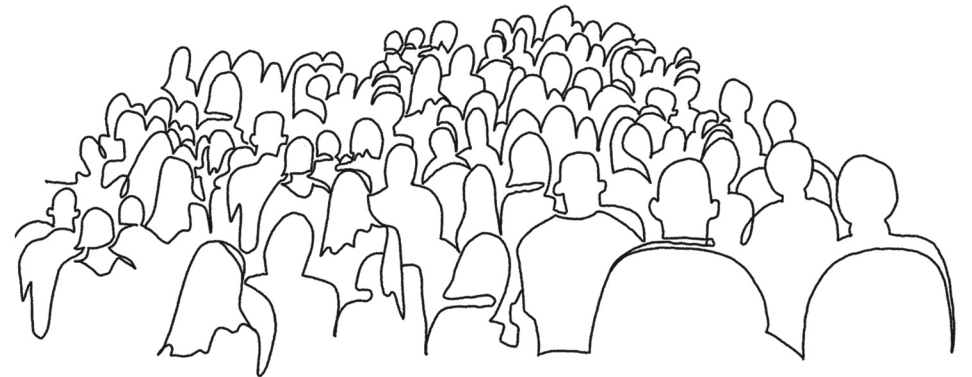


GROUP WORKBOOK

**THE
SACRED**

US

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WORKBOOK**



WELCOME TO THE SACRED US

Do you sometimes feel disconnected from other Christians? Do you find yourself losing interest in the typical church routines? If we want to experience a deeper community, we must be willing to explore a radically different way of living.

We live in a world that celebrates individuality and autonomy, and too many of us struggle to form deep, meaningful relationships. Loneliness is the norm, rich friendships are rare, and the church is no exception. Maybe you've followed the normal Christian programs but still feel disconnected. Is there more? Could things be different?

In this nine-week group study, *The Sacred Us* will explore the principles of biblical community that shift our relationships from casual to intentional. These principles might stretch and challenge you, but they also will help deepen your relationship with God and others. Together, we will explore:

- Proximity that provides opportunity
- Vulnerability that creates connection
- Discipleship that sets direction
- Fun that amplifies grace
- Mission that drives adventure
- Sacrifice that matures love
- Boundaries that sustain growth

HOW TO USE THIS GROUP WORKBOOK

1. **Read through *The Sacred Us*.** Before each group meeting, there will be sections of the book to read. Your group experience will be far more impactful if you've taken the time to read and process the material before gathering.
2. **Prepare for the discussion.** In this workbook, there are discussion questions for each meeting, as well as space to jot down your responses. Take time before your gathering to write down your thoughts.
3. **Watch the video to start your group.** After praying to open the meeting, visit thesacredus.com to find video links for each week. Watch the weekly video before your discussion.
4. **Talk through the questions.** Once you have watched the video, talk through the questions.
5. **Follow through on application and further study.** Every meeting will have a section for application and further study. Leave your meeting and dive in deeper!

TIPS FOR GROUP LEADERS

Thank you for leading a *The Sacred Us* group! Here are a few simple tips to prepare for your gathering:

- **Pray!** Before your first meeting, pray that God would use this group to make a big impact.
- **Confirm all details for the group.** Make sure people know where to go, when the meeting starts, and a contact number in case they get lost.
- **Make the space hospitable.** Set up a space to meet. Provide light refreshments. Make your space as welcoming as possible. Consider using name tags, especially for

the first meeting. Once people arrive, take a few minutes to get to know each other.

- **Don't be too formal.** Treat the group more like family and less like a business.
- **Use the materials provided.** Make sure everyone has a *Sacred Us* book and a *Sacred Us Group Workbook*. Decide how to play the intro videos in your group and test the device ahead of time.
- **Figure out a plan for the kids.** Maybe they are old enough to participate, or perhaps the group hires a babysitter. Make a plan ahead of time.
- **Encourage everyone to participate.** If someone in the group doesn't want to share, that's okay, but try to give an opportunity for everyone to be involved.

GROUP MEETING 1

*Oil and perfume make the heart glad,
and the sweetness of a friend comes from
his earnest counsel.*

Proverbs 27:9

READING

The Sacred Us chapter 1

KEY THOUGHT

The world we live in is lonely, but you were not created to do life alone.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Take a few minutes to make sure everyone is acquainted in your group. Go around and share your name and one thing you love to do.
2. Chapter one explores the idea of *individualism*. Do you tend to be more of an introvert or extrovert? Do you make friends quickly? Why or why not?

3. J.C. Ryle wrote, "Friendship halves our troubles and doubles our joys." What has friendship meant to you in your life? Who have been your closest friends?

4. As you begin this nine-week study of biblical community, what do you hope to get out of it? What are you asking God to do in your life?

5. When have you battled with loneliness? When have you felt isolated? Conclude your group by praying for one another that God would help you grow in the next nine weeks.

APPLICATION

Complete the "Sacred Steps" from chapter 1 on page 34. Focus on step 2: Create a list of reasons you distance yourself from others. Have you been hurt? Are you afraid of something? Invite God to speak to you and heal these hesitations in your heart.

GROUP MEETING 2

You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He's using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building.

Ephesians 2:19–20 MSG

READING

The Sacred Us chapters 2 and 3

KEY THOUGHT

Relationship is not an afterthought in the universe. Relationship is central to all of life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Every person wants to belong. Can you think of a time in your life when you felt isolated? What made you feel that way?

2. Consider the relational dynamic of the Trinity on pages 40–44—how God is *three* and *one*. God is a *fellowship of hearts*; through Christ, he has invited you to belong. How does this understanding of God challenge you? How is it helpful?

3. Pages 55–57 focus on Acts 2:42–47. Read this passage of scripture together. What stands out to you about the description of the early church?

4. Paul describes the church as "the body of Christ" in Romans 12:4–5. Read this passage together. Why is this analogy important? What do you think it means to "belong to each other"?

5. On pages 65–66, Justin outlines four important contributions to the church that only you can make: your story, your strength, your service, and your sacrifice. Share how God might be encouraging you to participate in his church in one of these four areas.

APPLICATION

Complete the "Sacred Steps" from chapters 3 and 4 on pages 50 and 68. Focus on step 3 on page 68: Write down the specifics of your story, your strength, your service, and your sacrifice. Share it with a close friend and hold each other accountable to engage with God's people at a deeper level.

GROUP MEETING 3

Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away.

Proverbs 27:10 NASB

READING

The Sacred Us chapter 4

KEY THOUGHT

Proximity provides opportunity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Begin your meeting by sharing one area of your story, strength, service, or sacrifice that you wrote down from last week.

2. Take a few minutes to discuss the impact of social media on your relationships. How has it had a positive impact on your life? How has it negatively impacted you? Have you ever placed a limit on your social media consumption? Why or why not?

3. On page 71, Justin writes, "The presence of another person fundamentally changes the mental state of the individual." Can you think of a time when this has been true in your life? How has God used the nearness of another person to have a significantly positive effect on you?

4. Pages 82–83 explore the idea of "storage love." How has God challenged you to love the more challenging person? What have you learned?

5. Do you regularly interact with other Christians who spiritually challenge you? What could you do differently to make this more of a priority in your life?

APPLICATION

Complete the "Sacred Steps" from chapter 4 on page 89. Focus on step 2: Ask the three closest people in your life how you could be a better listener. Apply what you learn.

GROUP MEETING 4

We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.

2 Corinthians 6:11–13

READING

The Sacred Us chapter 5

KEY THOUGHT

Vulnerability creates connection.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. No one likes to feel embarrassed. At the beginning of chapter 5, Justin shares his embarrassing story from fifth grade. Can you think of a time in your life when you made an innocent blunder? Can you think of a time when your ego was bruised?

2. Shame is a part of all our lives. Can you think of an area in your life or an instance where you struggled with the feeling of shame?

3. Read together the quote from C.S. Lewis on pages 97–98. What strikes you about what Lewis wrote? What challenges you?

4. Read together the quote from Tim Keller on page 103. Have you personally experienced the power of the gospel as Keller describes it? Explain.

5. As you reflect on the content of chapter 5, how is God challenging you to stretch in the area of vulnerability?

APPLICATION

Complete the "Sacred Steps" from chapter 5 on page 108. Focus on step 2: Isolate one area of sin you struggle with. Ask a mature Christian of the same gender if you could be accountable to them to grow. Commit to reaching out to them anytime you face that weakness or temptation.

GROUP MEETING 5

I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.

Philippians 3:14 MSG

READING

The Sacred Us chapter 6

KEY THOUGHT

Discipleship sets direction.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The word "discipleship" means to live every moment of your life as a student of Christ. Paul called this the "upward call" (Philippians 3:12–14). This means we are called to look up to and become more like him. As you think about your purpose in life, how has following Jesus impacted your perception of that purpose? How would you articulate your life's purpose?

2. On pages 117–118, Justin writes about the "Compound Effect." Can you think of a time when the faith or actions of another Christian inspired you?

3. Read 1 Samuel 23:16–17 together. How did God use Jonathan to strengthen David? What stands out to you about what Jonathan said and did?

4. Review the "IDEAL" way to approach confrontation on pages 122–123. Read the five bullet points together. How is this different from the way you tend to approach confrontation? What could you do differently?

5. Biblical community only works when it's rooted in God's grace through Christ. We each must accept his grace for ourselves and extend his grace to others. How is God challenging you personally right now in this area of discipleship?

APPLICATION

Complete the "Sacred Steps" from chapter 6 on page 126. Focus on step 2: Make a list of five other Christians in your life. Think of one way you can encourage each one of them like Jonathan encouraged David. Act on it this week.

GROUP MEETING 6

I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing them good.

Jeremiah 32:40–41

READING

The Sacred Us chapter 7

KEY THOUGHT

Fun amplifies grace.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This chapter deals with the idea of *fun* from a biblical perspective. What stood out to you?

2. The Bible teaches that God is happy and enjoys blessing you (Jeremiah 32:41). Is this the way you think of God? Why or why not? How does this view of God challenge you?

3. John chapter 2 records Jesus's first miracle of turning water into wine. What do you think this story teaches us about God?

4. Life is full of comedic moments. On pages 142–145, Justin shares about the time he got stuck in traffic without a bathroom. How do you handle messy, embarrassing moments in your life? Can you think of one that you're willing to share? Are you able to laugh at yourself?

5. What do you think "fun amplifies grace" means? How does having fun make grace look more attractive? How can you personally amplify grace in your life?

APPLICATION

Complete the "Sacred Steps" from chapter 7 on page 148. Focus on step 3: Plan a get-together with two or three Christian friends. Don't just spend the night watching entertainment. Enjoy the gift of time together. Play a game, eat a great meal, and swap stories. When the get-together is over, journal about what God taught you and what you learned about fun.

GROUP MEETING 7

*And he who was seated on the throne said,
"Behold, I am making all things new."*

Revelation 21:5

READING

The Sacred Us chapter 8

KEY THOUGHT

Mission drives adventure.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Begin your group by reading Matthew 28:18–20 together. How does this passage apply to you? How has it shaped your sense of personal mission?

2. Have you ever shared about Jesus with someone in your life? If so, how did it go? If not, what do you think is stopping you?

3. Has Jesus's mission to reach people disrupted your life in any way? Has it caused you to stretch or made you uncomfortable? If not, then you will never experience the thrill of adventure God has called you to experience. What is one way that you could risk or stretch for God right now?

4. Justin shares a quote from N.D. Wilson on page 167. Read it together. Your stories may not include giants or lions, but do you have any stories from your experiences with God? Share something that God has done in your life or your family.

5. How might God use your life in his greater mission to make all things new? What can you do this week to step out into that mission in a bigger way?

APPLICATION

Complete the "Sacred Steps" from chapter 8 on page 170. Focus on step 3: Plan to go on a mission trip with other Christians to a third-world country in the next three years. Get outside your cultural box and get a taste of the adventure of God beyond the borders of your everyday routines.

GROUP MEETING 8

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

John 13:34

READING

The Sacred Us chapter 9

KEY THOUGHT

Sacrifice matures love.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This chapter starts with a comparison of the "selfish heart" and the "barren heart." As you reflect on pages 172–177, what stands out in these descriptions? Where do you see reflections of yourself?

2. The love of God doesn't fully compute with our rational minds. It's described as undeserved, costly, and beneficial. How does the idea of *agape* love challenge you personally? (See pages 179-180.)

3. The only way to mature in agape love is to personally sacrifice. Can you think of a time in your life when you made a significant sacrifice for someone else, or someone made a significant sacrifice for you, and the result was growth in love?

4. In this chapter, Justin shares part of the story of the Kendricks' adoption of their daughter. Can you think of a time when you resisted sacrifice? What did you learn?

5. Mother Teresa spoke of the paradox of love: "If you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love." How have you found this to be true in your life? How is God prompting you to love right now?

APPLICATION

Complete the "Sacred Steps" from chapter 9 on page 194. Focus on step 2: Consider giving away something sacred to you—a prized possession, an expensive trinket, or a sum of money. Don't do this out of obligation or duty. Do it to attach your heart to God's heart and grow in love. Pray for guidance about what you should give and to whom you should give it. Then follow through.

GROUP MEETING 9

Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ...For each will have to bear his own load.

Galatians 6:2, 5

READING

The Sacred Us chapters 10 and 11

KEY THOUGHT

Boundaries sustain growth.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This is the final meeting in *The Sacred Us* group study. How has God used this study to impact your life? What stands out over the last eight meetings? What will you take away from this?

2. On pages 200–201, Justin writes about the difference between burdens and cargo. Review the four pitfalls of healthy boundaries on pages 202–203. What pitfall do you think you are most susceptible to? Why?

3. What stood out to you in the six levels of relationship outlined on pages 207–211? Where do you need to intentionally grow?

4. Biblical community only works when Jesus is the foundation. He provides the security and stability our hearts need to help us stick it out when people let us down. Read together the recap on pages 223–224 about how Jesus modeled the seven principles of biblical community. Which one of the seven principles stands out to you most? Why?

5. Fill out *The Sacred Us* Assessment Tool on pages 227–231. Did you have any scores below six? Take some time to pray for one another in the areas where you scored the lowest.

APPLICATION

Don't let your commitment to biblical community end with this group study! Decide right now what your next step will be. Will you continue to meet regularly as a group? When? Will you start a new group? When? Decide your next step and take action.



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