

# File 1 – *Belonging* Study Group Prep

Step 1 – Download needed articles and files from [www.thrivetoday.org](http://www.thrivetoday.org) website

*Asking Someone to Pray*

*Changing Fear to Love* by Dr. Jim Wilder

*Infant and Child Checklist*

*Christian Formation - Living from Our Hearts* (Shepherd's House Ministry)

*True Identity Revealed* by M. Poole

*Who Am I?* by M. Poole

Step 2 – Review Five to *THRIVE*

1. Five to *THRIVE* -

- i. **Belonging** is where the action begins for us to grow. Familiar faces and personal people teach us about life, relationships and God by their words and example. When present belonging can be a life giving environment or when absent, a deadly prison. When our people provide stability, consistency and availability we thrive. When they do not give us what we need or lack necessary ingredients we wither.
  1. **Symptom 1** – Do you and your people develop the sort of bonds that promote growth, peace and joy? Or does your church leave you isolated, hurt and confused? Do relationships in your family and church community encourage individuals to grow and become all they are created to be or do relationships leave you feeling sapped and emotionally malnourished? If you do not know the answers to these questions you will by the end of this study.
- ii. **Receiving and Giving Life** refers to what we take in from our people and environment and the effect it has on our ability to impart life, love and joy to others.
  1. **Symptom 2** – When we receive something deadly it creates an unhelpful cycle in an otherwise natural process. If you recognize addictions, depression and conflicts in your church then you are dealing with a receiving and giving issue. Does fear or people-pleasing direct decisions/behavior?
- iii. **Recovery** – As you will learn from the Life Model, we all need to address deficits in our growth process when life's unexpected curve balls cross our path. We know the purposeful attention to deficits, pain and trouble as recovery. We rebuild when our walls become broken.
  1. **Symptom 3** – Does your church struggle with the inability to return to joy from distressing emotions? Can you and your people peacefully resolve conflict? When we fail to address deficits and are unable to handle emotions we stay stuck in

unresolved emotions, conflict and upset that leave us depressed, anxious and angry, to name a few.

iv. **Maturity** – Refers to the process of our accomplishing specific tasks and completing goals so we fully develop into more complex life stages. Infants become children and adults parents not because their bodies transform but they advance emotionally through life experience and relationships.

1. **Symptom 4** – We recognize the need for maturity in our church community when we observe:

- a. Outbursts
- b. Addictions
- c. Gossip
- d. Reactivity
- e. Rigidity
- f. ‘Self centered, Selfish behavior’
- g. Avoidance driven behaviors

v. **Healthy Hearts** – The joy and blessing of all four previous life ingredients is our ability to live from our heart, also known as having a coherent identity. We see ourselves how God sees us, we live according to desire rather than fear and gracefully stay the same person over time regardless of environment, people or circumstances.

1. **Symptom 5** – We recognize this failure when we see ourselves or our community members acting differently when at church (or around the pastor) and when they are at work, home, school or with friends.

2. **This video and workbook will use a few basic principles from Mark 6.**

i. **Loaves and Fish – Here are steps to guide you through your Study Guide experience:**

1. **Follow Jesus**
2. **Gather in Groups**
3. **Receive ‘food’ and experience satisfaction**
4. **Put into practice your experience and learning**

ii. **See your adventure as, KEEPING FIT FOR THE KINGDOM – so your study can be a ‘Boot Camp’ of sorts! We as believers in Jesus Christ are called to be salt and light to the world around us rather than toxic and deadly. This study is designed to bring out the best in you and your people by addressing the essentials of living.**

1. Athletes and soldiers train, exercise and prepare for their big day so we as Christians should be prepared since we have ‘big days’ all the time. Let’s keep fit!

- a. 1 Timothy 4:8 - *Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is much more important, for it promises a reward in both this life and the next.* NLT

### **Step 3 - Commit your endeavor to prayer**

i. I encourage you to fast as a means to achieve focus and resolve. Ask the Lord to bless your efforts.

1. When faced with an oversized task, Judah fasted before the Lord as an army from Edom advanced against them

2. Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-30 – Ask God for victory over the obstacles that hinder you from becoming all you are created to be!

### **Accountability and Support**

- Each member should develop accountability with one another to attend the group time and follow through with assignments --“I will do my best to be here at 7pm on Sundays”
- Identify and discuss obstacles that will hinder effectiveness to participate
  - Count the cost – be realistic. The more invested you are in the *Belonging* Study the greater likelihood of success
  - Look at the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s wall in Nehemiah. See how the community counted the cost and persevered.
- Discuss solutions to hindrances or possible obstacles
- Ask God for His resources to help you

*This study improves when you are prepared and organized*

## Optional Post Study Group Activities

### *Put into Practice Your Experience and Learning*

1. Discuss your experience with the Life Model Study Group and Exercises
  - a. What would you change about the format?
  - b. How would you improve your experience?
  - c. How do you plan to use this experience in terms of:
    - i. Your life
    - ii. Family
    - iii. Work
    - iv. Church
    - v. Friendships
  - d. How did you experience the Quiet Together Time each week and overall?
    - i. Can you continue the practice?
  - e. How did you experience the purposeful act of paying attention to your body?
  - f. How did you experience the 4+ and Return to Joy stories?
  - g. How have these exercises impacted your life presently? How do you see the exercises impacting you in the future?
  - h. If you set goals, were your goals being accomplished? If not, what hindered your goals?
2. Take turns discussing personal feelings about your bonded group. What about this experience has been beneficial for you and your people these past three months? By ‘your people’ this means your family, friends, church community and co-workers.
  - a. Where do you go from here in terms of relationships with one another?
  - b. Do you plan to nurture the bonds you have formed/enhanced by this group?
3. Discuss ideas or plans to ‘share the bread’ you have gleaned from this study. How do you plan to pass on what you have received from the Life Model experience?
4. Because you have gained momentum in terms of theory and application, what do you foresee happening from this point on – be realistic.
5. Close your meeting by giving affirmations to each other.
6. We invite you to share any feedback with us on our website [www.thrivetoday.org](http://www.thrivetoday.org) or via email [thrivingtoday@yahoo.com](mailto:thrivingtoday@yahoo.com) so we can improve this *Enhanced Study Guide* experience.

## ***Further Suggestions for Applying the Life Model***

Like a spark to a dry forest floor, the Gospel spectacularly spread because a few individuals passionately testified about the Anointed One who changed their lives and brought salvation. Similarly, our testimonies and passions, when shared, leave an impressionable mark on others. If this study has impacted you for the better, then be a part of testifying and sharing this bread with others.

1. Consider leading a Life Model Study Group with new members!
2. Use what you learned from the first round to enhance and improve your group.
  - a. Be flexible with meeting times and schedules
  - b. Take more time for stories and discussion.
3. Present your experience to your church Pastor (s) and Board to inquire about the Life Model being a resource in your church community.
  - a. Present him/her a copy of the Life Model and Study Guide for review and consideration
4. Start a **'40 Day Joy Jubilee'** at your church!
  - a. This is purposeful joy building for you and your people!' Imagine trying to wake up three hours earlier than you are used to waking up each morning. This task will be difficult because you have set a pattern for your sleep schedule. Similarly, our nervous system develops patterns over time, some run on 'high joy' while others run on 'low joy'. Joy is contagious, so here is your opportunity to have a positive impact on your church and family 'nervous system thermostat'.
  - b. Find interested participants who have read the Life Model.
  - c. Once your group is formed, try this simple plan.
    1. Make it a point to tell three 4+ Stories to three different people each day. If you are low on Joy Stories, you can tell the same story if needed. Use 4+ story telling guidelines.
    2. At church functions, share one 4+ Joy Story with at least three people per meeting (this includes before and after church services, meetings, functions, etc.)
    3. A little joy goes a long way. People will see and more importantly, EXPERIENCE the difference over time but you do not have to announce what you are doing. Of course, if someone asks then gladly tell them the truth.
    4. This simple exercise will not only bless you, but create an environment that is full of joy and people who are glad to be together.