



Pursuing God's Will Together

Week 2



The Seed
Community

Question for Individual Reflection

How do you respond to the idea of moving beyond teamwork to spiritual community in your current leadership group? Pay attention to resonance and resistance. Even (and perhaps most especially) if you feel resistant, don't judge yourself but rather be curious about why you are resisting and where that resistance is coming from. Talk to God about it or write about it in your journal.¹

What do you notice about how the culture of your church or organization is shaping you and others? Does participation in this culture encourage and support spiritual transformation, or are there dynamics in the environment that actually work against the process of transformation?²

¹ Barton, Ruth Haley. Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups (Transforming Resources) . InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

² Ibid

Cultivating Community at the Leadership Level requires:

1. Great clarity and intentional commitment to values that undergird community
2. Shared practices that help us live out our values and keep us open to the transforming presence of Christ
3. Clear covenant that ratifies or makes real our intent to live together this way

Values That Undergird Community

For Individuals

Values come from deep inside the individuals involved, from aspirations that have called the group together, commitments that have shaped their existence.

Biblically sound, relationally healthy, spiritually enlivening, meaningfully expressed in their context.

Question: What values currently shape your life and ministry practice?

For Groups









Exercise

What is the culture of your organisation? Invite each member of your team to share a story from your life together that illustrates lifegiving culture and values, rather than just listing them. Record all the stories. Get the recording transcribed and then produce a word cloud from this link: <https://www.wordclouds.com/>.

Here is an example of one we did for the Seed Community:


Practices that Anchor our Values

Practices of:

-  Transformation
-  Love
-  Stability
-  Submitting to Discernment
-  Listening
-  Truth Telling
-  Confession
-  Conflict Transformation

For Group Discussion

Transformation

-  What are the practices, relationships and experiences that will help us stay in a process of spiritual transformation—together? How can we order our life together so we are becoming increasingly abandoned to God rather than being driven by our egos and caught up in our own compulsions?³

³ Ibid

- ④ Take time as a group to find out if each person has a rule of life in place and how they are experiencing God in that context. (If some don't have a rule of life, encourage them to clarify their commitment to "practicing transformation" by establishing such a rhythm.) Craft a personal rule of life as part of your commitment to each other—to do whatever it takes to bring a transforming self into the leadership setting.

Love

- ④ Discuss what it would look like for you to love each other as you lead together. What will your commitment be? Allow time for each individual to share what makes them feel loved and valued so you can love each other intelligently rather than hoping to stumble into it by accident.

Stability

- ④ Talk about the importance of stability in relationships and what stability might look like for your leadership group. What difference would it make? What are you willing to commit yourselves to in this regard?

Discernment

- ④ If your group has gotten this far, it can probably be assumed that you are committed to the value of discernment, but now take some time to discuss how you will practice this in concrete ways. What kinds of decisions (both personal and corporate) do you agree warrant discernment with the group? Can each of you commit to bringing these kinds of things to the group?
- ④ How well does your group do at paying attention and processing inner dynamics such as fear and resistance, desire and calling, consolation and desolation? How will you demonstrate respect for the inner dynamics that take place within the souls of spiritual people? How will you create space for paying attention to them?

Truth Telling

- ④ It is recommended that your team all read Pursuing God's Will Together and look and talk through the case studies on p. 141-142. Allow yourselves to fully enter into each of the scenarios as a way of clarifying what your commitment to truth telling with each other actually means. This commitment needs to come from inside each person rather than

simply being imposed from the outside. Talk about these scenarios together.

Confession

- ④ What is the desire and willingness of the group to practice confession? How might you incorporate confession into your patterns of being and leading together?

Conflict Transformation

- ④ Again read the relevant chapter of Pursuing God's Will Together. Discuss together as a team how they feel about making the proposed commitments on pages 146-47 in how you handle conflict?4

4 Questions taken from Pursuing God's Will Together


Intense conflict is an invitation to turn to God, who wants to lead us forward into restored relationships and into new organizational processes⁵.

Covenant

“We bind ourselves to each other in times of strength so that in moments of weakness we do not become unbound.”

Jeff Greenway

For Individuals

-  What is your previous experience with covenant making and keeping? In your experience, what is its value? What are the challenges? How do you feel about making a covenant with your leadership community?

5 Jan Wood, Lon Fendall and Bruce Bishop, *Practicing Discernment Together*

For Groups

1. Capture in writing the guiding values and principles you wish to embrace together. List everything important to the group.
2. Clarify which practices will help you to live each value. Be as specific as you can be at this time.
3. After you have completed the rough draft of your values and practices, distribute to everyone in the group the record of what has been discussed, giving them time to reflect on whether there is anything missing or that needs to be corrected. They also need to agree that they are willing to commit to these values and practices.
4. Decide together on a meaningful sign or ritual that would give you the opportunity to commit to the covenant as a group. It doesn't need to be anything fancy or overdone, but it should have some weight to it—something that members can point to as a reminder of the commitment they have made.

A Prayer of Commitment

As Abraham left his home and the security of all he had known,

So we lay down what is past and look to the future.

As Elijah left his life in the company of others to seek God in the wilderness,

So we commit ourselves to seek god in the wilderness of our own silence.

As Bartimaeus cried out to Jesus and begged for mercy,

So we cast ourselves on God's mercy for our own healing and transformation.

As the Israelites travelled together in community as the disciples gathered around the presence of Christ,

So we commit ourselves to god and to each other for the journey of spiritual transformation and discerning god's will together in this community.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Thanks be to God!⁶

⁶ Ruth Haley Barton

Recommended Reading

Pursuing God's Will Together, Ruth Haley Barton

Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership, Ruth Haley Barton