

## Fall 2017 Discipleship Group Materials

# Contents

Introduction	1
Week 1: Our Vision	5
Week 2: Growth	7
Week 3: Community	10
Week 4: Servanthood	13
Week 5: The Challenge	15
Week 6: Commitment Sunday	19
Annex: Additional Reading (from <i>The Journey</i> )	20



# Introduction

As we enter the fall and resume the routine of everyday life, we begin a six-week series that is intended to inspire us to live out our vision together. We will look at the three interwoven aspects of the vision—growth, community and servanthood; how these aspects have played out in the life of our church over the last few years; and how we will address them in the coming year. We will think through what Cedar Ridge means to each of us personally, and challenge ourselves to renew our commitment to our vision for following Jesus.

Through this series, and the associated discussions and activities, we will ask ourselves how we can personally and collectively follow Jesus in ways that bring heaven to earth. This is what Jesus lived and taught about the Kingdom of God, and what we seek through our vision. Jesus' teaching was grounded in everyday realities—and as we develop a deeper understanding of what discipleship looks like at Cedar Ridge, we will consider practical ways we can move forward in growth, community and servanthood over the next year. Similarly, Jesus challenged people to consider the cost of following him (Luke 14:25-33), and through this series, we will all be invited to take up the challenge to commit our time, talents, and financial resources to our vision to follow Jesus.

## Overview

Our vision is special to us. It was written through a yearlong consultative process 10 years ago, and reviewed and reaffirmed through a strategic planning process over the last 12 months. Some aspects of the vision have played out in unexpected ways, or have taken on new dimensions. Some of the wording resonates more with some of us than with others. And that is okay! It is not the *statement* of the vision that is special; it is the vision itself.

Each week we will explore an aspect of our vision, and celebrate recent tangible results of living out that aspect in terms of relationships established, activities conducted, and—most importantly—lives changed. We will look at opportunities in our new annual plan to apply the vision to our own personal lives, as well as collectively as a community. And each week, we will challenge ourselves to commit to this aspect of our vision in the coming year.

The six weeks of the series will cover the following themes:

- *September 17: Our Vision*  
What our vision means and what the Kingdom of God could look like here and now; reflecting on the challenge to follow Jesus—individually and as a community; and renewing our commitment for the year ahead.

- *September 24: Growth*  
Exploring what the practice of holistic spiritual growth looks like; and considering various aspects of regular, feasible and sustainable practices that will help us grow.
- *October 1: Community*  
What it means to be a diverse community—as both a means and an end; and how we can become more accepting, vulnerable, empathetic and intentional in order to be that kind of community.
- *October 8: Servanthood*  
How the various ways we serve reflect the way of Jesus; and how understanding our oneness with God and others can make servanthood a joy and a privilege.
- *October 15: The Challenge*  
Ensuring our commitment to following Jesus is reflected in our priorities, use of resources, and relationships; and how each of us can contribute to the achievement of our vision.
- *October 22: Commitment Sunday*  
Welcoming new members; celebrating the inclusive call to experience, be, and share the good news; reaffirming our individual journeys; and expressing commitment to our vision for following Jesus together.

## Practicalities

### Messages

In this packet you will find the discussion questions for weeks 1-5. (Note: there are no discussion questions for week 6, the final week in this series.) The questions assume you have heard the message for that week, so if you were not able to be at Cedar Ridge that Sunday, please listen or watch the message online ([www.crcc.org/messages/](http://www.crcc.org/messages/)).

### Additional Reading

Excerpts from *The Journey*—Cedar Ridge’s introduction to our community—are included as additional reading in the annex. Although you can read them at any time, the excerpts are particularly pertinent to the following weeks:

- Week 2, Growth—*An Approach To Understanding Reality*, and *Spiritual Disciplines*
- Week 3, Community—*Unity Does Not Mean We Are All The Same*
- Week 5, The Challenge—*Embracing Mystery and Living Devotedly*, and *Reflecting on Commitment and Membership*

### Expressing Commitment

This series is intended to inspire us to a greater level of commitment to following Jesus—both through personal discipleship, as well as through engagement in the Cedar Ridge community.

This is not meant to be a heavy, guilt-inducing theme: Jesus' yoke is easy and his burden is light. Rather, it is an exciting opportunity to partner with God in the work of reconciliation and healing—an invitation to help make the world a better place.

- **Response cards:** On week 5, we will distribute cards that provide space for people to write how they will express their commitment to following Jesus at Cedar Ridge over the next 12 months. (A copy of this card is also included on page 17 of this workbook.) Everyone is encouraged to prayerfully consider their responses during week 5, and record them on the card.

Response cards can be returned on week 6 (Commitment Sunday) and placed in one of the offering towers. Financial pledge information will be entered into the person's giving record in CCB. (The information will only be visible to the person submitting the information.) Information related to specific serving opportunities at Cedar Ridge will be passed on to the relevant ministry area leader. The cards will then be placed in sealed envelopes, and they will be mailed back to the people who submitted them in 3 months' time, as a reminder to us of our commitments.

- **Membership:** One way to express commitment to our community is to become a member. If you feel aligned with our vision and values, and are not yet a member, we encourage you to prayerfully consider taking this step—regardless of how long you have been attending Cedar Ridge. More information on membership is included at the end of the annex. Please inform Matthew Dyer ([matthewd@crcc.org](mailto:matthewd@crcc.org)) or any of the other pastors if you would like to become a member.

## Additional Activities

The fall is an exciting season at Cedar Ridge! It is a time when we recommit to different ministry areas, review our plans and finances, and reach out to our community in friendship and service. Specific opportunities related to our annual plan goal of ***growing as a safe and welcoming community, confident in our oneness with God and one another in Christ*** are described below. Let's all make an extra effort to make visitors and newcomers feel welcome.

### **Movie Nights—Fridays September 15 and 22, and October 6, from 7-9 PM**

The films selected this year—*Hidden Figures*, *The Eagle Huntress*, and *How To Train Your Dragon*—challenge us to question our assumptions and prejudices, including those related to race, gender, and the role of aggression. There will be free popcorn and hot chocolate, so grab a blanket or chairs, invite your neighbors, and come along.

### **Ministry Fair—Sunday September 17, immediately after the service**

Stay after the service to learn about the areas we are involved in as a community, sign up to volunteer, join a discipleship group, or make a suggestion for a group you would like to lead or participate in. There will be ice cream, prizes, and fun for all ages!

**Multi-faith Day of Service—*Saturday September 30, 9AM-1PM***

We will gather at Cedar Ridge for a potluck breakfast at 9AM before heading out in groups to local community projects. Members of two neighborhood mosques (the Baitur Rahman Mosque on Good Hope Rd, and the Idara-e-Jaferia Islamic Center on Spencerville Rd) have been invited to participate with us. Sign-ups are on our website.

**Annual Meeting—*Sunday October 1, immediately after the service***

In addition to voting on Board candidates, we will take an in-depth look at our finances and plans for the coming year. While only members are permitted to vote, we encourage everyone to participate in the meeting. Chili, soup, and bread will be served for lunch. Please bring a crockpot to share. Childcare (and a lunch of cheese pizza) will be available.

**Harvest Festival—*Saturday October 14, 4-7PM***

Invite your neighbors and friends to celebrate with us another bountiful growing season on the farm. There will be food trucks, live music, hayrides, pumpkin carving, face painting, and more. All activities are free, but we ask that you bring a non-perishable food item to benefit local organizations addressing hunger in our area. Pick up postcards in the Commons and give them to friends, or post them in local coffee shops and grocery stores.

**Racial Reconciliation Potluck and Presentation—*Sunday October 22, after the service***

Following the service on Commitment Sunday, there will be a potluck lunch followed by a 15-minute presentation by the racial reconciliation team's action research group on inequity in public schooling in our neighborhood. Please bring a dish to share that reflects your cultural heritage. Everybody welcome!

## **Fall Discipleship Series 2017**

### **A Vision for the Journey**

## **Week 1: Our Vision**

We are a community of hope and transformation that dares to dream of heaven on earth. That's our vision in a nutshell, and the driving force behind it all is our dedication to following Jesus. We are a community of hope because deep in our hearts we dare to believe God is good and has not given up on us: not on any one of us, not on humanity as a whole, and not on our planet. We are a community of transformation because we dare to believe that change is possible, and so we lean into that challenge. This transformation is very personal. Rather than pointing the finger at what is wrong with the world (and others!), we accept that we can only really take responsibility for our own transformation. Each of us has to decide how willing we are to change; how much we are willing to partner with God in being the change we want to see in the world. But this transformation is also very public. Change is hard and we can't do it alone. We need each other! That's why we live out our vision in community. And together we engage in the public arenas of simple kindness, healing relationships, helping those in need, and pursuing justice in society. We dare to dream the world can be a better place!

We make this hope real and engage in transformation through following Jesus, and as we do so, we experience a new reality in our own lives and in the world. Jesus called this the "Kingdom of God" and said it's like heaven coming to earth. This series is all about our vision to follow Jesus, and in this first week we will focus on what our vision means and what the Kingdom of God could look like here and now. We will reflect on the challenge to follow Jesus—individually and as a community—and have an opportunity to renew our dedication.

### **This week's discussion questions**

1. Watch the video of our vision, which we played in the service on Sunday (and can be found on our website). What inspires you about this? What do you find most challenging? What new response from you does it evoke?
2. What struck you about the message on Sunday? What did you find most helpful? What was most difficult or challenging?
3. Read Matthew 4:17-25. The speaker on Sunday suggested there are responses highlighted in this passage: repent and follow. What does "repentance" mean to you, and what could it look like in your life? What does following look like for you, and how do you need to respond?

4. Share with the group how you responded personally at the Ministry Fair on Sunday. How are you going to serve within our community?
5. The following questions relate to our church objectives for this year as part of our annual plan. (You can read more about our annual plan at [www.crc.org/our-annual-plan](http://www.crc.org/our-annual-plan).) This year we our intention is:
  - a. To strengthen our commitment and skills to be a safe place—as individuals and as a community, to listen well, practice empathy, and be receptive to hearing God’s heart for a situation.
    - What can you do to create “safe space” around you? Where do you feel most challenged to do this (home, family, work, church, other)? For whom specifically do you need to make safe space?
  - b. To deepen and broaden our relationships with one another—to intentionally experience more of God’s life together.
    - How do you need to reach out relationally? With whom do you need to be more vulnerable? How can you deepen your relationships as a group?
  - c. To increasingly reach out together to others—to share our vision with newcomers, neighbors and partners with confidence, authenticity and humility.
    - With whom do you feel especially drawn to share our vision? How can you overcome some of the barriers that keep you from sharing?
6. Spend some time praying for one another as we consider our personal responses to the three objectives listed above.

### **Practice during the week: Creating safe space**

This week, identify one person outside of our church community for whom you will deliberately work at creating safe space. This could be a friend, co-worker, neighbor or relative; someone you like or someone you find difficult. Choose someone you are likely to encounter several times each week. Begin by praying for that person and intentionally extend compassion towards them in your imagination. Imagine what complete acceptance of them would look like, and ask God to help you be that to them. Each day you encounter them be very mindful of your intention to create safe space for them: in how you listen, in how you speak, and in your physical presence to them. Adopt a compassionate posture towards them, and cultivate this each time you encounter them. Make a commitment not to criticize them and only to say encouraging things. As you feel is appropriate, try to show vulnerability—perhaps by sharing something about yourself that represents a weakness or a need you have. Don’t try to control any outcomes, but simply create safe space and see what happens. Reflect on your interactions at the end of each day and write down anything noteworthy. Come to the next group discussion prepared to share your findings.



## **Fall Discipleship Series 2017**

### **A Vision for the Journey**

## **Week 2: Growth**

Jesus came with an offer of real, meaningful, and fulfilling life (John 10:10). He gives us hope that such life is possible, and calls us into the transformation that this kind of life requires. It's an inspiring offer and a deep challenge to change—and both lie at the heart of our vision. Change is inevitable: One way or another, for good or for bad, we are all being transformed. The way we spend our time, energy and money, what we value, what we pay attention to, and where we look for inspiration all have a profound cumulative impact on our spiritual formation, whether we are aware of it or not. But the good news is that we can be intentionally aware and proactive about our spiritual formation. Through following Jesus, we can become “apprentices” and learn this new way of life (Matthew 11:28-30). We call this “growth.”

This week, we will explore what the practice of holistic spiritual growth looks like, and consider various aspects of regular, doable and sustainable practices that will help us grow. As we work at transformation of our inner lives, we see an outflow in a more positive presence and personal impact on the world. As we encounter the challenges of living in the world, we become more compassionate, more aware of our need to change, and more motivated to work at our inner lives. This “rhythm of grace” can become a vehicle for God’s Spirit to create in us the new life that Jesus talked about and embodied.

### **This week’s discussion questions**

1. What struck you about the message on Sunday? What did you find most helpful? What was most difficult or challenging?
2. Reflect alone on the following for a few minutes, and then break into groups of 2 or 3 to share your reflections:
  - a. What kind of person do you wish to be? What kind of qualities would you like to embody?
  - b. What are you intentionally doing (practicing) to become that person?
  - c. Consider what impact (intentional or not) the following have on your spiritual formation: money, popularity, status, choices, attitudes, work, entertainment, friendships, family, upbringing, and religion. What other forces shape you?
3. Read Matthew 11:28-30. What does this kind of followership sound and feel like? In what ways is it easy? In what ways is it challenging?

4. Read Ephesians 3:20 and 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. With question 3 in mind, in what ways do you need to ease up, lessen the load on yourself, and make more room for God's Spirit in your life? In what ways do you need to take on the challenge of the yoke and make more effort?
5. In the message on Sunday, the speaker shared 7 (non-exhaustive) elements of spiritual growth (see textbox). For each one discuss the following:
  - a. What are you already doing to engage with this element? What can you do to celebrate this aspect of your life?
  - b. What inhibits this in your life and what do you need to stop doing?
  - c. What is a new way you could engage with this?
  - d. How could you specifically lean more on God's Spirit with this?
  - e. What specific effort do you need to make?
  - f. How could you encourage and support one another with this as a group?

#### **Elements of Spiritual Growth**

**Love:** Knowing and experiencing that God completely and unconditionally loves us

**Honesty:** Regularly reflecting honestly on our own lives; accepting that we are not perfect and that we need to change

**Surrender:** Not trying to fix ourselves the best way we or others see fit, but embracing silence and stillness to hear and receive what God is saying to us

**Practice:** Developing spiritual habits (spiritual disciplines) that intentionally open us to God's presence and action within us

**Time:** Remaining faithful to spiritual practice and giving time for God to transform us

**Healing:** Recognizing when we are stuck and need help, and seeking that from others

**Community:** Understanding we need help, encouragement, support and challenge from one another

6. Spend some time praying for one another to become the kind of people we long to be.

#### **Reflection during the week: Who do you want to become?**

Refer back to question 2 above and spend some time prayerfully identifying one way in which you want to grow and change. What is that quality? What does it look like? What makes you want to become that? Are there any ways in which you exhibit it already? How could you build on that?

Next reflect on your current life, habits and behaviors. Are there any that inhibit this quality in you? What do you need to stop doing? How will you stop? Can you stop on your own, or do you need help to stop?

Now reflect on who might be able to help and support you in this transformation. With whom could you share your intention to change as a source of encouragement as well as accountability? Who do you know that exhibits this quality and how might you learn from them? Try to identify one person who you can share with—and then share with them!

Prayerfully consider ways (practices) that might help you grow. Discuss this with your confidante and/or your group, and together work out a simple practice to help you grow.

Prayerfully invite God to empower you in this growth, and commit to a specified timeframe that seems appropriate to you. Make a commitment to discuss progress with your confidante and/or group at the end of the timeframe, and evaluate next steps.

## **Fall Discipleship Series 2017**

### **A Vision for the Journey**

## **Week 3: Community**

Relationships and being a community together are at the heart of our vision. Community is both the means of our followership and the end. Through caring, supporting, encouraging and challenging one another in love, we acquire strength for the journey (the means). We can't walk this path alone and were never meant to. As we grow together and embrace one another with radical love, acceptance and forgiveness, we become the hope and dream God has for humanity (the end). In Jesus' words, we become one, just as he and the Father are one (John 10:30; John 17: 20-23). The metaphor of the Trinity to describe God is a wonderful expression of the loving community that is God. God is not defined by dogma, but by loving relationship. Jesus demonstrated this in how he lived, how he related to people, and what he called his followers to do.

This week, we will take up the challenge to be a community both as a means and an end. The degree to which we experience this loving community is a measure of the presence of the Kingdom of God—a measure of the presence of heaven on earth. This is both appealing (we all long for this kind of relationship and sense of belonging) and incredibly challenging (we all know how hard it is to experience deep relationships with those who are closest to us, let alone with those who are least like us). We'll explore what it means to be a diverse community rather than one preserved for people who all look, think, believe and behave the same. And we'll wrestle with how we can become more accepting, vulnerable, empathetic and intentional in order to be that kind of community.

### **This week's discussion questions**

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What was difficult for you?
2. The speaker on Sunday talked about community as both a means and an end. In what ways have you experienced it in each of these ways? In which aspect do you feel you need to grow most or make more of a priority?
3. Read John 10:30 and John 17: 20-23. Jesus is talking about "oneness": the reality that we are all part of God and God is part of us, and that therefore we are all part of one another.
  - a. How could the Trinitarian concept of God help us see God in fresh ways?
  - b. How could this inspire us to a deeper experience of community?

4. The speaker on Sunday shared four characteristics of community: acceptance, vulnerability, empathy and intentionality. For each one, consider the following:
- a. Acceptance
    - In what ways do you need to be more accepting?
    - How can you personally “create safe space” for others?
    - How could you be a safer space as a group?
  - b. Vulnerability
    - Read James 5:16 and Romans 15:1-2 and discuss. In what ways do you need to let yourself be more known by others?
    - What keeps you from this?
    - How could you be more vulnerable to one another as a group?
  - c. Empathy
    - Read Philippians 2:1-4 and Romans 12:14-16 and discuss.
    - With whom do you need to be more empathetic?
    - How could you empathize with one another more as a group?
  - d. Intentionality
    - Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11-15 (The Message is a good version for this). How do you need to be more intentional about reaching out, and to whom?
    - What changes in practice and habit do you need to adopt as a group in order to be more proactive with one another about community?
    - What do you need to do as a group to be more open and proactive about reaching out to include others? Discuss what might inhibit you from doing this.
5. How might following through on the issues in question 4 make life messier for you as an individual and as a group? How does what you’ve discussed about acceptance help you deal with this? How can you support and encourage one another as a group (and as a church) as we reach out to include others within and outside our church community?
6. Pray that your group and our church as a whole will be a safe, welcoming and accepting place for people within and outside our community.

### **Reflection during the week: Reaching out**

For this week’s practice, prayerfully consider a person for whom you feel challenged to reach out. This could be the same person as in your week 1 practice, or someone completely different. It could be someone within our church community or outside of it. Choose someone who you think would appreciate being more included; someone who might feel or be on the outside. Think through what would be an appropriate way to

include them and make it personal. Invite them to dinner and cook them your favorite dish; take them to your favorite restaurant, or invite them for coffee. Invite them into a setting where it's possible to chat and listen. When you get together, make your priority asking about their story and listening intently. Consider ways you can continue to welcome them into your friendship circle.

## **Fall Discipleship Series 2017**

### **A Vision for the Journey**

## **Week 4: Servanthood**

Jesus, who bore the fullness of deity, came not to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:25). Because we are very familiar with the story of Jesus, this no longer shocks us. But Jesus' life is a revelation to us that God is love, and love is made real through selfless servanthood.

Servanthood is vulnerability: It puts the interests of others first, and thereby risks our own interests. It means taking on a lifestyle of serving whenever needs arise; making unseen and uncelebrated choices about what we consume and where it comes from; caring about our impact on the environment; sharing with others; and standing against systems of injustice, without hope of personal gain and even at the cost of our privilege. Servanthood is God's heart-cry to humanity, embodied in Jesus, which lovingly draws us back to oneness with God. And servanthood is the cry of the human heart to one another: "I am with you! I am part of you, and you are part of me."

Servanthood is intimately connected to growth and community: we grow as we serve, and through serving, we become more like Jesus. To grow together, but not serve together, would risk a self-centered view of what it means to be a church community. This week, we will consider how the ways we serve—both individually and collectively—reflect the way of Jesus in being holistic, joyful, generous, empowering of others, and highly relational. We will also focus on how understanding our oneness with God and with others can make servanthood a joy and a privilege.

### **This week's discussion questions**

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What was difficult or challenging for you?
2. Share with the group an example of how you have served through Cedar Ridge this past year.
  - What inspired you to serve in this way? Were there any obstacles you had to overcome?
  - What impact did it have on your own spiritual journey?
  - How does your relationship with Jesus affect how you serve?
3. Read John 13:1-17. We may not find this well-known and culturally-removed story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet shocking. Think of some modern equivalents for the lowly task Jesus undertook.

- With a modern equivalent in mind, consider how you might have responded to Jesus undertaking an unclean and/or humiliating task on your behalf.
  - Why do you think Peter objected? What does this reveal about Peter's view of what it meant to be a leader?
  - What underlying fears and emotions hold you back from serving in menial tasks?
4. The speaker on Sunday said that our view of servanthood can be characterized by the following (this is not an exhaustive list):
- a. Not simply individual acts of service, but a whole way of selfless living
  - b. Not a duty to perform, but a privilege to partner with the Divine and experience God through others
  - c. Expressed through both immediate, generous kindness *and* long-term, systemic justice
  - d. Long-term and relational to be effective and transformational

How do the ways you serve (through Cedar Ridge and individually) reflect these characteristics? Do you find any of these characteristics difficult to embody through the ways you serve?

5. Read Philippians 2:1-8. How do you understand the connection between "being one in spirit and of one mind" and Jesus' example of "taking the very nature of a servant"? How might our focus this year on being a "safe space" and prioritizing relationships impact the way we serve? The way you serve?
6. Pray for each group member to increasingly experience God through serving, and to find joy and peace in bringing more of Heaven to Earth.

### **Reflection during the week: Being and sharing the good news through service**

The Cedar Ridge annual Harvest Festival is on Saturday. This is a great opportunity for your group to serve together and to reach out to neighbors and friends. Sign up to volunteer on the website. Invite people from outside our community to come along. Make an extra and sustained effort to be welcoming of people you do not know at the event. Pray that God will help you to be good news to someone in our neighborhood this weekend.



## **Fall Discipleship Series 2017**

### **A Vision for the Journey**

## **Week 5: The Challenge**

We live in a society that is highly commitment-averse, but which admires the achievements that can only come through passionate engagement over the long term. The obstacles to commitment are many: fear, inertia, consumerism, distractions and doubts, to name a few. But our commitment to following Jesus together should not be seen as a cause for guilt, pressure or anxiety. Following Jesus means surrendering to the God who is love; a good, kind and trustworthy parent. It means partnering with Jesus, and letting him bear the load as we take on his easy yoke. It means humbly embracing mystery, recognizing that God is so much bigger than our own understanding. Discipleship is not about us trying harder to be better people: It is about allowing God's Spirit to work within us and through us. Commitment is not an unwanted obligation, but an amazing invitation to journey together in the way of Jesus.

This week we will first consider our commitment to following Jesus, and how that is reflected in our priorities, our use of time and money, and our willingness to "deny ourselves." We will also consider our commitment to Cedar Ridge, recognizing our need to help, support, encourage and challenge one another along the journey. We will prayerfully consider how each of us can contribute to the achievement of our vision in advance of next Sunday—Commitment Sunday, and the final week in this series.

### **This week's discussion questions**

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What was difficult for you?
2. What emotions does the word "commitment" stir up in you? Why do you feel this way?
3. The speaker on Sunday listed a number of reasons why people are unwilling to commit:
  - Loss of a sense of community or societal obligations
  - Focus on consumerism
  - Fear of vulnerability, rejection or failure
  - Unrealistic expectations, leading to disillusionment
  - Constant pursuit of "something better"
  - Feeling "trapped"
  - Feeling burned by past experiences
  - Expectation that commitment can always wait until later
  - Too busy or distracted

Which of these reasons most resonate with you and why?

4. Read Luke 14:25-35, and answer the following questions:
  - Why do you think large crowds were following Jesus? Why does he speak to them with such daunting words?
  - What do you think Jesus means by “hating” our family members and our own life?
  - What is Jesus communicating through the two brief parables of building a tower and going to war?
  - What does this passage say to you about the cost of following Jesus?
5. Read Matthew 11:28-30. How do you reconcile this passage with the passage you just read from Luke? How does this second passage shed light on the first one—and vice versa?
6. Think back on your own spiritual journey.
  - Do you feel more or less committed to following Jesus now than in the past? What has led to the difference?
  - Do you feel more or less committed to following Jesus in the context of a local church community (Cedar Ridge) than in the past? Why?
7. Reflect alone on the following for a few minutes, and then break into groups of 2 or 3 to share your reflections:
  - a. In what ways have you allowed fear, inertia, or uncertainty to stop you from following Jesus whole-heartedly?
  - b. How does this impact your life
    - When you are alone?
    - In your relationships with others?
    - In the ways you manage your resources (time, money, skills, etc.)
    - In the ways you engage at Cedar Ridge?
8. Remain in your groups of 2 or 3, and take some time to pray for each other regarding what you have shared.

### **Reflection during the week**

Each day, prayerfully consider your commitment to following Jesus at Cedar Ridge. What does this look like for you? How might you deepen or reaffirm your commitment? Prior to Commitment Sunday (October 22), complete the card you received at church, or cut out the workbook copy on the next page. Return the completed card to Cedar Ridge and drop it in one of the offering towers. Financial pledge information will be entered into your

giving record in CCB. (The information will only be visible to you.) Interest expressed in specific serving opportunities at Cedar Ridge will be passed on to the relevant ministry area leader. The card will then be placed in a sealed envelope and mailed back to you in 3 months' time, as a reminder of your commitments.

## Response card



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

***In the coming year, I commit to...***

***Participation:*** I will increase my engagement with Cedar Ridge through \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***Relationships:*** I will go deeper in my relationship(s) with \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ and invite into my

circle of friends \_\_\_\_\_

***Giving:*** I will give \$ \_\_\_\_\_ over the next 12 months to finance the vision.

***Serving:*** I will serve in the following ways \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# Response Card

**Fall Discipleship Series 2017**  
**A Vision for the Journey**

## **Week 6: Commitment Sunday**

Each quarter we hold a Commitment Sunday, which is a special opportunity to celebrate community, and to renew our commitment to Jesus and to one another. During the Sunday service we welcome people into new membership, dedicate children to God (and ourselves to supporting them in their journey), and conduct baptisms. This Sunday, we will also submit Response Cards to mark our commitment to following Jesus together at Cedar Ridge. The service will be followed by a potluck lunch.

If you feel aligned with our vision and values, and are not yet a member, we encourage you to prayerfully consider becoming one—regardless of how long you have been attending Cedar Ridge. More information on membership is included at the end of the annex. Please inform one of the pastors if you would like to become a member. (If you are unsure whether or not you are a member, contact the church office.)

As we draw this series to a close, we will focus on the good news that God loves us, has great hope for us and the world at large, and calls us to partner in God's work of reconciling all things. Let us experience, be, and share that good news—and together make the world a better place.

Fall Discipleship Series 2017  
A Vision for the Journey

## Annex: Additional Reading (from *The Journey*)

### An Approach To Understanding Reality

We are devoted followers of Jesus who are also aware of our frailty and imperfections in how we perceive reality (critical realists). How then do we determine what is real about Jesus, life, the universe and everything, in order to pursue it so passionately?

We all have different views of life and different perspectives, which ultimately result in us landing on certain understandings and convictions about what is real and true. No matter how convinced we are that our way is the right way, or that our view of God is the most accurate, we have certain lenses through which we look at the world and through which we build a picture of reality.

As followers of Jesus we place high value on the Hebrew and Christians scriptures—what we now call the Old and New Testaments in the Bible. We cherish the Bible and believe that God speaks to us in unique ways through it. In all we say and do, we seek to be instructed by the rich resources given us in the Bible: stories, poetry, letters, histories and more.

Another lens we look through is our cultural traditions. Our upbringing, family life and religious background significantly influence how we see the world. Likewise what we have experienced in life firsthand for ourselves makes a significant impact and creates another lens. If we are used to having a lot of control over outcomes in our life we will most likely have a different view of the universe than if we were very poor or had little control over circumstances. Not only that, our rational thought plays a big part. We often deem something to be untrue if it does not “make sense.” Rather than seeing these “lenses” as negative, we see them as a normal and healthy part of the human experience. But we also recognize that it can be helpful to be aware of them so that we can both understand how they may have played a role in determining our own unique view of reality, and also so that we can apply them in creating a balanced view of what we believe to be true.

We are not alone in this practice of viewing reality; John Wesley took a similar approach. Wesley was an Anglican priest in 18th century England who experienced significant spiritual renewal and eventually founded the Methodist movement, which became an important denomination throughout the world and especially in North America. Wesley described a four-fold approach to understanding reality, which later, after his death, was termed the Wesleyan

Quadrilateral. Wesley maintained that, as followers of Jesus, we look through four important lenses to determine what is real and true:

1. Scripture
2. Tradition
3. Experience
4. Reason

At Cedar Ridge, we have not set out to try to “follow” the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. But upon reflection we have found it to be a helpful way to describe how we see truth and reality. We are also encouraged to know that we are not alone in taking an approach like this. Let’s look at each element of the quadrilateral.

### 1. Scripture

As stated earlier, we cherish the Bible. Scripture has a huge, central role in our spirituality and the way we follow Jesus. Through scripture, we can form an understanding of God as we engage with its deep teaching, history and poetry. Through scripture, we encounter Jesus’ life and teaching and we center our spiritual thinking and practice around it. However, even though scripture is very central for us, we do not take a literal, fundamentalist approach. We recognize it as very ancient writing and respect it so much that we take great care in its interpretation and application.

But the Bible does not replace Jesus as the center of our faith. We are followers of Jesus and we see Jesus as the center of scripture. Jesus is the Word of God, and no writing could ever replace that. We don’t worship the Bible or our own interpretations of it. We all view the Bible through various lenses and perspectives to determine our own interpretation. That’s why there have been so many different views about scripture through the ages. Rather than considering this a problem, we view it as part of the richness of the Bible. In fact, it seems clear that we all bring the other “lenses” of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral to bear on our interpretation and handling of the Bible.

### 2. Tradition

Wesley placed great value on the traditions of the church, and the truths, practices and understandings that have been passed down through the generations. Cedar Ridge is a multi-denominational church that values greatly the church traditions of the past 2000 years. We can view tradition in 3 ways:

- a) **Historical tradition:** Ever since the time of Jesus, spiritual understanding has been passed on through relationships. This is the way Jesus operated. He didn’t write a book to capture the truth in his message; he gathered people and lived it out through relationships. The apostles “caught” this message and passed it on through their relationships and influences, those they influenced passed it on, and so on. Over the

early centuries, some of this understanding about the way of Jesus was written down. Some of it became scripture and was included in the Biblical canon. Some writings did not become part of the Bible, but have been preserved—such as writings by the “Early Church Fathers” (Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyons, et al). Much was not written down, but passed on in the traditions of the church. Over time, different churches emphasized different ways of expressing this understanding—and hence the diversity of expression we have today. That is why we look back throughout church history and embrace ancient traditions and practices that have been tried and tested over time to aid us in our spiritual understanding and development. In this way we have a family connection, generation by generation, all the way back to Jesus. That is an incredible thing!

- b) **Cultural tradition:** Whether we have a religious background or not, we have all been hugely influenced by the cultural milieu in which we grew up and now live. In fact, to a large extent, we are products of our culture, and it has a huge impact on how we see life. Whether you call the same person a freedom fighter or a terrorist is largely dependent on where you live and how that fight affects you. Someone born and bred in Baltimore, Maryland will have a very different view of life to someone born in an Amazonian tribe. If you are a slave in 18th century United States the story of the Exodus will have a sharply different meaning than for a 21st century Sunday school student in the white middle class suburbs of Chicago. Women will generally have a different understanding of Mary (the mother of Jesus) than men.
- c) **Local tradition:** Not only do the larger forces of history and culture influence our perception of reality, but so do the more specific ones of our local situation. The fact that we have certain friends, that we belong to a certain church community, that we read certain books and listen to certain podcasts, or radio or TV shows, all influence how we see life. All of us are where we are today (including spiritually) because of relationships with other people who have helped, developed and supported us. Each of us can point to at least one person in our lives who helped pass on the reality of Jesus to us.

When we consider all these forms of tradition (historical, cultural and local) we endeavor to respond in two ways. First, we want to celebrate them and acknowledge how enriched we are by them. Part of this is a realization that we do not have a single thought or understanding in isolation; all of our greatest thoughts about God, all of our most profound understandings and experiences have been influenced by the presence of others in our lives. Moreover, in being aware of this connection to others, we are led away from independent thinking and begin to value the thinking of others. We might have a particular view about spiritual truth, but we should always weigh that against scripture and tradition—the historic traditions of the church and also the local traditions of our relationships. If our understanding seems to differ with



ancient traditions we should be careful. That does not mean we are wrong, it does not mean we shouldn't challenge anything. Many of the great spiritual reformers and leaders throughout history have challenged traditional belief. Jesus himself challenged the religious establishment of his day, but remained deeply connected to and respectful of its tradition, and so too we ought to be respectful and careful. Likewise, the opinion of those around us matters and we should not disregard it. This is the safeguard of community. We don't have to all agree, but through respect and listening to one another, our understanding and experience of reality can be enriched and deepened. If those around me have a different opinion to me, that ought to have some impact on me, and challenge my own understandings—and this is particularly true when it comes to interpreting scripture.

Our second response to tradition ought to be one of careful awareness. Not all tradition is good (and clearly the church has developed some particularly harmful ones throughout the ages) and becoming more aware of how we have been influenced can help us to unravel some of the confused, unhelpful or destructive ways we view life and spirituality as religious people.

### **3. Experience**

Wesley also maintained that faith has to be practical. It has to work in the real world. We too value the human experience. We bring our own experience to bear on what we believe to be true. For example, the reason most of us feel comfortable walking or driving across a bridge is not necessarily because we have a deep understanding of the engineering of the bridge, but because we have done it time and time again and found it to be reliable. We've also seen others do it (perhaps as children) and learned from their experience.

That doesn't mean our belief cannot contradict our experience—that's the challenge of transformation. In one sense Jesus came to challenge our experience of life, but he also helps us make sense of our experience. Let's think for a moment about issues of social justice. On the one hand, Jesus validated the experience of injustice that many groups experienced (slaves, lepers, ethnic groups, women, etc.). He helped his followers reinterpret scripture and tradition in light of that experience. Scripture and tradition were being used as "truth" by the religious establishment (such as the Pharisees) to justify the unfair way some people were being treated. People experienced this as fundamentally wrong but their adherence to a certain interpretation of scripture and tradition overrode this experience.

But Jesus took that experience, validated it, and from that basis helped people to see scripture and tradition in a different light. A great example of this is found in Matthew 9:

*As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow Me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your*

*Teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

Matthew 9:9-13 (New International Version)

Jesus' religious tradition was that it is wrong to eat with sinners and unclean people like tax collectors. But Jesus validates the injustice of this and reinterprets scripture (he quotes the Hebrew prophet Hosea 6:6) in a new light.

But that's not all. Jesus also taught us that the deeper, most real and fulfilling aspects of life are experienced in giving up one's power, control, wealth, and right to success. In that sense, he challenges our experience that being an insider, being popular, powerful and influential are important. From Matthew again:

*"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

Matthew 6:19-21 (New International Version)

Then Jesus said to His disciples:

*"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

Matthew 16:24-26 (New International Version)

In these instances Jesus (through the scriptures) challenges our experience.

Another way in which experience is important spiritually is in our devotion to Jesus in the here and now. We are not just following the teachings of Jesus or his example. We believe Jesus is actually present to us now through the Holy Spirit. We can encounter God through a direct present relationship, not just through the Bible or tradition.

#### **4. Reason**

Wesley emphasized that faith should engage our whole being, including our mind. That is not to say that we should think we can understand everything. Mystery is an important part of our understanding of God, and we do not espouse a purely rational approach to reality. But we all apply reason in determining what we believe to be true, and that is not necessarily a bad thing. Some people have used scripture and tradition to explain some very bizarre things: like slavery

and racism for example. But it just doesn't make sense that some people are superior to others based on the color of their skin and our reason has caused us to challenge that reality. In the 16th century, when Copernicus first postulated that the Earth was not the center of the universe but rather revolved around the sun, this was against the established church's interpretation of scripture and tradition. To be fair, it also went against most people's experience because we see the sun, moon and stars apparently moving around us and we don't have any sense that we are moving at 60,000 m.p.h. around the sun. The church opposed this theory, but Copernicus held his ground because of his reasoning based on the facts he observed. Later, in the 17th century, when Galileo championed Copernicus's theory, church opposition became strong and violent. But eventually reason prevailed, and it's hard to imagine that any one of us would espouse that the sun revolves around the Earth, nor would we equate any sense of spirituality with holding to that notion.

In the same way we might apply reason to various aspects of belief. It doesn't seem to stand to reason to persecute or exclude certain groups of people. When the scripture says:

*I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.*

1 Timothy 2:12 (New International Version)

this just doesn't seem reasonable. We bring other factors to bear on this, such as other parts of scripture, the tradition of our own community, and our own experiences, and we use reason to work through it all. This is not an attempt to create our own truth, nor to avoid the challenge of scripture, but rather an honest endeavor to truly understand.

## **How Do We Approach Scripture?**

The Bible is so important to us and has been so important throughout church history that it merits taking a slightly more in-depth look at how we approach it at Cedar Ridge. The following points summarize our approach and the place that scripture holds in our community.

### **1. We deeply cherish the Bible**

We hold the Bible to be real, relevant and true. Scripture plays a huge, vital role in our spirituality and the way we follow Jesus. Through scripture we can deepen our understanding of God as we engage with its teaching, history and poetry.

### **2. We approach the Bible with humility**

We recognize that the scriptures are several millennia old, written in ancient languages and in totally different cultures to ours. The Bible has multiple authors, all kinds of genres of literature, and is often not easy to understand. We approach it carefully, both in interpretation and application, recognizing that we may not always fully understand either. As a practice, we don't expect to be able to just open it, pick out a few verses and understand immediately what

it means. We need a lot of help to understand—from historic traditions, from others we respect, and most of all from the Holy Spirit. This is a process, and we patiently give it time by making a practice of reading scripture and allowing it to challenge us.

### **3. We believe the Bible to be inspired by God**

Our conviction is that the scriptures are inspired by God, both the Hebrew (Old Testament) and the Christians ones (New Testament). They contain a reliable, coherent, overarching narrative of the love of God for the world, and a distinct challenge to receive and share that love as a way of life. They contain profound and timeless wisdom and truth, and we treasure them as such. But we recognize that these scriptures did not just fall out of the sky! We don't view inspiration as meaning God just handed them over to us directly and already written. In that sense, we have a very different approach to scripture than, say, the Islamic tradition, which teaches that the Islamic Scriptures (the Qur'an) were dictated directly to the Prophet Mohammed while he was in a trance-like state by the angel Gabriel and he recited these (Qur'an means "recital") to be written down. The Christian approach to scripture (to which we adhere) is that the creation of the Bible was a much more complex and subjective process involving people, their thoughts, opinions, strengths and weaknesses. So for us, the inspiration of scripture is a dynamic process that requires us to engage with the Spirit of God every time we read. We don't just take a static, literal approach, but a thoughtful, contextual and even, at times, critical one as we constantly seek the inspired voice of God in scripture.

### **4. The Bible is a human book**

The beauty and majesty of the Bible is that it was, through God's inspiration, written by normal limited human beings, with their human grasp of language, and their human imagination and understandings. It was edited by humans; manuscripts were copied by humans and passed from generation to generation. It has been protected by humans over centuries, and both translated and interpreted by humans. This does not take away from its splendor or special place. Rather it takes on greater beauty in its stories, poetry, history and teaching. It is also a literary wonder; a human one, in which we can see ourselves. All this means that we do not equate scripture with the direct voice of God. Rather, it is in reading scripture that we can hear God's voice.

This may seem a subtle distinction, but if we equate scripture to God's voice then we fail to recognize the human vessel through which it has come, and we could use scripture in unhelpful and oppressive ways. The fact that it was written through humans means that it has the human elements of time, culture, language and social setting. We recognize that at times the Bible seems prejudiced, sexist and even violent in ways that do not seem congruent with the way of Jesus. Rather than blame this on a prejudiced, sexist, violent God, we see the limits of humanity in this. That is why we approach scripture with care, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit to truly hear God's voice.

## 5. The Bible is part of the community of God

We cannot see the Bible as independent from the Christian (or Jewish) tradition. It is a product of our story and of our community over centuries. As followers of Jesus, we have accepted the Hebrew scriptures, passed onto us by the historic Jewish community, and we have the Christian scriptures (New Testament) today because of difficult decisions made by the Christian community centuries ago. In fact different Christian traditions have different views of what should be included in the Bible, i.e., different views about whether certain writings are inspired by God or not. Most of these writings are related to the Hebrew scriptures and are known as the Apocrypha. Books like 1st and 2nd Esdras and the Prayer of Manasses, have been included by the Roman Catholic tradition but rejected by Protestants. The Eastern and Slavonic Orthodox traditions have tended to include them as scripture but choose different combinations of writings to the Roman tradition.

Most of the content in the Christian scriptures was written in the 1st century and circulated widely among the early church in the 2nd century. Writings at the time included those of the apostles and early church fathers that did not make it into the final canon of the New Testament, and in the 3rd century there was debate about which writings were inspired by God. By the end of the 4th century, a series of councils of early church leaders (such as the Council of Hippo in 393 and the Council of Carthage in 397) resulted in the 27 books of the New Testament becoming canon. Certain books were left out, such as the Gnostic writings; and other books have been found since, such as the Gospel of Judas.

All these decisions about what is canon and what is not were made by human beings who were seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the reason we say the Bible is inspired by God is because the community of Christ, through a careful process over several centuries, deemed that it was inspired. This was not done randomly; writings were evaluated on 3 main criteria:

- Written by apostles or close associates (i.e., authority given by Christ)
- Content is in accordance with teachings of all other books in the New Testament (i.e., intrinsic consistency)
- Had been used by the churches since written, and had proven their value in life and worship

Interestingly, it's not hard to see how tradition, reason and experience (the other 3 elements of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral) were lenses through which the early church looked in determining inspiration. We do the same today in interpreting the Bible.

Whatever way we look at it, the Bible we love and cherish today came to us through a very human community process. It's not hard to see how that process itself could be inspired by God, but that action was carried out through human beings like us. This does not detract from

scripture for us, but rather roots scripture in our historic tradition and in our spiritual community. It makes us value it even more, as we recognize the way God has chosen to involve human beings in integral ways in creating, assembling and preserving scripture. We see ourselves as intrinsically interwoven into the fabric of scripture, and we see interpreting scripture as a community enterprise, where we don't just make it mean what we want it to mean, but we listen to other parts of the community.

## **6. We take a narrative approach to the Bible**

We don't see the Bible as primarily a rulebook, statement of doctrine, textbook, or operations manual. Rather we see it as a narrative; the story of God's incredible, redeeming love for humanity. All kinds of different genres of literature are used to tell this story (history, poetry, prophecy, apocalyptic, gospel, letters, etc.) all of which require different approaches and different means of interpretation, but all of which are ultimately interpreted in the light of this theme of love and redemption.

## **7. We see Jesus as the center of the Bible**

Jesus is the center-point of this story and is the ultimate authority for us in how we interpret scripture. This is an important issue because often the Bible is seen as the ultimate authority, and Christ is only someone we see through the Bible. At Cedar Ridge, as followers of Jesus we see Jesus as the ultimate truth and authority and the Bible is something that we see through and in light of Jesus. The Bible itself ascribes ultimate authority to Jesus:

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Matthew 28:18-20 (New International Version)

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,  
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.*

Philippians 2:9-11 (New International Version)

Jesus himself encouraged us to see him as giving ultimate meaning to the scriptures. Jesus is what causes the story of scripture to make sense. Here's what he said to the Pharisees:

*You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.*

John 5:39-40 (New International Version)

Interestingly in this last passage Jesus seems to be cautioning us about thinking we can obtain “life eternal” (the deep, real, true life of God) from scripture. That can only come from Jesus himself. John seems to go even further by saying Jesus is the Word of God:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John 1:1-5 & 14 (New International Version)

## **8. We read the Bible as a practice**

We see reading the Bible as a vital part of our spiritual practice and an essential part of our transformation. We read it as a story of God’s love, bearing in mind the historical setting, and we consider ourselves an integral part of this ongoing story. We read with the whole context in mind, looking at larger sections as a whole, rather than picking a verse here and there, to ensure that we catch the larger flow as well as the specifics. We study the Bible—not just academically or scientifically, but seeking to interact with the Spirit of Christ: we look for Jesus to be revealed. We do this through various traditional practices such as Lectio Divina (“divine reading” where we read slowly, meditate on and listen to God speaking through the text) and Ignatian reading (using our imaginations to put ourselves in the story), Bible study, as well as devotionally and meditatively.

We place particular emphasis on the gospels because they teach us so much about Jesus, and through them we hear Jesus’ own words. The rest of the New Testament is the story of the early community of followers living out the teachings of Jesus, and commentary on the teachings and way of Jesus. The Old Testament is the history and context that gives so much more meaning and depth to our understanding of Jesus. We take those parts very seriously, but we are careful to interpret for instance Paul’s writings and the Hebrew Law and prophets in the light of Jesus. We don’t see the Bible as a black and white list of dos and don’ts but a beautiful love story inspired by God through which we encounter the living Christ. What is so remarkable is that in all Jesus’ efforts to share his love and life with the world, he chose not to write a book. It seems that greater than his desire to give us the written word was his desire to give us the Living Word... Jesus himself.

## Spiritual Disciplines

Spiritual disciplines are practices that offer God space in us to help us to change. We recognize that God loves us as we are, but because we have been moved by that love to follow and obey Jesus, we desire more of the Divine Life at work in us. So we choose to live more intentionally and purposefully: we let go of the things we believe are not helping us to grow, and we seek to surrender more of ourselves to what God has for us—the new life and power Jesus promised to his followers. In surrendering to what God wants, through God’s grace at work in us, we are transformed—re-created into Christ-likeness. To become like Jesus, we take on the practices that Jesus engaged in himself. We choose prayer in solitude, because “Jesus went to a quiet place to pray.” We fast, pray in secret, worship, and become still, because Jesus did and commands us to too. We want to learn from him, to imitate him, to embrace his way of thinking and doing, to be obedient to what he said, and to grow as channels of God’s love in order to love as he did. We want more than mere “cognitive change” (believing better). We want a new life-rhythm—a new way of living—centered on loving God and expressing that love in how we live each moment in our daily lives, rather than just once a week at a Sunday morning event, removed from our “real-time” lives.

Spiritual disciplines are new habits: habits that can help us to center our thinking, speaking, doing, choosing, eating, spending—our living—on God and kingdom life. These new habits shape us and allow for transformation to happen in us, as over time they become an intrinsic part of who we are becoming. There are many, many spiritual disciplines. Not every discipline will be embraced by every person all the time, but it is important for each of us to discover and put into practice those habits and choices that have the greatest impact in moving us toward God and away from the things that distract us, or may even at times rob us of meaning, health and purpose.

We engage in spiritual practices sometimes on our own in solitude, and at times with companions on the journey—together as a large gathered community, and also with small groups of friends we know and trust to share more of our life together. Below is a list of some common spiritual disciplines.

### Growth

- *Solitude*—getting alone for a while without the distractions of other people so we can be with God, who often is heard best in quiet places. Solitude can help us slow down the pace of our life.
- *Silence*—being quiet for a period of time without the manmade noise or conversation that often distracts us from God’s voice. In that silence, we can often hear more clearly the voice of God.
- *Study*—giving time to the study of the Bible, to reflect upon its message and its



application to one's life, including the reading of spiritual writers whose works make the Bible's message plain and poignant to us.

- *Lectio Divina*—giving time to allow a passage of scripture to fill us and impact us on a deep level. Rather than reading and “mastering” the text, we listen to the words and allow the passage to “read” us and listen to God speaking to us through the text.
- *Fasting*—voluntarily foregoing eating or another activity such as radio, TV, or sports, as a way of saying, “God, I want you and your will even more than my body wants nourishment or entertainment.”
- *Journaling*—keeping a regular written record of private prayer, study, and worship.
- *Prayer*—ongoing communication and communion with God in many forms and at many times.
- *Examen*—a daily or weekly examination of conscience; reflecting back on our experiences and our responses to them, and how well we have reflected and received God's love.

## Community

- *Hospitality*—offering our time, energy and resources to others, recognizing the oneness of the human family and God's rich love for all, sharing our very selves with others as we share our gifts.
- *Gathered worship*—devoting time to pondering God's worth, greatness and goodness in all dimensions, and then expressing that worthiness sincerely before God.
- *Gratitude*—feasting and rejoicing in a pure and sincere way to express the goodness of life and its many pleasures, seeing all good things as gifts from God.
- *Celebration*—marking special times by expressing and sharing in the wonder of what God is doing, commemorating and reveling in God's love together.
- *Confession*—finding the freedom to confess our faults to one another, assuring one another of the mercy of God, and challenging one another to continued growth.
- *Submission*—trusting the Spirit of God to work through a group of wise, trusted Christian mentors to give balance and safe guidance for one's life, or to the words or actions of another when it is difficult.

## Servanthood

- *Simplicity*—voluntarily choosing to limit our standard of living or forego certain luxuries to avoid the temptations of greed and distraction from what really matters in life, and to consider those who are impacted by our consumer choices—to “live simply so others may simply live.”
- *Sharing*—giving of our resources to those who have less.
- *Secrecy*—purposely doing good in secret to show love for others and to purify one's desire to live for God's pleasure and glory alone, without concern for the admiration or credit of others.

- *Sacrifice*—willingly giving away possessions or rights, so as to remain less attached to things of this world, and more devoted to God.
- *Service*—freely engaging in humble acts of consideration and kindness to others as opportunities to affirm their dignity and value before God.

## Rule of Life

Many devoted followers of Jesus have found it helpful or even essential to create a “Rule of Life” for themselves in order to allow the greatest space for God’s transformation in their lives. A Christian rule of life means choosing spiritual disciplines and practices and ordering them into our daily lives in such a way as to allow the love, grace and power of Jesus to come before everything else.

Some people are put off by the words “rule” and “discipline” thinking they imply a way of seeking to be “right with God” through a bunch of regulations or self-inflicted punishment, or living within oppressive constraints and restrictions, rather than from the freedom Jesus came to bring. At Cedar Ridge we believe that Jesus came to set us free from legalistic religiosity, and all its trappings.

“Discipline,” while it can connote punishment, comes from a Latin word meaning “to teach.” We get the word “disciple” from the same root word. And the word “rule,” while it has negative implications for many, is based in a very healthy concept—it means “a principle that governs behavior.” Margaret Guenther, in her book *At Home in the World: A Rule of Life for the Rest of Us*, compares a “rule of life” to a trellis—the supporting structure that upholds a grapevine. The amount and quality of grapes are directly impacted by the integrity and nature of the trellis that supports it. Not only that, there are many kinds of trellises to support different kinds of grapevines in a variety of growing conditions. The trellis lifts the vine off the ground and trains it to grow toward the sun and up from the dirt. The vine is wrapped around or tied to the trellis only tightly enough to offer support while allowing it the freedom to better grow and flourish.

Jesus used the image of a vine to describe His followers:

*Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.*

John 15:5 (New International Version)

Only God who can produce fruit in us. But devising a rule of life for ourselves can be like a good trellis that supports our spiritual life and helps us choose to “remain in Jesus.” A rule of life includes a combination of spiritual disciplines that provides structure and support. It needs to be unique to who we are and what our particular challenges are at this unique time in our lives. The same trellis that upholds and supports one vine and allows it to grow and produce an

abundant crop, may be restrictive and damaging to a different vine in another place and in a different growing season.

Very few people, even people who have been following Jesus for a long time, have a purposeful plan for growing spiritually. Most of us do not live very intentionally, but rather allow ourselves to be swept along or dragged down by the norms and values of what surrounds us. This should not be a source of self-condemnation, just acknowledged for the purpose of awareness. Research shows that most people who identify themselves as followers of Jesus are just as busy, noisy, distracted, harried and stressed as everyone else. We might say that everyone, whether they are aware of it or not, already has a “rule of life” by which they live, even if it has been created quite passively and accidentally.

### **What does your current rule of life look like?**

Take a few minutes to think about your daily routine and the things you like to do, choose to do, want to do, and have to do. Write out what a typical day looks like for you (make a separate list for weekends if you want to), including any religious practice.

*Example:* coffee in the morning, read newspaper, exercise, watch TV show on Wed nights, read the Bible before bed, church on Sunday, group gathering, serving at a soup kitchen, caring for elderly neighbor, etc.

### **Creating a purposeful rule of life**

Look at the list you made and think about your current habits and daily routines. What things on your list do you feel help you at this time become a better person? Which things might inhibit your spiritual growth? What are you doing that helps you grow closer to God? To grow in love for yourself, or others? What would you change if you could?

Take some time to think about creating a rule of life for yourself in order to grow in your own experience of God and to keep the love of Christ central in your daily life. This may seem like a huge task, but start by thinking about making one simple change in your life, adding or subtracting one thing to your day or week. Keep in mind the image of a trellis that is supportive and life-enabling, and not in any way restrictive, constraining or life-stealing. Try not to make it a list of do’s and don’ts or view the rule of life as a static thing, but as a living, breathing progressive plan that will grow and change over time. Use the list of spiritual disciplines above as possibilities for choosing a new practice that could be part of beginning to create a rule of life for you, and prayerfully seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit for choosing change.

## Unity Does Not Mean We Are All The Same

Our journey is what we have in common. We are all travelers. This is very important to us as a community because often in religious communities belonging is determined by other things: believing a certain set of principles or theological beliefs, refraining from a certain set of behaviors, or acting a certain way. At Cedar Ridge, we recognize that everyone is different, with unique experiences and perspectives. That means we all set out on our journey from different places and walk unique paths, but we are all moving towards a common place: Christ. This is what makes us a community: not that we are all the same, not that we all believe the same things, not that we all agree about what is the right behavior. Rather, we are united by the fact that we are all in a process of following Jesus.

One way of describing this unifying element is to consider a metaphor from set theory (used in mathematics, sociology and other disciplines). For the sake of this illustration we will look at two types of sets: bounded sets and centered sets.

### Bounded Set

In a bounded set, membership (belonging to the set) is determined by a very clearly defined boundary (figure 1). This strong boundary acts as a filter admitting certain people and excluding others (figure 2). This is not necessarily done in an unkind way; it's just how some communities define and determine identity. Boundary criteria in religious communities often require people to believe (or at least publically profess belief) in certain specific things about God, the world, right and wrong, life, people, etc.

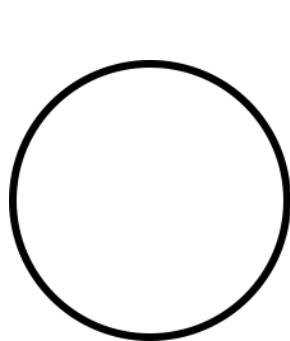


Figure 1: Strong boundary

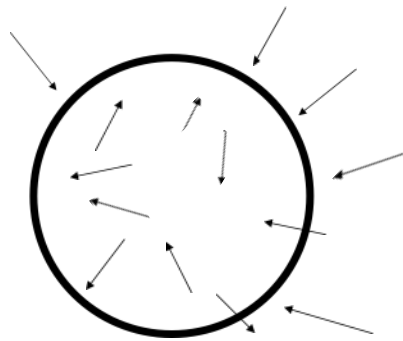


Figure 2: Strong boundary acts as a filter defining who's in and who's out

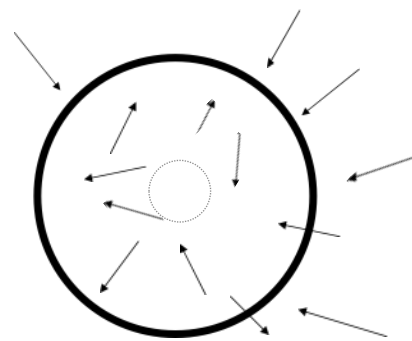


Figure 3: Soft center does not define movement within the set

In communities defined by strong boundaries, less attention is often paid to the "center," i.e., where people are heading once they qualify to get in. Such communities are said to have a hard boundary and a soft center (figure 3). The defining issues are around the boundary criteria, which are about "getting in", rather than on what happens within the community.

Action can often be primarily around trying to conform beliefs and behaviors to the commonly understood boundary.

Some characteristics of bounded set communities are the following:

1. It is very clear who is in and who is out.
2. Belonging is usually determined by obvious, externally recognizable criteria.
3. Members form a homogenous group since entry and ongoing inclusion require conformity.
4. These groups tend to be static. The emphasis is on what people are like now (and whether they meet the required criteria) rather than on what they are becoming. The driving force is the boundary, not the center.

A perceived strength of these communities is a sense of safety, as there is usually little ambiguity about what is acceptable, and people usually know what to expect. A sense of comfort can be felt in being with like-minded and like-living people. There may be not much complexity to wrestle with, and this can contribute to a sense of confidence and certainty.

Perceived weaknesses of a bounded set are the requirement to meet the standard before joining, and the need to maintain certain standards throughout. Doubt and struggles must be concealed, or when expressed, may be cause for non-inclusion. Certain people are often excluded from or belittled within bounded communities because of their views and practices. There may be very little diversity, or expressed diversity.

### Centered Set

In a centered set, membership is determined by a very clearly defined center (figure 4). This strong center acts as a kind of “magnetic north” defining the activity, process and journey of the community. What defines the community is that everyone is moving towards a common center (figure 5).



Figure 4: Clearly defined firm center

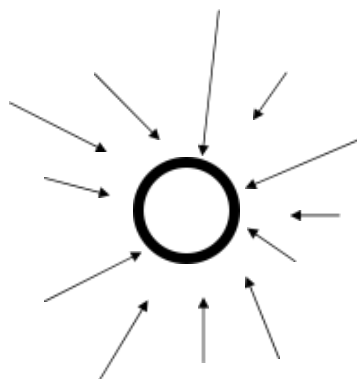


Figure 5: Clear firm center defines movement within the set

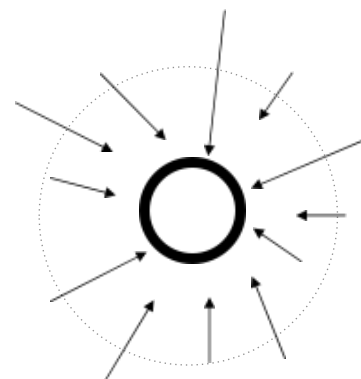


Figure 6: Soft porous boundary keeps set open

There is only a very porous boundary (if at all), so it is open to all (figure 6). What determines whether one is part of the community is not the boundary, but whether one is choosing to move towards the center. People approach the center from very different directions (the boundary is open) and move at very different paces.

In figure 6 above, some of the arrows are moving away from the center: membership is based on movement towards the center rather than on being inside a defining boundary and so people further away from the center but moving towards it might experience a deeper sense of belonging than those closer to the center but moving away. These kinds of groups are also not only easy to join but inherently easy to voluntarily leave.

Some characteristics of centered set communities are the following:

1. It is often less easy to determine who is part of the group.
2. Since belonging is determined by movement and a process (a journey) that is only evident over time, these groups tend not to evaluate people on external criteria (beliefs and behaviors) but create space for inward transformation to work itself out.
3. Members of the group are usually very diverse since there are no standard entry requirements.
4. These groups tend to be dynamic. The emphasis is on what people are becoming, rather than on what they are like now. The driving force is the clear firm center to which the group is moving.

Perceived strengths of these communities are that everyone is accepted and respected and anyone can belong. There is also a built-in dynamic of growth, as belonging is defined by movement towards the center, rather than a static adherence to boundary criteria.

Perceived weaknesses are that the community will be very diverse with lots of different opinions and beliefs, which can lead to conflict. There may also be ambiguity about what the community stands for without clear communication of vision and values. With a porous boundary, there might be a lot of turnover as it is low risk for inquisitive people to enter and spend time checking out the community, with some staying at the edges and others eventually leaving. These types of communities need to work hard at good communication and dealing honestly with conflict.

### **What kind of set is Cedar Ridge?**

You might have guessed already that Cedar Ridge strives to be a centered set. Our community is defined by the following:

- a) **Firm center:** Our center is Jesus. We are a community devoted to following Jesus. Clearly we have a particular way in which we see and follow Jesus, which we call our vision. So in practical terms our center is our vision; this is what unifies us. But we must

always keep in mind that our center is not some corporate vision that we have come up with for our own purpose, and that we try to enforce on others. Jesus Himself is the center, drawing us to Him. We are not the guardians of that process; we believe that God is in charge of that.

*"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."*

John 12:32 (New Revised Standard Version)

- b) **Porous boundary:** We accept everyone, no exceptions.

That does not mean we all have to agree with each other or accept all behavior as good. But we give everyone space and time to follow their journey towards the center.

- c) **Membership:** We value commitment; commitment to Jesus, to the journey, and to one another. This commitment is expressed in movement towards the center; taking steps on this journey. Commitment is not defined as being at any particular point on the journey at any given time.

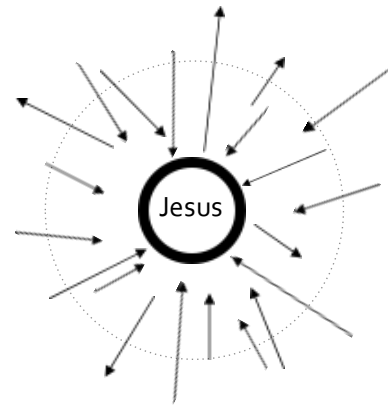


Figure 7: Cedar Ridge is an open community with Jesus at the center

- d) **Journey to the center:** There is no time limit. Change is not forced, and we recognize that true change and real movement take time.
- e) **Diversity:** We accept people. We don't try to change anyone, but point them towards the center. We don't assume we are always right about everything, and we seek to accept and learn from those who are different from us. This diversity creates a culture of transformation where we are all challenged.
- f) **Openness and honesty:** Bounded sets could result in people trying to conceal their real thoughts, doubts, beliefs and behaviors in order to gain entry and acceptance. This often results in a fake church culture where people "pretend to be good." In a centered set we encourage honesty and openness, and accept one another with all our faults and failings. This creates the opportunity for growth and change to happen.
- g) **Reliance on the Holy Spirit:** Only God really knows people's innermost beings. We put the pressure on God for change, and trust God for the journey that we are all on. We don't police change, but we do expect an atmosphere where we lovingly challenge one another to grow.

### **We are intentionally a centered set**

Sometimes groups that are very open and accepting might appear to be just vague, woolly and spineless, as though they are just not prepared to be challenging, defined or strong. At Cedar Ridge we are a centered set on purpose. This is not a case of “anything goes;” we intentionally want to create this kind of environment because in it we see the greatest hope for people to follow Jesus. We recognize that many churches and religious establishments choose a different way, and we respect that, but we are passionate and purposeful about creating an atmosphere in which everyone has space to work out their journey.

In many ways being a centered set is much more risky. We have to trust each person is truly following Jesus and making Jesus-centered decisions, rather than demanding a certain set of behaviors or beliefs. It is messier. Maybe the most uncomfortable aspect is that it requires trusting in the mysterious, unseen and often imperceptible presence of God with us and with others, rather than the recognizable neatness and simple order that can come through placing confidence in standard behaviors, a moral code, etc. We won’t have the “comfort in conformity” that a bounded set can sometimes bring, but rather, we are certain to be with others who believe and behave very differently. As a result, we will have disagreement and conflict, but we embrace these as healthy things and agents of potential transformation. This means we must be humble and diligent about conflict and not avoid it. This way of community has the potential for incredible transformation and beauty. It is a strong call to commitment, belonging and membership.

### **Our centeredness is rooted in history**

Describing ourselves as a “centered set” is simply a metaphor to help explain what kind of community we are. There is no “centered set” movement or denomination that we belong to; no handbook on “how to be a centered set church.” We are just trying to be true to the way of Jesus as we see it, and just trying to use language like this to help describe it. But we are not alone in pursuing Jesus in this way. Many other churches throughout history could be described in similar ways. In fact if we go back to the very early years of the church in the first few centuries, we can see a very similar approach to following Jesus.

Back then, as the early Christian movement grew throughout Europe, two approaches evolved. One, influenced from the church and culture in Rome, emphasized catechism. This meant that before someone could become a “Christian” and a member of the local church community, they would have to go through a series of often rigorous teaching and training in the faith (catechism) at the end of which they would be baptized “into” the community. This approach saw faith as good understanding of and adherence to the precepts of the church before being admitted to the community.

A different approach evolved among the Celtic tribes of Europe, led by people such as St. Patrick. The Celtic movement espoused “belonging before believing.” Rather than putting new



members through catechism, they were welcomed into the community with all their pagan beliefs, attitudes and culture, and were able to witness first-hand the reality of what following Jesus meant. Through relationships and experiences, they grew in their own understanding, and had space and time in this diverse community to develop spiritually at their own pace. Ultimately, the Roman approach predominated in Christendom. Although we have great respect for and have gained so much from the Roman tradition, our understanding of community is more like the less common Celtic tradition, in many ways.

## Embracing Mystery and Living Devotedly

Acknowledging that we don't know everything and that life is a mystery seems humble and the right approach. But then, why don't we just give up trying to believe anything? Does acceptance of mystery mean that following anything is futile? Far from it!

We are **philosophical realists** in that we believe there is something other than us, separate from us, that can be understood. We believe there is a God. But at the same time, we are **philosophical critics** in that we believe our understanding and even our capacity to understand is limited by all sorts of things: our brains, our personality, our experience, our cultural heritage, our brokenness, etc. That means we are always open-minded about our understanding of God. Rather than seeing doubt as a failing, and absolute certainty as a measure of spiritual strength, we endeavor to take a humble approach that always leaves room for growth and increased understanding.

The fact that we are realists means we maintain there is something worth believing in and something worth pursuing. The fact that we are critical means we take an open humble approach to this pursuit. In that sense, theologically speaking, we are **critical realists** and as such several issues become very important for us:

1. **We are devoted.** Pursuit of God, pursuit of what is real, good and wholesome, is an exciting journey into mystery and wonder. We are humble and open, not fearing to review our understanding of what is real and true as we go along—but that in no way takes away from our excitement and fervor in pursuing God.
2. **We accept others.** People's opinions about what is real and true will vary and we don't judge or try to bully people into agreeing with us. In fact, we listen and allow others' capacity for truth to challenge our own perspectives. While we may not always agree, our own spiritual experience and understanding of God can be enriched and enlarged in hearing others' perspectives, and that is a good thing. Hatred and fear of others' beliefs causes our hearts to shrink and our understanding of the deep realities of God to diminish.
3. **We share our life and perspective with others.** By taking a humble approach we can share our own opinion without being dogmatic, self-righteous or judgmental. This gives the opportunity for others to grow. It also makes us a community: if we love others and care about their perspectives, then we can never be individual islands of isolated belief. What each of us thinks and believes becomes important to all of us as we are challenged to grow.

4. **Our capacity for God can grow.** As we passionately pursue God, as we are challenged and transformed, we become more sensitive to God and we become more embracing of a deeper reality. Our capacity for God grows. We might have experienced this already. Who of us, no matter how sure we might feel about what we believe, can look back over the past ten years and say our understanding has not changed? This is the journey we are all on.
5. **We value metaphor.** We see all attempts to understand God as metaphorical. In other words, we always try to be aware of the huge difference between God and our ideas about God. We call our ideas about God “theology,” and this results in us forming doctrines (what we claim to be true). This is a very valid activity as critical realists, but we should never substitute our doctrines about God for God-self. It could be possible to fall in love with our own ideas and make our doctrine our god, rather than recognizing our doctrine is just our attempt to use words to describe and understand God (who we could never fully understand). This is an important issue because so often we speak and act as if we have ascribed ultimate authority, and in that sense, deity, to our ideas about God.

As an example of how we cannot avoid using metaphor in speaking about God, let's look at the language we use for God in the first place. In the English language we use the term “God” which has its roots in *Gott*, which was an ancient pagan Germanic deity. Clearly when we say “God” we are not referring to a Germanic pagan deity, but simply using it as a label (a metaphor) for something we could not fully explain. Likewise, the French word for God (*Dieu*) and the Spanish word (*Dios*) have their root in the Latin *Deus*, which is a derivative of Zeus – the ancient high God in the Greek pantheon. And when Arabic-speaking people say “God” they use the word *Allah* (the word for “God” in Arabic). None of these words could be defined as the correct word for God. They are just linguistic metaphors that we use to describe deity. That is to say, we recognize that there is some greater, deeper, more beautiful, more awesome reality that our words just cannot express and we cannot fully understand.

Likewise, we recognize that beyond our great thoughts about God (our labels, our doctrine, our theology) there is a far greater, deeper, more beautiful, more awesome reality that our thoughts don't fully capture and we don't fully understand. We've just landed on certain theological concepts (like we've chosen certain words for God) as our best attempts to explain or describe God, but they are still just attempts and are always insufficient. That's why we are careful about not equating our ideas about God with God-self.

The ancient Hebrews seem to have recognized the incomprehensibility and awesomeness of God, and although in one tradition the term *Elohim* is used (derived

from the ancient pagan deity El), in Exodus God is revealed to Moses as YHWH (otherwise known as the tetragrammaton) a word that we translate Yahweh but which was traditionally never spoken because it was deemed too sacred by the Hebrew people. The word is associated with “being” (i.e., “the One who is”) and in this way something of the mystery of God is preserved.

6. **We value story.** Another way we understand God is through the story of God and God’s love for humanity and the world. This story comes to us through the Scriptures and we are all still a part of that story being played out now. Our spiritual journey involves becoming aware of this story and playing our part in it. That’s one reason we cherish the Bible.
7. **We value humility and love over theological accuracy.** Our currency of belief is love. People are more important than any theological issue. So often in Christianity, believing, understanding or stating the right things accurately becomes the defining issue of spirituality. If that is the case, then who has the most accurate list of beliefs? Which ones are most important? Do you have to have them all correct, or just a certain percentage? How wrong do you have to be before you are Wrong? Sadly people have been thrown out of churches, relationships have been broken and people have even been put to death for not having exactly the same belief as the predominant group. We have to acknowledge that actions like these do not accurately reflect the Spirit of Christ in His followers.

As critical realists we accept that we are probably never fully “right” anyway and that all our beliefs are simply our best (and most honest and worthwhile) attempt to be “right,” and so we do not make accuracy the determining issue. As followers of Jesus we place love above “correct knowledge”:

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (New International Version)

8. **Jesus is the center of our belief.** We see Jesus as truth; Jesus as the center of this cosmic story; Jesus as the revelation of the mystery of God to humanity. That is why we are followers of Jesus. We see Jesus as worth following with all our hearts and minds and souls.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John 1:1-5 & 14 (New International Version)

This scripture describes the mystery of God in ancient Greek terms (the “Word,” or *Logos* in the Greek) and also captures some of the mystery of God in Hebrew terms by referencing the beginning of time (like the beginning of the Hebrew scriptures in Genesis). The passage is clearly talking about Jesus as the revelation of God to humanity. The way we pursue God and all the wonderful mystery of God, the way we understand “truth and grace” is to follow Jesus with everything we have. We take Jesus very seriously!

## Reflecting on Commitment and Membership

Below is the affirmation that people are invited to make when they want to commit themselves as members of Cedar Ridge. Read through the questions and ponder each one.

### New Member Affirmation

Cedar Ridge Community Church invites you to join us in our journey of hope and transformation, being and making disciples of Jesus Christ, in authentic community, for the good of the world.

With God's help...

Will you commit to follow Jesus Christ? Will you be open and honest about your life, earnestly seeking to become a better person in every way and helping others do the same? Will you commit to growing spiritually into the person God created you to be?

Will you commit to other people?

Will you pursue life-giving, meaningful sacrificial relationships? Will you work to believe the best about others and work through differences; to be humble, forgiving and to listen and speak the truth in love? Will you share your gifts, time and money with others to the best of your ability?

Will you commit to a life of servanthood?

Will you generously help those in need? Will you commit to include others and practice hospitality? Will you live a life that honors God by caring about people and the world God created?

Do you now commit to the vision, mission and values of this community?

### Reflection

Take some time to reflect on the following question.

1. How have these past weeks of this series felt to you?
2. What's been most difficult?
3. What's been most surprising?
4. What's changed in you? Where have you seen yourself challenged or stretched?
5. What commitments to yourself, to God, and to others have you made?
6. What commitments are you planning to make?

**Personal Response**

Would you like to take up this invitation? Maybe you have been at Cedar Ridge for a while but have never taken this step. Perhaps you are new and would like to make a commitment. You might already be a member but want to renew your commitment. No one should feel pressured, but we do want to invite everyone into this exciting adventure of following Jesus and pursuing hope and transformation together.

Cedar Ridge welcomes people into new membership once each quarter. Our next Commitment Sunday is on October 22. Let one of the pastors know if you are interested in this deeper commitment to following Jesus at Cedar Ridge.