

Regulate

*Learning to Quiet the Mind
and Reconnect with God*

FACILITATOR WORKBOOK

MIKE FARRAR

Week 1: SURRENDER — Preparing the Heart for the Work

Facilitator Preparation

A Note From the Author

I did not come to surrender easily.

For most of my life surrender felt like losing. Like admitting I could not handle it. Like giving up ground I had fought hard to hold. I was built to push through, figure it out, keep moving, and never let anyone see the places where I was actually falling apart.

That posture cost me everything. My health. My family. Nearly my life. Twice.

What I did not understand — and what I wish someone had told me long before the hospital beds and the shaking hands and the kids picking me up off the floor — is that surrender is not the end of the fight. It is the beginning of the right one. It is the moment you stop fighting God and start letting Him fight for you. And everything changes when that shift happens.

Week 1 exists because posture matters before content does. A person can hear the most accurate, most biblically grounded, most practically useful information in the world and walk away unchanged if their heart is not in a posture to receive it. I have been that person. I have sat in rooms where truth was being spoken and missed all of it because I was too guarded, too proud, or too exhausted from performing to let any of it in.

The people walking into your room this week are carrying things they have not named out loud. Some of them will struggle with the idea of surrender — but the first step was showing up and that matters more than they know. Many will be searching for peace while still holding onto the world. And as long as they are holding both, the lens they see through and the posture of their heart will keep them just far enough from the very thing they came looking for.

All of them need the same thing before anything else.

They need to feel that this room is safe enough to be honest in.

That is your job this week more than anything else. Not the content. Not the framework. Not the scriptures. The room. The tone. The posture you carry when you walk in. The way you handle the person who says too much and the person who says nothing. The way you model what an open, honest, surrendered posture actually looks like in a human being who has not arrived but is genuinely in process.

Teach surrender like someone who needed it. Because the people in that room will know the difference between a person who is presenting a concept and a person who is living one.

I am grateful you are carrying this. Do not underestimate what God can do in one room on one night when one person is willing to lead with honesty instead of performance.

Mike Farrar Founder, Invictus Publications Author, You Don't Know What You Don't Know

The heart behind this lesson

Week 1 is about helping participants understand that this program is not just information transfer. It is heart work.

Before people can recognize patterns, understand regulation, or begin changing how they live, they need the right posture. If someone comes in guarded, defensive, prideful, performative, or unwilling to be honest, the material may be heard but not truly received.

This week helps participants understand that surrender is not weakness. It is alignment. It is the moment a person stops trying to control, hide, manage appearances, or force healing in their own strength and begins placing themselves honestly before God.

This lesson sets the tone for the whole course. The 5-day daily companion that follows the session will carry participants deeper into the personal work. The in-class session plants the seed. The daily work waters it.

What the facilitator should understand

Some people in the room may want help but still feel guarded.

- Some may be afraid of being exposed.
- Some may be tired of trying.
- Some may want relief without surrender.
- Some may want God to remove pain without opening their heart.

That is human.

Lead with invitation, not pressure. The pathway to surrender runs through vulnerability — and the pathway to vulnerability runs through humility and grace. You cannot get to one without the other. The goal is not to push people into openness. The goal is to help them understand that the condition of the heart matters, and that surrendering is not losing something. It is entering a season of humility and grace that most of them have been standing just outside of for a long time.

Facilitator posture

Lead with warmth, humility, and steadiness. Do not teach this like a lecture. Teach it like an invitation. Let the room feel safe enough for honesty. Model calm honesty and a surrendered posture in the way you carry the lesson.

Session structure — 60 minutes

- 0–5 min — Opening prayer and welcome
- 5–25 min — Facilitator teaches the message
- 25–50 min — Group discussion questions
- 50–58 min — Introduce the 5-day daily companion
- 58–60 min — Closing prayer

Scripture for facilitator prep

- *Proverbs 3:5–6 (NIV): “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”*
- *Psalms 51:10 (NIV): “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”*
- *James 4:6–8 (NIV): “But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: ‘God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.’ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”*
- *Romans 12:2 (NIV): “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*
- *Psalms 46:10 (NIV): “He says, ‘Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.’”*

Week 2: THE ACTIVATED STATE

Understanding the State You Are Living In, Part 1

Facilitator Preparation

A Note From the Author

I did not know I was in scan mode. I just thought that was how everyone felt.

Always on. Always reading the room. Always a little braced for what was coming next. Heart rate slightly elevated. Mind moving fast even when I was sitting still. I called it being responsible. Being aware. Staying ahead of things.

It never occurred to me that it was costing me anything. It felt like just how I was wired.

What I did not know, and what nobody had ever explained to me, is that the state I was living from was not neutral. It was not just my personality. It was a nervous system that had been trained to stay on high alert for so long that survival mode had become my default setting. And that default was shaping everything. How I heard people. How I interpreted situations. How available I was to God. How much noise was running underneath everything I did.

Here is something else I did not understand at the time. There is more than one road that leads to that state.

Some of the people walking into your room got there through trauma. Real, named, life-altering trauma — abuse, neglect, accidents, loss, betrayal, war, the kind of experiences that wire a nervous system for survival before the person ever had a choice about it. And here is the part most teaching about trauma misses. Trauma is calibrated differently for every person. What registers as a five for someone who grew up in a calm home registers as a two for someone who grew up watching their parents fight every night. The system that lived in chaos called chaos normal. So when chaos shows up later, the system does not flinch the way another system would. Trauma is not measured by what happened. It is measured by what the system had to adapt to in order to survive what happened.

Others walked through a different door. No single trauma. No identifiable event. Just twenty years of phones, deadlines, emails, news cycles, comparison feeds, and never enough quiet to process any of it. Chronic overstimulation does not feel like trauma. It does not announce itself as a wound. But the system ends up in the same place — wound tight, scanning, reactive, unable to settle. The road was different. The destination is identical.

Both roads lead to the same activated state. And both kinds of people will be sitting in your room.

You cannot regulate what you cannot name. And you cannot name what you have never been shown.

That is why Week 2 exists.

The people walking into your room this week may have never had a conversation about their internal state. They may have spent decades living wound tight without a single person ever helping them understand what that actually is, where it comes from, and what it is costing them. They have been managing the symptoms — the reactivity, the exhaustion, the spiritual distance, the relationships that keep breaking down, the bad decisions they keep blaming themselves for — without anyone ever pointing to the root.

This week you get to give them something I did not have for most of my life. Language. Honest, practical, non-shaming language for what has been happening inside them.

That is not a small thing. For some people in that room, this week will be the first time they have ever felt understood at the level where the real problem actually lives.

Carry it carefully. And lead with compassion. Because understanding the state you have been living in is the beginning of being able to leave it, and many of the people in that room have been in it for a very long time.

Mike Farrar Founder, Invictus Publications Author, You Don't Know What You Don't Know

The heart behind this lesson

Week 2 is about helping people begin recognizing that the state they are living in is affecting more than they realize. Many people have been wound tight for so long that it feels normal. They are constantly scanning, reading tone, bracing for conflict, watching for what might go wrong, and they have no idea how much energy that is costing them — or how much it has been costing their decisions, their relationships, and their ability to hear God.

This week introduces three things that need to land clearly:

First — there are two doors into the activated state. Trauma is one road in. Chronic overstimulation is another. Most teaching about regulation focuses on one or the other. This program names both, because both kinds of people will be in your room and both need to find themselves in the teaching. Without naming both doors, half the room will read the activation teaching and conclude it does not apply to them.

Second — trauma is calibrated differently for every person. What registers as catastrophic for one person registers as ordinary for another, depending on what the nervous system was trained to call normal in formation. It is the imprinting that occurred as we grew up — learning from what we were around and from our own lived experiences. This is critical for participants who have been minimizing what happened to them — and for participants who have been comparing themselves to others and concluding their experience does not qualify as trauma worth addressing. Both miss the point. The question is not what happened. The question is what the system had to do to survive it.

Third — sympathetic dominance throttles discernment. When the nervous system is locked in survival mode, the higher-order capacities for wisdom, learning, and decision-making are physiologically impaired. This is the relief many participants have been waiting their whole lives to hear. They have been blaming themselves for decades of bad decisions while their system was throttled the entire time. They were not stupid. They were not weak. Their system was running on a setting that does not allow for clear thinking. Naming this is not making excuses for sin. It is naming the soil that bad decisions kept growing out of.

This is not a clinical lecture. It is an invitation to awareness. Before people can change the state they are responding from, they need to be able to name it honestly. That is the purpose of this week.

The 5-day daily companion carries participants deeper into personal application through practice — not just reflection. The in-class session introduces the framework and opens the conversation. The daily work does the formation.

What the facilitator should understand

- Some may have lived wound tight so long they assumed it was just their personality.
- Some may think being constantly alert means they are responsible or on top of things.
- Some may genuinely not know that what they are experiencing has a name.
- Some may feel uncomfortable with stillness because quiet exposes how much noise they have been carrying.
- Some came through trauma they have never named out loud and may begin to recognize themselves for the first time this week.
- Some came through chronic overstimulation without any single defining event and may struggle to feel they belong in the conversation. They do.
- Some have been blaming themselves for years of bad decisions, not realizing their system was throttling their capacity to make good ones.
- Some will recognize how poorly they have been sleeping and feel exposed when sleep gets named as a symptom — handle that gently.

That is human. Lead with gentleness and honesty. The goal is not to make people feel broken. The goal is to help them begin noticing the state they have been living in and the road that brought them to it.

Facilitator posture

Lead with calm, steadiness, and compassion. Do not teach this like a clinical breakdown. Teach it like an invitation to honesty. Model a peaceful tone. Make stillness feel safe, not intimidating. Your calm presence in the room is itself part of the lesson.

When you teach the two paths, do not lean harder on one than the other. The trauma path and the overstimulation path both deserve full weight. The room will sort themselves into the one that fits — your job is to make sure both find a home.

Session structure — 60 minutes

- 0–5 min — Opening prayer and brief connection
- 5–25 min — Facilitator teaches the message
- 25–50 min — Group discussion questions
- 50–58 min — Introduce the 5-day daily companion
- 58–60 min — Closing prayer

Scripture for facilitator prep

Psalm 139:23–24 (NIV): “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

1 Kings 19:11–12 (NIV): “The Lord said, ‘Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.’ Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.”

Luke 10:41–42 (NIV): “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Psalm 46:10 (NIV): “He says, ‘Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.’”

Psalm 127:2 (NIV): “In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.”

Psalm 4:8 (NIV): “In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.”

Romans 12:2 (NIV): “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Week 3: THE SETTLED STATE — Understanding the State You Are Living In, Part 2

Facilitator Preparation

A Note From the Author

I remember the first time I sat at the lake and actually felt it.

Not telling myself I should be grateful and call that peace.

Actually, felt it. The water still. The sun coming up. Something settled inside me that I had not felt in, I do not know how long. Maybe ever in a sustained way.

My first instinct was to wait for it to go away.

That is what years of living in the activated state does to a person. Peace starts to feel suspicious. Settledness starts to feel like you are missing something. The quiet starts to feel unsafe because for so long the quiet was where the worst things surfaced.

It took time to learn that the settled state was not a trap. It was home.

Week 3 exists because most of the people walking into your room this week have never been taught what God designed them to live from. They know what activated feels like. They know what survival mode feels like. They know what numb feels like and exhausted feels like and the brief relief of whatever they have been using to manage the noise.

But settled? Genuinely, internally, actually at rest? For many of them that is as foreign as it was to me.

What makes this week different from any other week in the program is this. Week 2 named the problem. Week 3 shows them the destination. And for some people that will be the most hope they have felt in years. Not because their circumstances changed. Because they finally saw that there is another way to live and it is actually available to them.

Your job this week is to carry that hope without performing it.

Do not teach this week like someone presenting a destination they have read about. Teach it like someone who has been there. Who has sat at the still water. Who has felt the peace that does not make sense in the middle of circumstances that should produce panic. Who knows from the inside that what God designed is real and reachable.

If you have not experienced the settled state yourself, that is honest and that is okay. Say so. And then point to the One who has it for them.

Because the people in that room do not need a perfect guide. They need an honest one pointing in the right direction.

Mike Farrar Founder, Invictus Publications Author, You Don't Know What You Don't Know

The heart behind this lesson

Week 3 is the turning point of the first half of this program.

Week 2 gave participants language for the problem, the activated, scanning, wound-tight state that many have been living from for years. This week gives them a picture of the destination. The parasympathetic state, not as a clinical category but as the internal condition of settledness, presence, and receptivity that God created human beings to live from.

But this week goes beyond just naming the destination. It begins to show participants what the settled state actually makes possible and what living from the activated state has been costing them in ways they may not have fully recognized.

Here is the truth that needs to land this week: the state a person is living from is not just affecting how they feel. It is shaping how they interpret everything around them. A person in the sympathetic state interprets a delayed text as rejection. A quiet room feels threatening. Correction feels like attack. Uncertainty feels like danger. The system is not trying to read situations accurately. It is trying to survive them.

A person in the parasympathetic state interprets the same circumstances differently not because they are naive or disconnected from reality, but because the system is no longer braced. It is present. It can take in new information, adapt without overloading, receive correction without collapsing, and sit with uncertainty without reaching immediately for control.

That difference, between braced and present, between surviving and receiving is what makes the parasympathetic state so important spiritually. It is the internal condition where truth can actually land. Where God can actually be heard. Where the Holy Spirit has room to move in a person rather than being drowned out by the noise of chronic activation.

This is also the week to introduce HRV — Heart Rate Variability — as a simple, practical tool participants can use to begin tracking their own state. Present it lightly. Not as a performance metric or a clinical measure. As an awareness tool. A way to get honest about what the body is actually reporting rather than what the mind assumes.

The connection between the settled nervous system state and the work of the Holy Spirit is the most powerful theological idea in the program. Handle it with care and let it land.

The 5-day daily companion carries the personal inventory and application work into the week. The session plants the seed. The daily entries water it.

What the facilitator should understand

- Some people may associate peace with passivity or weakness — clarify that the settled state is not checked out. It is the most capable and adaptive state a person can live from. Grounded is not the same as passive.
- Some may feel guilty for wanting rest when life demands so much from them — help them see that the settled state actually increases their capacity to respond well, not decreases it.
- Some may have never experienced sustained settledness and may need to hear clearly that it is genuinely available to them — not as a reward for having it together, but as a gift God designed them to live from.
- Some may recognize what keeps feeding their activation and feel overwhelmed by how much would need to change — keep the focus on awareness first. You cannot move toward what you cannot yet name.
- Some may be skeptical of the HRV concept or not have access to a smartwatch — make clear that HRV is an optional awareness tool, not a requirement. The same awareness can come from honest self-observation.
- Some may be in rooms or seasons of life where genuine stillness feels dangerous or impossible right now — honor that. The goal is not to make people feel like they are failing at peace. The goal is to help them begin seeing that the settled state is real, it is available, and the return to it is a process, not a performance.

Facilitator posture

Lead with hope, gentleness, and practical honesty.

Do not teach the parasympathetic state like a clinical module. Do not teach HRV like a health presentation. Teach this week like a homecoming — helping people see that the condition of settledness, presence, and receptivity they have been longing for is not out of reach. It is what they were designed for. And it is where God has been waiting to meet them the whole time.

The room should feel the weight of what chronic activation has been costing them and the genuine hope of what becomes possible when the system begins to settle. Carry both.

A note on the vagus nerve for the facilitator

Before you teach HRV this week, you need to understand what HRV is actually measuring. It is measuring the function of the vagus nerve.

The vagus nerve is the longest cranial nerve in the body. It begins at the base of the brain and runs down through the neck, the chest, and into the abdomen, branching to the heart, the lungs, the gut, and most of the major organs. It is the primary highway of the parasympathetic nervous system. When the vagus nerve is engaged, the body shifts toward settled. When it is suppressed, the body locks into activation.

Vagal tone is the term for how well the vagus nerve is functioning. High vagal tone means the system can move quickly and easily into the parasympathetic state. Low vagal tone means the system has been locked in sympathetic dominance long enough that the pathway home has become harder to access. HRV is essentially the measurable output of vagal tone. The two terms are not identical, but for purposes of this program they point at the same thing — how well the body is able to return to settled.

Here is the part most facilitators have never been told. The vagus nerve can be intentionally engaged. There are specific physical practices that activate it directly. Slow exhales longer than the inhale. Humming. Singing. Reading or praying out loud. Cold water on the face or neck. Walking in a calm environment. Connection with a trusted person whose own system is settled. Each of these stimulates the vagus nerve and helps the body shift toward parasympathetic dominance.

This matters spiritually because of what we now understand. Many of the things Scripture has commanded for thousands of years are vagal activators. Sing to the Lord. Be still. Come away to a quiet place. Give thanks. The Hebrew word for spirit, *ruach*, is the same word for breath. God designed the body with a built-in pathway home. We just did not have the science to recognize it until recently.

That is the most powerful theological idea in this week's teaching, and it is worth letting it land in your own heart before you carry it into the room. The body is not separate from the spiritual life. God designed reset into the physical system itself. And the practices He has been calling His people to for centuries — worship, stillness, gratitude, breath, gathered community — are not just spiritual disciplines. They are the design itself, working as it was meant to work.

When you teach the vagus nerve in the session, keep it simple. Name what it is. Name what it does. Name the practical activators. Connect it back to the spiritual frame. Then move into the HRV teaching as the measurement of how well that mechanism is functioning. Participants do not need a neuroscience lecture. They need to know there is a physical pathway home that they can engage on purpose.

The participant workbook teaches this in plain language and Day 2's daily practice introduces a specific vagal breathing exercise. The session sets the foundation. The daily practice begins the work.

A note on HRV for the facilitator

Heart Rate Variability measures the variation in time between heartbeats. Most people assume a perfectly steady heartbeat is the healthy one. It is actually the opposite.

A high HRV — significant variation between beats — indicates a nervous system that is flexible, responsive, and adaptive. The heart is not locked into one rigid rhythm. It is adjusting constantly to what the body needs moment by moment. That flexibility is a physiological marker of parasympathetic dominance. The system is present and adaptive rather than braced and rigid.

A low HRV — very consistent, rigid beats — indicates a system under sustained stress. The nervous system is locked in. Less able to adjust. Less adaptive. More likely operating from sympathetic dominance.

Many smartwatches now track HRV — Apple Watch, Garmin, Whoop, and others. Participants who have access to one can begin checking it daily as part of their awareness practice this week.

The important thing to communicate is this: HRV is not a score to optimize. It is a window into honesty. It tells you what your body has actually been living in — not what you think it has been, but what the system is reporting. That honest data can be a powerful prompt to return to the settled state when a person might otherwise have stayed unaware.

Introduce it briefly in the session. Let participants who are curious pursue it further on their own.

Session structure – 60 minutes

- 0–5 min – Opening prayer and brief connection
- 5–25 min – Facilitator teaches the message
- 25–50 min – Group discussion questions
- 50–58 min – Introduce the 5-day daily companion
- 58–60 min – Closing prayer

Scripture for facilitator prep

- *Philippians 4:6–7 (NIV): “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*
- *Isaiah 26:3 (NIV): “You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.”*
- *John 14:27 (NIV): “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*
- *Romans 8:6 (NIV): “The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.”*
- *Mark 4:35–40 (NIV): “That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, ‘Let us go over to the other side.’ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, ‘Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?’ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, ‘Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?’”*
- *Acts 16:25 (NIV): “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.”*
- *Psalms 23:1–3 (NIV): “The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake.”*

Week 4: RUMINATION — The Battle Before the War

Facilitator Preparation

A Note From the Author

The loop in my head had a voice I knew well.

It did not sound like the enemy. It sounded like me. Like my own honest self-assessment. Like the realistic version of who I was after everything I had done and everything I had failed to do.

You are too far gone. You keep proving who you really are. Nobody actually believes you have changed. Why would they. You barely believe it yourself.

I did not know it was a weapon. I thought it was just the truth.

That is the most dangerous thing about rumination. It does not announce itself as a lie. It presents itself as clarity. As finally seeing yourself without all the wishful thinking. And the longer you let it run, the more it feels like wisdom rather than warfare.

I spent years in that loop before I understood what was actually happening. Before I realized that the voice I kept listening to was not my conscience, not God's conviction, and not an honest assessment of reality. It was a strategy. A planted thought that had been rehearsed so many times it had settled into the furniture of my identity and stopped feeling like an intruder at all.

Week 4 is the week that changes for people in this room.

Not because the loop suddenly stops. It will not stop overnight. But because the moment a person understands that not every voice in their head deserves agreement — that some of those thoughts were planted and designed to keep them stuck — the loop loses something it cannot get back. It loses the illusion that it is telling the truth.

And once the lie is exposed, the person can begin doing something about it.

Your job this week is not to fix everyone's inner dialogue. Your job is to name the battle clearly enough that the people in that room begin to recognize what has been happening in their own minds — possibly for the first time in their lives.

For some of them this week will feel like the lights coming on in a room that has been dark for years.

Carry it with that kind of weight. And lead with the authority of someone who knows the loop is not the last word.

Mike Farrar Founder, Invictus Publications Author, You Don't Know What You Don't Know

The heart behind this lesson

Week 4 is about the war most people do not know they are losing.

For three weeks, participants have been building awareness of their internal state. This week goes to the source of much of that activation. Before the reaction. Before the shutdown. Before the decision that cost them — something was already running in the mind. A repeated thought. A familiar lie. A loop that kept feeding fear, shame, regret, or hopelessness until the weight of it finally showed up on the outside.

Rumination is not just overthinking. It is the primary battlefield of spiritual warfare. The enemy has never needed to destroy people through external force alone. His most effective weapon has always been the thought planted in the mind and left to grow. This lesson names that battle, identifies the weapon, and gives participants the only thing that actually works against it — the truth of who God says they are.

The 5-day daily companion carries this into the week with daily practice catching the loop, naming the lie, and replacing it with truth. This is where the real work of Week 4 happens.

A note on the dopamine loop for the facilitator

Before you teach rumination this week, you need to understand something about why the loop is so hard to stop. Most facilitators have never been told this. Most participants have been blaming themselves for years because nobody told them either.

Rumination has a dopamine signature.

Dopamine is one of the brain's primary reward chemicals. It is what gets released when something feels meaningful, productive, or important. And here is the part that most people find counterintuitive — when a person ruminates on a problem, their brain releases dopamine. Not because the problem is being solved. Because the brain interprets the act of thinking about a problem as the act of working on a solution. The loop feels productive even when nothing is being produced. It feels meaningful even when it is destroying the person.

That is why participants in your room have been unable to simply stop ruminating, even when they know the loop is hurting them. The loop is rewarded. The brain returns to it the same way it returns to any other reward — automatically, often, and without permission from the conscious mind.

This is the relief many participants have been waiting their whole lives to hear. They have not been weak for not stopping the loop on their own. They have been fighting a brain mechanism that was actively rewarding them for staying in it. The loop was not just a bad habit. It was a neurological reward pattern the enemy has learned to exploit.

Here is the second piece the facilitator needs to carry. The same mechanism that grooves the lie pattern can groove the truth pattern. Repetition is the tool. The brain rewires according to what it rehearses. This is what neuroscientists call neuroplasticity. It is also what Scripture has been teaching for thousands of years.

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."
— Romans 12:2

"But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." — Hebrews 5:14

Constant use. Trained themselves. That is neuroplasticity in the writer of Hebrews' own words. The brain that has been trained on the lie can be retrained on the truth. The pathway that runs the loop can be replaced with a pathway that runs the Word, gratitude, worship, and declaration of who God says the participant is.

This matters for how you teach Day 4 specifically. Day 4 is about gratitude as a weapon. Most participants will hear that and think it sounds like spiritual fluff — something well-meaning Christians say without much science behind it. But gratitude is not just a spiritual discipline. Gratitude actively produces dopamine. It engages the same reward pathway the loop has been hijacking, but in a direction that builds rather than destroys. When the participant practices gratitude, their brain receives a reward signal — and that signal competes with the rumination reward. Over time, with repetition, gratitude becomes the new pathway. The loop loses ground because it loses reward.

Philippians 4:8 — think on whatever is true, noble, right, pure — is not a moral instruction in disguise. It is neurological warfare written into Scripture two thousand years before science could name what was happening. Same mechanism the enemy has been using to keep people stuck. Used in reverse for the kingdom.

Carry that into the room. Teach the loop with the authority of someone who knows it is rewarded by design, hijacked by the enemy, and reversible by deliberate repetition of what God has actually said. The participant who hears this will leave with something they did not have before — confidence that the practice will actually work because the mechanism is real, not just hopeful.

The participant workbook teaches this in plain language inside the message section. Day 4's daily practice deepens it as the gratitude teaching lands.

What the facilitator should understand

- Some may have lived with a harsh condemning inner voice so long it feels like their own personality.
- Some may have confused the enemy's voice with God's voice and lived under condemnation they thought was conviction.
- Some may have believed the lies for so long that the truth feels foreign or even threatening.

Lead this week with steadiness, compassion, and uncompromising truth. The goal is not to frighten people about their thoughts. The goal is to help them recognize that not every voice in their head deserves agreement — and that God has already spoken something truer over every person in that room.

Facilitator posture

Lead with calm authority and genuine compassion. Do not teach this like a lecture on thought management. Teach it like an unveiling — helping people see a battle that has been happening right under the surface of their daily life. The tone should communicate clearly: what has been happening in your mind is real, it has had real consequences, AND there is a way through it.

Session structure — 60 minutes

- 0–5 min — Opening prayer and brief connection
- 5–25 min — Facilitator teaches the message
- 25–50 min — Group discussion questions
- 50–58 min — Introduce the 5-day daily companion
- 58–60 min — Closing prayer

Scripture for facilitator prep

- *2 Corinthians 10:3–5 (NIV) "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."*
- *Proverbs 23:7 (NIV) "for he is the kind of person who is always thinking about the cost. 'Eat and drink,' he says to you, but his heart is not with you."*
- *Genesis 3:1 (NIV) "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?"'*
- *Psalms 42:5 (NIV) "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."*
- *Philippians 4:8 (NIV) "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things."*
- *Matthew 12:43–45 (NIV) - The empty swept house — the warning about removal without replacement*
- *Philippians 4:6–7 (NIV) - Thanksgiving as the mechanism that precedes peace*

Week 5: POSTURE OF THE HEART — The Filter That Shapes Everything

Facilitator Preparation

A Note From the Author

For most of my life I thought my heart was fine.

I thought the issue was my circumstances. My choices. The substances. The consequences. If I could just get those under control, everything underneath would sort itself out.

What I did not understand — and what took me longer to see than almost anything else — is that the choices and the circumstances were downstream. They were the output. And what was producing them had been running quietly in the background for decades without me ever really looking at it.

The posture of my heart.

The filter. The lens. The set of assumptions I had been carrying so long they felt like just how life worked. Fear is normal. Guard everything. Do not let people see what is really there. Hold it together on the outside no matter what it costs on the inside.

That posture was not random. It was trained. Shaped by what I had been repeatedly exposed to. By what I had learned to expect from people, from God, from myself. And by the time I was deep in the addiction, the filter had been shaped by so many years of pain, pride, and survival mode that I could no longer tell the difference between what I actually believed and what the filter had been telling me was true.

Pressure exposed it. But not all at once. And not in a way I recognized for a long time.

Week 5 is the week participants start looking below the surface. Below the behavior. Below the reaction. Below the noise. At the thing that has been quietly shaping everything else.

For some people in that room this will be the most uncomfortable week so far. Not because the content is harsh. Because an honest look at the heart posture is an honest look at what has really been driving things — and most people have worked very hard not to look at that directly.

Your job this week is not to force the exposure. It is to make the room safe enough that the honest look is possible. God does the exposing. You create the conditions.

Lead with gentleness and with genuine hope. Because the truth about this week is not just that the filter gets exposed. It is that God is offering to replace it. Not manage it. Not patch it. Replace it.

That is not a small thing to carry into a room.

Mike Farrar Founder, Invictus Publications Author, You Don't Know What You Don't Know

The heart behind this lesson

Week 5 is the bridge between understanding internal state and understanding what shapes it at the deepest level.

For four weeks participants have been building awareness. They named the activated state. They caught a picture of the settled state. They began recognizing the battle in their own mind. This week goes one layer deeper.

The heart is not just about feelings. It is a filter. It is the lens through which a person interprets what happens to them, decides what it means, and chooses how to respond. And the posture of that heart directly affects the nervous system state a person lives from. A heart shaped by fear keeps the system scanning. A heart shaped by pride keeps the system defended. A heart shaped by surrender creates the internal conditions for the parasympathetic state.

The electrical analogy from the recovery world connects powerfully here - we run on energy, and the posture of the heart determines whether that energy is clean or dirty. The 5-day daily companion carries participants into honest examination of what has been shaping their filter.

What the facilitator should understand

- Some may think their main problem is behavior or circumstance, not the deeper heart posture underneath.
- Some may feel immediate shame when pressure reveals something they did not want to see - help them understand that exposure is not condemnation, it is invitation.
- Some may have lived with a guarded or hardened heart for so long that openness feels genuinely unsafe.
- Some may need to hear clearly that God does not expose the heart to shame people. He exposes it to heal and realign them.

Lead this week with humility, steadiness, and hope. The goal is not to make participants feel guilty for what gets revealed under pressure. Pressure is not the enemy. It is a mirror. And what the mirror shows is the starting point for honest growth, not a verdict on who they are forever.

Facilitator posture

Lead with warmth, honesty, and genuine compassion. Do not teach this like a theological lecture. Teach it like a practical invitation to become honest about what has really been shaping the filter. The room should feel safe enough for people to sit with uncomfortable answers.

Session structure - 60 minutes

- 0-5 min - Opening prayer and brief connection
- 5-25 min - Facilitator teaches the message
- 25-50 min - Group discussion questions
- 50-58 min - Introduce the 5-day daily companion
- 58-60 min - Closing prayer

Scripture for facilitator prep

- *Proverbs 4:23 (NIV) – "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."*
- *Matthew 15:18 (NIV) – "But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them."*
- *Luke 6:45 (NIV) – "A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of."*
- *Matthew 7:24–27 (NIV) – "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."*
- *Ezekiel 36:26 (NIV) – "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."*

Week 6: THE FORMATION SYSTEM — Plugging Into the Word, Not the World

Facilitator Preparation

A Note From the Author

For years I lived in the gray and called it faith.

I believed in God. I prayed in seasons. I thought of myself as a person who had not walked away from the Lord. And I was drinking a handle of vodka a day. Justifying it. Negotiating with it. Moving the line every time the evidence got too close to something I did not want to face.

That is the gray. Not dramatically choosing the world. Not walking away from God. Just never fully choosing the Word either. Keeping one hand in each place and wondering why the peace I could almost see kept staying just out of reach.

The enemy had a specific lie he used to keep me there. It was not complicated. It was just the oldest lie in Scripture dressed in modern clothes.

You will lose too much. The life on the other side of full surrender is smaller than the one you have now. Are you sure you want to give all of that up?

I believed it for longer than I want to admit. Not because it was true. Because my filter was still shaped by the world's accounting system. And through that lens the cost looked like loss.

What I did not know — what nobody had ever shown me clearly enough — is that the cost narrative is not an honest assessment of the trade. It is a distortion. Produced by a filter that has not yet seen what is in the field. The moment God begins to replace the filter the old desires do not just get managed. They get displaced. The things you were afraid of losing stop looking like what you need. And what you thought would feel like sacrifice starts feeling like the most obvious trade you have ever made.

I know that from the inside now. And I want every person in your room to know it too.

Your job this week is not to make the cost sound smaller than it is. It is real and Jesus never pretended otherwise. Your job is to show people what is on the other side of it clearly enough that the cost narrative loses its power over them.

Because the peace waiting on the other side of full surrender is not theoretical. It is the most real thing I have ever experienced. And it is available to every person in that room.

Point them toward it with everything you have.

The heart behind this lesson

Week 6 is the pivot point of the entire program.

For five weeks participants have been building awareness. They named the activated state. They caught a picture of settledness. They identified the battle in their own mind. They examined the posture of their heart and what has been shaping it. All of that has been leading here.

This week moves through four distinct theological movements and every one of them needs to land in order.

The first is the gift. Before anything else this week the participant needs to understand that salvation and grace are free — already given, already paid for, not conditional on performance. But free does not mean costless to receive. A gift requires an open hand. And the open hand is humility. Which requires vulnerability. Which is the posture the world has spent years training people to avoid. This is the entry point for everything else the week asks of them.

The second is the gray. Most people in that room are not dramatically in the world. They are in the gray — not fully choosing the Word, not fully walking away from God, keeping one foot in each place and wondering why the peace they can almost see keeps staying just out of reach. The gray is not neutral ground. It is the breeding ground for anxiety, depression, addiction, instability, and spiritual deafness. The participant needs to see that clearly before they can leave it honestly.

The third is the cost narrative. The moment a person gets serious about leaving the gray the enemy pivots the conversation from what the gray has been costing to what leaving it would cost. This is Genesis 3 in modern clothing — the oldest lie in Scripture and the one that keeps the most sincere people stuck at the edge of full surrender. The lie is not that the cost is real. The cost is real. The lie is that the cost looks like loss. It only looks like loss through a filter that has not yet seen what is in the field. Matthew 13:44 and Matthew 19:21–22 sit side by side in this week's message for exactly that reason — same cost, different filter, completely different experience of it.

The fourth is the desire shift. This is the part the enemy cannot explain because he has never experienced it. When the filter gets replaced God does not just change what a person does. He changes what they want. Not through suppression of old desires by willpower. Through displacement of old desires by something better. Paul called what he gave up garbage. The woman left the jar at the well without looking back. Zacchaeus gave away half his possessions and it felt natural. The cost narrative loses its power the moment the filter starts to change because what a person was afraid of losing stops looking like what they need.

The week ends with the peace that makes no sense — the natural output of a filter progressively surrendered to the right source. Not a reward for performance. Not available in the gray. Available only on the other side of the open hand.

This is the highlight of the program. Teach it with full conviction and full compassion.

What the facilitator should understand

- Some will immediately recognize themselves in the gray and feel exposed. That recognition is the beginning of movement, not a failure.
- Some may confuse the gray with balance or wisdom – help them see the difference between wisdom and compromise.
- Some have tried to live fully by the Word and felt the cost personally. Honor that. The cost is real. So is what is on the other side.
- Some may be in active addiction cycle or struggling with mental health and need to hear that the gray is not a character flaw – it is a condition that has a way out.

Lead this week with conviction and compassion in equal measure. The truth is clear. The invitation is warm. And the peace on the other side is worth everything the gray was protecting.

Facilitator posture

Lead with clarity, warmth, and genuine hope. Do not teach this like a warning. Teach it like an unveiling – showing people a map they have needed for a long time. The room should feel the weight of the gray honestly and the pull of the Word powerfully.

A note on the marriage covenant framing

Before you teach this week, you need to understand what James is doing in 4:4–6. Most teaching on this passage stops at the surface — friendship with the world is bad, friendship with God is good, choose God. That reading is correct but it misses the load-bearing image James is using.

James is using marriage language.

"You adulterous people" is not metaphor for emphasis. It is covenant language. In the prophets — especially Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel — Israel's relationship with God is repeatedly described as a marriage. When Israel turned to other gods, the prophets called it adultery. Not because the metaphor was harsh. Because the relationship really was that intimate, and the betrayal really was that personal.

James is standing in that prophetic tradition. He is not exaggerating to make the point land harder. He is naming what is actually happening in the spiritual life of his readers. They are in a covenant relationship with God. Friendship with the world — half-hearted devotion, divided loyalty, keeping one foot in each place — is unfaithfulness in that covenant. The gray is not just compromise. It is covenant betrayal.

That framing matters because it changes what the gray actually is. Most participants in your room think of the gray as a personal struggle, a failure of discipline, a discipleship project they have not yet completed. James says no. The gray is unfaithfulness. There is a Person on the other side of it, and He is grieved by it.

Then watch what James does next. The Greek word in verse 5 is *epipothei* — yearns, longs intensely. Not petty jealousy. Not the small, possessive jealousy a person feels when their pride is wounded. The jealousy of a husband watching his wife slipping toward another lover. God is not indifferent about which pool we live in. He longs for the spirit He placed in us. He aches over the divided heart.

If James left the reader there, the passage would crush. "You are an adulterer against God" without resolution would produce shame, not repentance. Scripture knows the difference.

So James pivots. Verse 6 — "But he gives us more grace." The Greek is *meizona charin* — greater grace. Grace that scales up to meet the size of the problem. The bigger the unfaithfulness, the greater the grace available. The diagnosis is severe. The mercy is greater.

Carry this into the room. The gray is not just a habit to break. It is unfaithfulness in a covenant. And the response is not shame — it is greater grace, available right now, scaled to whatever the participant has been carrying. Both have to land, in that order.

This reframes everything else this week is teaching. The cost narrative loses power not because the cost is smaller than it looks. It loses power because what is on the other side is a faithful relationship with the One who has been longing for the participant the entire time. The treasure in the field is not just a metaphor for kingdom value. It is the covenant relationship itself — the Bridegroom waiting for the bride to come home from the gray.

The participant workbook teaches this in plain language inside the message section. Day 2's daily companion deepens it as the participant looks honestly at their own gray.

Session structure – 60 minutes

- 0–5 min - Opening prayer and brief connection
- 5–25 min - Facilitator teaches the message
- 25–50 min - Group discussion questions
- 50–58 min - Introduce the 5-day daily companion
- 58–60 min - Closing prayer

Scripture for facilitator prep

- *Romans 12:2 (NIV) "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will."*
- *James 4:6 (NIV) "But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'"*
- *James 1:6-8 (NIV) "But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do."*

- *Revelation 3:15–16 (NIV) "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth."*
- *Matthew 13:44 (NIV) "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."*
- *Matthew 19:21–22 (NIV) "Jesus answered, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth."*
- *Philippians 3:7–8 (NIV) "But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ."*
- *Philippians 4:7 (NIV) "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*
- *Philippians 4:11 (NIV) "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content."*
- *James 4:4–6 (NIV) "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'"*

Week 7: THE LENS — How Formation Shapes What You See

Facilitator Preparation

A Note From the Author

For most of my life I thought I was seeing things clearly.

That was the problem.

I was not seeing clearly. I was seeing everything through a lens shaped by years of fear, survival mode, addiction, and unprocessed pain. And because the lens had been in place so long I had stopped noticing it was there. It just felt like reality. Like the way things actually were.

When someone was quiet I saw withdrawal. When someone corrected me I saw attack. When things slowed down I saw abandonment. When God did not move on my timeline I saw absence.

None of those interpretations were accurate. They were what happens when a distorted lens gets mistaken for a clear window.

The moment that began to change for me was when I stopped arguing with my circumstances and started asking a different question. Not — why is this happening to me? But — what lens am I looking through right now? Because the answer to the second question explained the answer to the first in ways that nothing else could.

Joseph had every reason to see his story as a tragedy. Betrayed. Sold. Falsely accused. Forgotten. Through the world lens that is exactly what it was. But Joseph never lost the Word lens. And what the Word lens could see across decades of injustice was something the world lens could not even detect — preparation, positioning, and a God who was not wasting a single piece of the pain.

That is what this week is about.

Not positive thinking. Not pretending the circumstances are better than they are. A genuine shift in what the lens can see — and the daily discipline required to keep that lens clean when the world is working constantly to smear it.

The people in your room this week have been living through real things. Real loss. Real difficulty. Real injustice. Do not minimize that. Joseph did not minimize it either. He named it directly — you intended to harm me.

But then show them what the Word lens can see that the world lens cannot. Because the peace they have been looking for is not waiting for the circumstances to change.

It is waiting for the lens to.

Mike Farrar Founder, Invictus Publications Author, You Don't Know What You Don't Know

The heart behind this lesson

Week 7 is the practical payoff of Week 6.

Last week participants faced the hardest truth in the program — there are only two formation systems, the Word or the world, and the gray between them is the breeding ground for everything they have been trying to escape. This week shows them what actually changes when they choose the Word consistently. Because the formation system shapes the lens. And the lens shapes everything.

This is not a new subject. It is the downstream effect of everything the program has been building. The nervous system state from Weeks 2 and 3 affects perception. The rumination battle from Week 4 distorts interpretation. The heart posture from Week 5 shapes what the filter produces. The formation system from Week 6 determines which lens gets used. Week 7 names the lens itself — and shows participants what it looks like to live from the Word lens rather than the world lens in concrete, daily, practical terms.

The core truth is this. A person looking through the world lens and a person looking through the Word lens can be in identical circumstances and have completely different experiences of those circumstances. Not because one is naive and the other is realistic. Because the lens determines what gets seen — what difficulty means, what delay means, what suffering means, what success means, and where peace actually comes from.

The week is built around five biblical figures across five daily entries. Elisha's servant in 2 Kings 6 — the man whose eyes were opened to see what was already there, unchanged by circumstances, visible only through a different lens. Joseph in Genesis 50 — the man who kept the Word lens through betrayal, slavery, false accusation, and prison and came out the other side able to see what God had been doing the entire time. Paul in 2 Corinthians 4 — the man who measured his suffering against an eternal backdrop and called it light and momentary. Daniel in Daniel 6 — the man who maintained the daily discipline of the lens even when circumstances made it illegal and costly. And Blind Bartimaeus in Mark 10 — the man who asked Jesus directly for what this week is ultimately about. I want to see.

The lens can change. Every person in that room is proof that it has already begun to. Your job this week is to show them what it looks like when the lens keeps getting clearer.

What the facilitator should understand

- Some may have never considered that their internal state is shaping what they think they are seeing, not just how they feel.
- Some may feel convicted when they see how much the world lens has been shaping their interpretation of people, circumstances, and God.
- Some may resist the Joseph framing because their pain feels too recent or too large to recontextualize yet – honor that and give it space.
- Some may need to hear clearly that the Word lens does not erase suffering. It recontextualizes it. That is a meaningful distinction.

Lead this week with clarity, warmth, and genuine hope. The lens can change. Joseph is proof. Paul is proof. And the peace on the other side of a Word-formed lens is more available than most people have dared to believe.

Facilitator posture

Lead with hope grounded in honesty. Do not teach this like a clinical concept about perception. Teach it like the most practical truth in the program. The lens explains everything. And it can change. The facilitator's own settled, Word-formed presence in the room is part of the lesson.

Session structure – 60 minutes

- 0–5 min – Opening prayer and brief connection
- 5–25 min – Facilitator teaches the message
- 25–50 min – Group discussion questions
- 50–58 min – Introduce the 5-day daily companion
- 58–60 min – Closing prayer

Scripture for facilitator prep

- *"Don't be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. — 2 Kings 6:16–17 (NIV)*
- *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." — Genesis 50:20 (NIV)*
- *"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." — 2 Corinthians 4:17–18 (NIV)*
- *"When Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before." — Daniel 6:10 (NIV)*
- *"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." — Colossians 3:2 (NIV)*
- *"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." — John 8:32 (NIV)*

Week 8: CO-REGULATION — Who and What You Stay Around Matters

Facilitator Preparation

A Note From the Author

I did not know I was being formed.

That is the thing about co-regulation that took me the longest to understand. It does not announce itself. It does not ask permission. It just happens — below the surface, below conscious awareness, through sustained proximity to people and places and inputs that are doing formation work on you whether you realize it or not.

I look back now at the years when the addiction was running the show and I can see it clearly. The people I was staying closest to were not bad people. Some of them genuinely loved me. But the atmosphere we created together — the unspoken agreements, the shared justifications, the emotional temperature of what it felt like to be in that circle — was reinforcing the very thing I was trying to survive.

I was being regulated by an environment that was keeping me stuck. And I did not know it was happening because I had been in it long enough that it just felt like normal.

The moment that began to change was when I started being honest about how I felt after being around certain people. Not what I thought about them. How I felt. More settled or more activated. More aligned with what God was building or more pulled back toward what I was trying to leave.

That question — how do I feel after being with this person — was the beginning of something I did not have language for yet. It was the beginning of understanding that the people and environments I was giving access to were not neutral. They were forming me. Every one of them. In the direction of who they were.

Week 8 is the week that names what has been happening below the surface the entire time.

Not to produce fear or suspicion of the people around you. Not to make the world feel like a threat. To help you see clearly what has had access to your formation so you can begin making more intentional choices about what you let stay close.

Because here is what I have learned from the other side of some of those hard decisions.

The people you stay close to are not just people you enjoy. They are the environment in which your formation happens. And the quality of that environment matters more than most people have ever been told.

Your job this week is to help the people in that room see that clearly enough to begin doing something about it. Not with judgment. With wisdom.

And with the genuine hope that the right community — people moving in the same direction, holding each other accountable, spurring one another toward God — is one of the most powerful formation forces available to them.

Point them toward it.

Mike Farrar Founder, Invictus Publications Author, You Don't Know What You Don't Know

The heart behind this lesson

Week 8 is the hidden infrastructure under everything else in this program.

For seven weeks participants have been doing internal work. They named the activated state. They found the settled state. They identified the battle in the mind. They examined the heart posture. They chose the formation system. They learned to see through the Word lens. All of that has been leading here — because all of that internal work is happening inside an external environment that has been doing its own formation work the entire time. And most people have never fully seen it.

This is not just a social observation about choosing good friends. It is biological, neurological, and deeply spiritual. Human beings are wired to mirror one another. The nervous system of the people around you is communicating with your nervous system below conscious awareness — regulating or dysregulating it, settling or activating it, moving it toward the parasympathetic state or away from it. That mirroring happens automatically. It is not a choice. It is a design feature.

And it does not stop with people. Everything a person gives repeated access to is doing formation work at the subconscious level. The media they consume. The environments they keep returning to. The emotional atmosphere they stay inside most consistently. All of it is shaping the lens, forming the heart posture, feeding or starving the rumination loops, and modulating the nervous system state — simultaneously, below the surface, without asking permission.

Week 8 helps participants name what has been shaping them subconsciously and begin making more intentional choices. Not with judgment. Not with isolation. With wisdom.

The week moves through five categories across five daily entries. Who you have been staying around and what that sustained proximity has been producing. What you have been feeding yourself through media and inputs. The environments that settle or activate you. The community you actually need. And the closing question that turns everything around — not what kind of influence am I receiving but what kind of presence am I becoming for the people around me.

The five biblical figures carry the week. Ruth choosing to walk with Naomi and being formed into something she could not have become alone. David in Psalm 101 making deliberate commitments about what he would and would not allow access to his formation. Jesus

withdrawing intentionally to environments that supported the internal state He needed to maintain. The early church in Acts 2 demonstrating what intentional co-regulation community looks like when it is working. And Elisha staying in proximity to Elijah long enough to absorb what Elijah carried — and becoming someone who could carry it himself.

The facilitator's own settled presence in the room this week is not incidental. It is part of the lesson. They are demonstrating co-regulation working in a healthy direction in real time. Let them know that and let them carry it intentionally.

What the facilitator should understand

- Some may have never considered that their environment is forming them at a subconscious level.
- Some may feel convicted when they see how much certain relationships or media inputs have been shaping their lens and heart posture.
- Some may hear this and immediately think it means cutting people off — clarify that this is about awareness and wisdom, not isolation or judgment.
- Some may be in environments they genuinely cannot change right now — honor that and focus on what they can become more intentional about.
- Some may need to hear that godly community is not just a spiritual preference. It is practical nervous system support for the formation they are trying to build.

Lead this week with practical wisdom, compassion, and genuine hope. The goal is not suspicion of everyone around them. The goal is honest awareness of what has been forming them below the surface.

Facilitator posture

Lead with warmth, clarity, and practical groundedness. Do not overteach the neuroscience. Keep the mirror neuron and subconscious formation ideas simple and relatable. The point is not the science — the point is that this is real, it is happening, and Scripture has been saying it for thousands of years. The facilitator's own settled presence in the room is a demonstration of co-regulation working in a healthy direction.

A note on serotonin and embodied community for the facilitator

Before you teach co-regulation this week, you need to understand a second mechanism working alongside the mirror neurons. The mirror neurons explain how states transfer. Serotonin explains why sustained, embodied community produces flourishing and why isolation produces decay.

Serotonin is the brain's primary social bonding and mood regulation neurotransmitter. It is elevated through specific kinds of human interaction — face-to-face contact, eye contact,

physical touch (a handshake, a hug, a hand on the shoulder), shared meals, sustained in-person conversation, gathered worship, laughter with people who are physically present. These are not random activities the brain happens to enjoy. They are the inputs the body was specifically designed to receive in order to regulate, bond, and flourish.

Serotonin is suppressed by the opposite — isolation, parasocial relationships (consuming content from people who do not know you exist), screen-only interaction without physical presence, comparison feeds, and chronic loneliness. The body recognizes the difference between being adjacent to people and being with people. The screen-only generation has been increasingly anxious, depressed, and dysregulated for the last fifteen years not because they are weaker than previous generations. Because they are receiving less of the input the system was built to receive.

This matters spiritually because of what it tells you about how God designed human beings. The body was built for embodied community. Face-to-face. Shared meals. Gathered worship. Sustained presence with people who actually know you. Those things are not preferences. They are the inputs the design requires. And the entire New Testament treats them that way.

Look at how the early church practiced gathered life in Acts 2:42–47. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. They broke bread together — shared meals, embodied presence, multiple times a week. They met in the temple courts — gathered worship in the same physical space. They had everything in common — practical, embodied connection. They ate together with glad and sincere hearts. The Greek word translated fellowship is *koinonia* — shared life, common participation, partnership at the level of actual existence together. Not adjacent. Not parallel. Together.

That is not an accidental description. That is the chemistry of human flourishing being practiced as a way of life. The early church was not surviving despite its embodied community. It was thriving because of it. The same God who designed the human nervous system designed the church to be the place that nervous system would receive what it was built to receive.

Hebrews 10:25 tells us not to give up meeting together. That is not a religious obligation. That is a regulation instruction. The author of Hebrews understood, two thousand years before serotonin had a name, that gathered embodied community produces something isolated faith cannot produce. The instruction has always been pastoral. We just did not have the science to recognize what was being protected until recently.

Carry this into the room this week with both pieces working together. The mirror neurons explain how states transfer. The serotonin science explains why embodied community is irreplaceable. Together they make the case that the church gathered is not just spiritual encouragement. It is nervous system infrastructure. The screens cannot replicate it. The podcasts cannot replicate it. The watching-church-online cannot replicate it. None of those are bad. But none of them deliver what the body was built to receive from the gathered *koinonia* of physical presence with the people of God.

This is also the most direct answer to a generation of believers who have been trying to follow Jesus alone. They cannot. The design will not allow it. And telling them that is one of the most pastoral things this program does.

The participant workbook teaches this in plain language inside the message section. Day 4's daily practice gives the participant a specific, concrete embodied-connection assignment so they experience the chemistry of being with someone after a week of teaching about it.

Session structure — 60 minutes

- 0–5 min — Opening prayer and brief connection
- 5–25 min — Facilitator teaches the message
- 25–50 min — Group discussion questions
- 50–58 min — Introduce the 5-day daily companion
- 58–60 min — Closing prayer

Scripture for facilitator prep

- *"Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm." — Proverbs 13:20 (NIV)*
- *"Do not be misled: bad company corrupts good character." — 1 Corinthians 15:33 (NIV)*
- *"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." — Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)*
- *"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching." — Hebrews 10:24–25 (NIV)*
- *"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: if either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up." — Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 (NIV)*

Week 9: REMAIN IN CHRIST — The Five Practices and the Long Fight

Facilitator Preparation

A Note From the Author

Eight weeks ago I told you I was writing this program from the other side of a great cost — years of living hell on earth, two rehabs, multiple hospital stays, and a mental health condition I am now in long-term remission from.

This week I want to tell you what is actually holding that remission together.

It is not willpower. It is not church attendance. It is not the strength of my testimony. It is one posture lived out through five daily practices. And every one of them costs me something on the days I do not feel like doing them — which is most days.

Remain in Christ. That is the whole posture. Everything else is what it looks like in a body.

Daily return. Every morning I come back to God before the day starts coming at me. Some mornings it is robust. Most mornings it is short and honest. None of them are optional.

Medications. I am on medication. I will probably be on medication for the rest of my life. And I have made my peace with that, because the same God who designed the human body designed the medical care that helps a broken one keep working.

Sleep. When I am not sleeping, the system starts drifting toward dysregulation and the world starts becoming louder. But here is what I have learned over years of paying attention. Sleep is usually not the first thing that slips. It is the alarm that goes off when something is off with the other four.

Diet. What I eat affects how my brain works. Period. There is no version of stability that runs on garbage fuel. Honoring the body God gave me is not vanity. It is stewardship.

Exercise. The vagus nerve does not stay toned by accident. The dopamine and serotonin pathways do not stay healthy by accident. I move my body daily — not to look better, to think clearly enough to walk with God.

Those five practices are not a wellness routine. They are what abiding in Christ has looked like in my actual life over the years that produced and held this remission. Without them I do not have a program to teach. Without them I do not have a marriage. Without them I do not have a relationship with my children. Without them I would not have written this program.

Your job this week is to send the room out with both pieces firmly in hand. That remaining in Christ is the whole thing. And that the five practices are how it shows up daily in a body that lives in a fallen world.

Some of them will leave this week and try to do the practices without the abiding. Within a few months it will start to feel like a wellness routine and they will drift. Some of them will leave this

week and try to abide without the practices. Within a few months they will be exhausted, dysregulated, and wondering why the things they thought they had figured out are not holding.

The whole point of this final week is to put both pieces together so the participant cannot separate them in their head when the program ends.

And one more thing for you to carry into the room.

This week is the commissioning. Every other week has been formation. This week is sending. The fight ahead of these participants is real, daily, and longer than they realize. Send them out with the truth that the Helper goes with them, the supply is fresh every morning, and the practices are the body cooperating with what the Spirit is producing.

Mike Farrar Founder, Invictus Publications Author, You Don't Know What You Don't Know

The heart behind this lesson

Week 9 is the commissioning week. Everything for eight weeks has been formation — building awareness, naming the activated state, finding the settled state, identifying the battle in the mind, examining the heart posture, choosing the formation system, fixing the lens, recognizing the power of co-regulation. All of it has been preparation for what this final week sets up.

Remaining in Christ is the umbrella of the entire Christian life, but it cannot stay abstract. The participant needs to leave this week with a clear, livable, daily picture of what remaining looks like in a body. That picture is the five practices.

Sleep, Diet, Exercise, Medications, Daily Return are not a wellness routine. They are what abiding looks like in a body that lives in a fallen world with a nervous system that gravitates toward dysregulation. The participant who tries to abide without honoring the body will burn out. The participant who tries to honor the body without abiding will produce a wellness program with Christian language sprinkled on it. Neither is what this program is teaching.

The two have to land together. The five practices are the lived expression of remaining in Christ. Apart from Him they are nothing. With Him they are how the daily walk actually works.

The week also returns the participant to the foundation document at the front of the program. Eden was parasympathetic. The fall introduced dysregulation. The law was scaffolding. Jesus completed it. The Helper produces regulation as fruit. Now after eight weeks of personal experience underneath that arc the participant returns to it with new eyes — they have lived enough of it now to see it from the inside.

And the week names what the program has been carefully not naming until now. The flesh does not want to leave the gray. The post-fall human nervous system gravitates toward dysregulation. The pull back will be daily. "Be still and know that I am God" is not a passive instruction — it is a command against the gravity of the flesh. The five practices are not just lifestyle. They are daily warfare.

The week ends with commissioning. The program is ending. The walk is beginning. Joshua 1:9. Be strong and courageous. The Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

Lead this week with celebration and commissioning in equal measure. Look what God has done in this room. And now you go.

What the facilitator should understand

- Some will hear "five practices" and want to reduce the whole program to a checklist. Resist that. Keep returning to remain in Christ as the umbrella under which the practices live.
- Some will leave this week and overcommit to all five practices at full intensity, then burn out by week three after the program ends. Help them understand that consistency over time matters more than perfection in any single week.
- Some will leave this week and try to keep the abiding while neglecting the body. They will drift faster than they expect. Name that risk in the room.
- Some are grieving that the program is ending. The cohort has been a co-regulation environment for nine weeks. Honor the loss while pointing them toward the community structures they need to build for themselves now.
- Some will recognize that they have been trying to walk with God largely alone and that the previous weeks have already begun convicting them of that. Use this week's commissioning to put community on the same level as the five practices in their minds.
- Some may have decisions to make in the coming days that the activated state could not have produced wisdom for. Encourage them to wait until the system is settled before they act on anything significant. Discernment is throttled in the activated state — they learned that in Week 2 — and the same principle applies for the rest of their lives.

Lead with both hands. One celebrating what God has done in nine weeks. The other commissioning into what comes next.

Facilitator posture

Lead with the weight of what has happened in this room and the seriousness of what comes next. Do not let the closing week become sentimental. Honor the work. Honor the journey. But the participants are about to walk out of the cohort and back into a world that wants them dysregulated. The closing week is not a graduation — it is a deployment. Carry that gravity into the session without losing the joy of what God has done.

Session structure — 60 minutes

- 0–5 min — Opening prayer and brief connection
- 5–25 min — Facilitator teaches the message
- 25–45 min — Group discussion questions
- 45–55 min — Closing commissioning — pray over each participant by name
- 55–60 min — Final blessing and dismissal

Scripture for facilitator prep

John 15:4–5 (NIV) "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

Lamentations 3:22–23 (NIV) "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

Romans 12:1–2 (NIV) "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Galatians 5:22–23 (NIV) "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

Psalms 46:10 (NIV) "He says, 'Be still, and know that I am God.'"

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (NIV) "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies."

1 Timothy 4:8 (NIV) "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."

Your Next 90 Days

Practical Infrastructure for the Most Important Season You Just Entered

Facilitator Preparation

A Word Before You Hand This Off

This is not a teaching week. There is no session to prepare for, no Scripture to unpack at the front of a room, no group questions to walk through. The work you signed up for is done.

But the program does not actually end with the final session — not for the participants and not for you. The pages that follow are written directly to them. Read them carefully. You will reference this section in follow-up conversations. You will speak to it when someone struggles in the months ahead. You will know what they are holding because you held it with them.

Before you turn the page, though, a word for you.

You did this. Not alone — never alone — but you did this. You showed up week after week. You prepared when your own week had been hard. You opened in prayer. You held space when the room got quiet. You sat with people who were not sure they could say out loud what they were carrying. You let the Holy Spirit do what only the Holy Spirit can do, and you got out of the way long enough for it to happen.

God used you. Not as a polished teacher. As a willing one. Every honest moment in that room, every conversation after the session ended, every text from a participant on a hard day — that was the Holy Spirit working through someone who said yes.

You will not see most of the fruit. That is not how this works. The seed went into ground you cannot watch. Some of it is going to take months to break the surface. Some of it is going to take years. Some of it is going to come up in a way the participant never tells you about — but their spouse will know, their kids will know, the people they work alongside will know. Their life will be quieter inside. Their walk with Jesus will be deeper. And somewhere underneath it, a piece of that fruit traces back to a Tuesday night in your church, a hard conversation in Week 4, a moment in Week 7 when the lens shifted.

You planted seeds that can change a person's life and purpose. That is not exaggeration. That is what just happened in this room over these nine weeks.

So now turn the page. The next section is written to them — the participant walking out of Week 9 and into the most important season of formation they may ever consciously enter. Read it the way they will read it. Let it speak to what you carried with them. And then let it equip you for the conversations that are still ahead.

Thank you for saying yes.

Your Next 90 Days

Practical Infrastructure for the Most Important Season You Just Entered

The program is over. The cohort has scattered. Tomorrow you wake up and there is no session to attend, no daily companion to work through, no facilitator holding space for you. It is just you, your morning, the world coming at you, and what God has built in you over nine weeks.

This is the most dangerous season you are about to walk through. Not because something terrible is going to happen. Because the formation work is fragile until the rhythms become rooted, and the rhythms become rooted through repetition over time. The next 90 days are when most people drift. Not because they want to. Because they did not have a plan for what comes after.

This is your plan.

Read this once now. Then come back to it at 30 days, 60 days, and 90 days. The questions are different at each marker because the season is different at each marker.

The First 30 Days

The first 30 days are about protecting the rhythms you committed to in Week 9. The five practices — Sleep, Diet, Exercise, Medications, Daily Return — and the broader posture of remaining in Christ that holds them together.

This is not a season for adding new disciplines. This is a season for showing up to the ones you already named. Daily. Even when you do not feel like it. Especially when you do not feel like it.

Watch for these patterns in the first 30 days:

1. Rumination is the entry point for everything else breaking down. When it returns — and it will — do not negotiate with it. Catch it, name it, and replace it. Gratitude is the antidote the loop cannot survive in the same space with. Speak what you are grateful for and what God says is true over the lie, before either gets rehearsal time.
2. The pull to declare yourself fixed. After nine weeks of intense formation, the temptation is to think the work is done. It is not. The work is just beginning. Resist the urge to relax the rhythms because you feel better.
3. The pull to overcommit. The opposite trap. Wanting to perfect all five practices at full intensity in week one. You will burn out by week three. Build sustainability, not heroics.
4. Friends and family who liked you better activated. Some of the people in your life were comfortable with the version of you that was wound tight, scanning, reactive. They may push back — gently or not — when you start showing up differently. That is real. Stay the course.
5. The morning that gets away. You will miss a daily return. Maybe several. The temptation is to feel like you failed and then drift further because the failure feels like proof you cannot do this. It is not proof of anything except that you are human. Come back the next morning. The mercies are new.

6. Run a sleep audit. Sleep is the most honest data point your body has — and it is usually the first practice to drift quietly. For three nights this week, write down what time you actually went to bed, how long it took to fall asleep, whether you woke during the night, and how rested you felt in the morning. Then compare it to the sleep rhythm you committed to in Week 9 Day 1. If the numbers have started to slip, that is the early warning. Catch it now before the other four practices follow.

At 30 days, sit with these questions honestly:

1. Which of the five practices have I actually been doing daily? Which have already started to slip?
2. How is my sleep right now compared to the day I finished the program?
3. When was my last real, embodied, undistracted conversation with another believer?
4. What state am I living in most of the time right now? Settled, scanning, or somewhere in between?
5. What is the one thing I most need to recommit to before day 31?

The Second 30 Days (Days 31–60)

The second month is when the program starts to feel like a memory instead of a reality. The cohort is gone. The intensity has worn off. The new rhythms are becoming routine — and routine is when most people quietly stop doing the things that were supposed to be daily.

This is the season when the enemy gets patient and clever. He does not need a crisis. He needs an opening, repeated. The phone five minutes earlier than usual. The morning return skipped because you have a meeting. The walk traded for one more hour at the desk. The conversation with a friend put off another week. None of it feels like a big deal. All of it adds up.

This is also the season when life events tend to test the formation. Something hard happens — a conflict, a loss, a financial stress, a season of family difficulty — and the question becomes whether the rhythms hold under pressure or collapse.

Watch for these patterns in days 31–60:

1. Rumination is patient. It comes back quietly, often dressed up as honest self-assessment. The loop you spent Week 4 learning to catch is testing whether you are still catching it. Catch it. Name it. Speak God's truth over it. Same fight, every time.
2. What was 15 minutes becomes 10. Then 5. Then a quick prayer in the car. The drift is gradual and feels reasonable. It is not.
3. Quiet isolation. The cohort gave you community by default. Now community has to be chosen. Most people quietly stop choosing it within 6 weeks if they do not have a structured plan.
4. The reappearance of the activated state without you naming it. You are scanning again. You are reading rooms again. You are bracing again. And you may not realize it until something happens that should not have rattled you and you find yourself reacting from the same state you spent nine weeks naming.

5. The medication question. If you are on medication, this is the season some people quietly stop taking it because they feel better. Talk to your doctor before changing anything. Feeling better often is the medication working — not evidence you no longer need it.
6. Run a sleep audit. Sleep is the most honest data point your body has — and it is usually the first practice to drift quietly. For three nights this week, write down what time you actually went to bed, how long it took to fall asleep, whether you woke during the night, and how rested you felt in the morning. Then compare it to the sleep rhythm you committed to in Week 9 Day 1. If the numbers have started to slip, that is the early warning. Catch it now before the other four practices follow.

At 60 days, sit with these questions honestly:

1. If I am being honest, am I still actively remaining in Christ daily — or have I slipped into managing my life with Christian language on top?
2. What hard thing has happened in the last 30 days, and how did the rhythms hold under that pressure?
3. Where has drift started? Be specific — name the practice and the pattern.
4. Who in my life is actually walking with me right now? Not following me on social media. Walking with me.
5. What needs to be reset before day 61?

The Third 30 Days (Days 61–90)

The third month is when formation either becomes identity or quietly fades. By 90 days, the rhythms you have actually been keeping are starting to feel like who you are. The rhythms you have not been keeping are starting to feel like something you used to do.

This matters because identity is what holds when motivation runs out. The participant who completes the program but stops practicing within 90 days remembers it as a season they once went through. The participant who keeps practicing past 90 days starts to walk in something that no longer requires the program to sustain. The rhythms have become the person.

Watch for these patterns in days 61–90:

1. Rumination will be with you for the rest of your life. The goal was never to eliminate it. The goal is to catch it earlier than you used to, name it faster than you used to, and replace it with God's truth before it gets the rehearsal time it used to get. Three months in, you should already be doing this faster than you did the day you finished Week 4.
2. The temptation to evaluate the program. Some people will look back at 90 days and decide whether the program worked based on how they feel that morning. That is not the test. The test is whether you are still doing the work. The work is what produces the fruit. The feelings come and go.
3. The shift from doing for self to becoming for others. Around this season most participants notice that their internal change is starting to be visible to people in their life. Spouses comment. Coworkers notice. Children respond differently. This is the formation becoming presence. Steward it. Do not perform it.

4. The quiet question of whether you have built community or just attended one. The cohort is gone. If you have not built embodied community in the last 90 days, this is the season to be honest about that and start. It is not too late. It is just time.
5. Run a sleep audit. Sleep is the most honest data point your body has — and it is usually the first practice to drift quietly. For three nights this week, write down what time you actually went to bed, how long it took to fall asleep, whether you woke during the night, and how rested you felt in the morning. Then compare it to the sleep rhythm you committed to in Week 9 Day 1. If the numbers have started to slip, that is the early warning. Catch it now before the other four practices follow.

At 90 days, sit with these questions honestly:

1. What has actually changed in me over the last three months? Be specific. Name what is different.
2. What was I most afraid would not last from the program? Did it last?
3. What practice has become genuinely automatic and what practice still requires intentional effort?
4. Where am I in real, embodied community right now? If the answer is nowhere, what is the next concrete step this week?
5. If I look at the next year — what would it look like to keep doing this work for 12 more months without the structure of a program? What is my plan?

When You Drift

You will drift. Maybe in week three. Maybe in month two. Maybe in a hard season that has not happened yet. It will happen. Plan for it now so you have a response ready.

When you notice the drift, here is what to do.

1. Do not wait until you feel motivated to come back. Motivation is not coming. The return is what produces the motivation, not the other way around.
2. Do not start with all five practices at full intensity. Start with daily return. One question if that is all you can do — Lord, what am I carrying today that I need to lay before You? That is enough. The other four practices follow once the return is in place again.
3. Do not punish yourself for the drift. Shame keeps people drifting longer than the drift itself. Confession is appropriate. Self-flagellation is not. The mercies are new.
4. Reach out to one person. The cohort is over but your phone still works. Text someone from the cohort or your church and tell them honestly where you are. Co-regulation does not require a session. Sometimes it requires one honest text.

And remember the verse you committed to in Week 9:

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." — Lamentations 3:22–23 (NIV)

Every morning. Not every other morning. Not the mornings you earn. Every morning. The supply matches the daily fight. That is the whole point of the rhythm.

When To Reach For Help

This program is not a substitute for clinical care. It never was. There are situations where what you are walking through requires more than a daily framework can carry.

Reach out to a Christian counselor, a doctor, or your pastor in any of these situations:

1. Persistent thoughts of self-harm or suicide. Do not wait. Call your pastor, your counselor, or 988 (the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline). The same God who designed your body designed the helpers He has placed around you. Use them.
2. A return of patterns that previously required clinical intervention — addiction, severe depression, manic episodes, panic attacks, or trauma symptoms that are interfering with daily functioning.
3. Any situation where you are unable to maintain basic functioning at home, at work, or in your relationships for more than a few weeks.
4. Marriage or family situations that have become consistently unsafe physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

Reaching for help is not a failure of faith. It is faithful stewardship of the body and life God gave you. The same principle that applied to medication in Week 9 applies here. The God who gave you a body also gave the medical and pastoral care that helps it function in a fallen world.

Do not white-knuckle through something that requires help. Ask for it.

The Daily Framework Reminder

From Week 9 Day 5 — the rhythm you are carrying into the next 90 days and beyond: Ask yourself these questions.

1. Where am I today? (State check-in. Body, mind, soul. Honest.)
2. What needs to be surrendered? (Burdens, fears, decisions, sins. Hand them to God specifically.)
3. What does Your Word say is true that I need to receive so my lens stays clean in my daily surrender?
4. What lens do I need today? (Word lens, not world lens. Specific to what I am facing.)
5. What is the next faithful step? (One concrete thing the Spirit is asking me to do today.)

Print this page. Put it where you do your daily return. The framework is yours now. The practice is what makes it work.

One Last Thing

In ninety days, you will be three months further into a different kind of life than the one you walked into the program with. That different life is built one morning at a time.

Not in the dramatic moments. Not in the breakthrough sessions. Not in the spiritual highs. In the ordinary mornings when you came back to God before the world got there first. In the practices you kept doing when nobody was watching. In the daily returns that felt small and unimportant but were quietly building the foundation everything else now stands on.

That is how formation actually works. One morning at a time. For the rest of your life.

The Helper goes with you. The mercies are fresh. The Vine is still attached to the branch.

Now go live it.

A Prayer For Your Walk

Lord Jesus,

I am praying for the person holding this workbook right now.

You know their name. You know what they carried into Week 1 and what they are carrying out. You have been present in every honest moment of these nine weeks — in every answer that cost something, every session that required more courage than they expected, every quiet morning when something began to shift below the surface.

So I am asking You to guard what You have built in them.

Go before them into every room they are about to walk back into. The hard ones. The ones where the people they love most are still in the gray. The ones where the atmosphere will try to pull them back toward what they used to see and who they used to be.

Be in those rooms before they arrive.

Meet them in the daily return. In the quiet minutes before the day starts shaping the lens. In the five honest questions at the kitchen table or the lake or wherever they find their solitary place. In the deeper cleaning when the quick wipe is not enough and they need more than five minutes and more than their own strength.

And Lord — on the mornings when they miss. When the drift has gone further than they wanted before they noticed. When the guilt of it is making the return feel heavier than the staying away.

Let the mercy be new that morning too.

Because Your compassions never fail. Because You are that kind of God. Because the faithfulness that met Jeremiah in the rubble and David in his deepest failure and the prodigal while he was still a long way off — that same faithfulness is available to this person on their worst morning in their hardest season.

You are not finished with them.

What You began You will carry to completion.

Go with them wherever they go.

In the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.