

# First Meeting Notes

# 1

Arrive 30 minutes early to:

- **Set up the room—Have the group sit in a circle (not around a table)**
- **Review these meeting notes**
- **Prepare yourself by using the self-awareness skill:**
  1. **Ask yourself how you're feeling physically.**  
Ask yourself if you are tired, hungry, in pain, etc.
  2. **Ask yourself how you're feeling emotionally.**  
Ask yourself if you are sad, frustrated, angry, anxious, excited, etc.
  3. **Ask yourself how you're feeling about your relationships.**  
Think about your relationships with God, family members, co-workers, friends, group members, etc.
  4. **Make a mental list of the feelings that are dominating you right now.**
  5. **Ask God to prevent you from carrying these feelings into the meeting.**

Greet your group members as they arrive.

Start the meeting on time (regardless of how many are present).

Lead the group in prayer.

Read the material below to your group.

What we're going to do is:

1. Learn about how Essential Practices of the Faith works
2. Set a regular meeting day, time, and location for our meetings
3. Make a plan for the next week

Does anyone have questions before we start?

Before we start, I want to have each of us to think of a skill that we're really good at (e.g., cooking, running, gardening, fixing cars, etc.)

You'll see why we're doing this in a few minutes.

**Pause to allow everyone to think of something.**

First, let me read a description of our overall goal.

We are trying to become more like Jesus.

This means not just knowing about him, but starting to live like he lived and to do the things he did.

Things like forgiving people we dislike, praying regularly, and seeking solitude—the essential practices he spoke about and taught to his first disciples.

We will be learning six essential practices.

Each practice (except #6) will take two weeks to learn.

Two weeks per practice is not a lot of time, so we're going to use something called “deep practice.”

Has anyone heard of it?

Let's turn to page 137 and read “The Learning Model”

**Pause until everyone has finished reading.**

Remember that skill you're good at?

Let's share those now. I'll go first.

**Tell the group about a skill you are good at.**

**Turn to the person on your left and ask him/her to share.**

**Go around the group until everyone has shared.**

When you are good at something, it means that you've built up a myelin sheath around the nerves that control that skill.

Now let's talk about how we're going to use deep practice.

The tools that enable this to happen are: 1) a short story that helps us visualize the practice; 2) simple instructions on how to prepare to learn the practice; and 3) a set of steps, put in sequential order.

In the first week, with the help of these tools, we'll use the practice three or four times.

At the end of that week, we'll have a meeting, where each person will give a report on how his or her initial efforts at using the practice went.

During the week that follows, we'll try to use the practice another three or four times.

At the end of that week, the group will meet again and each of us will share his or her experiences of using the practice.

Then we'll go to the next practice and repeat the same two-week process.

Is there anything that you're confused about?

Next, let's talk about scheduling our meetings.

The challenge is to put together a meeting schedule that works for everyone.

One good way to get through all six practices is to break the learning into two different sessions.

We learn practices 1-3 during the first six-week session, take a break, and then learn practices 4-6 during the second session.

The length of the break is of our choosing; it can be as short as two weeks or it can be as long as a couple months.

An alternative option is to break the learning into three different sessions.

We learn practices 1-2 during the first four-week session, take a break, learn practices 3-4 during the second four-week session, take a break, and then learn practices 5-6 during the final session.

This option can be helpful if we have to work around holidays or vacations.

One final note is that each of us should make every effort to attend each meeting.

If one of us has to miss a meeting, he or she should stay on pace and keep using the practice at hand.

By doing this, no one will fall behind or be unprepared for the next meeting.

Do you want to meet for two sessions or three sessions?

What day and time works best for everyone?

Where should we hold our meetings?

The best place to meet is at someone's house or at church. Avoid public places so everyone will feel comfortable sharing.

Let's talk about the plan for next week.

Turn to page 9 to the first practice—praise.

Turn to the next page to see the story.

To engrave a picture of this practice, we need to read this story one or two times in the next 24 hours.

Now, turn to page 20 and read “Preparing to Learn.”

**Pause until everyone has finished reading.**

This is an important step in the process of learning.

Now go through the steps.

Before our next meeting we’ll each use this set of steps to begin learning the practice.

At each step, do exactly what the step says—precision is important at this point.

Go slowly and get it right.

When we come back next week, we’ll each share how our practicing went.

Keep in mind that this is not a study group.

Our sole purpose is to learn the practices by doing them.

Does anyone have questions on the plan for the next week?

Let’s close with a prayer.

**Lead the group in a closing prayer.**

**Adjourn the meeting.**

Don’t try to motivate group members with texts, emails, or phone calls. It’s important to let people find their own way into this process.