

**Session 1: Enrol in God's gym**

1-10 JAN

**ICEBREAKERS**

Share any humorous personal experiences of trying to keep fit.

Have you made any resolutions for the new year?

**KEY THOUGHT**

Just as physical exercises increase the body's fitness and health, so spiritual exercises improve spiritual fitness and vitality.

**KEY VERSE**

'... train yourself to be godly.' 1 Timothy 4:7

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

1. Which areas of your spiritual life require exercise and development?
2. How can we avoid legalism and self-dependency?
3. What is the difference between liberty and licence?
4. Discuss how the story of the young girl might apply to you.
5. Discuss the quote of the young student.
6. How have you personally benefited from reading and studying the Bible?
7. Do you ever read the Bible out loud in your own times with the Lord?

8. Can God's Word become stale?
9. Is studying the Bible just for Bible students and academics?
10. Meditate on and then discuss John 11:35.

**THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS**

'... on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read [from] ... the prophet Isaiah ...'

Luke 4:16-17

**PRAYER POINTERS**

- Ask for God's help as you embark on a spiritual fitness programme.
- Pray for one another's needs and dreams at the start of a new year.

**Session 2: Prayer**

11-16 JAN

**ICEBREAKERS**

Say the Lord's Prayer together.

Share testimonies of answered prayer.

**KEY THOUGHT**

There can be no real strength or growth in the Christian life unless you give time to prayer.

**KEY VERSE**

'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.'  
Philippians 4:6

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

1. Why is prayer like breathing?
2. Why may the subject of prayer produce feelings of guilt instead of joy?
3. Why may prayer be difficult?
4. Try to share honestly about your negative experiences of prayer so that you may be positively encouraged by others.
5. How may meditating on God's Word first transform our prayer life?
6. What changes could you make to deepen your prayer life?

**THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS**

'But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.' Luke 5:16

**PRAYER POINTERS**

- Give thanks for God's blessings in your life.
- Ask God to help you find time to pray and develop your relationship with Him.



### Session 3: Worship and solitude

17-26 JAN

#### ICEBREAKERS

Which are your favourite worship songs or hymns?

Where is your favourite place to 'get away from it all'?

#### KEY THOUGHTS

Worship is focusing on the greatness, glory and supreme worth of God and responding to Him in adoration and awe.

A time of solitude by withdrawing from activity and people for spiritual purposes is important for personal and spiritual renewal.

#### KEY VERSES

'Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.' John 4:23

'... he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.' Mark 6:31-32

#### DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. List the qualities that make the Father worthy of worship.
2. List the qualities that make the Son worthy of worship.
3. Why is it right for God to be worshipped?
4. Why may we worship God in vain?

5. How can we worship God seven days a week?
6. Discuss the quote of James Russell Lowell.
7. How do you cope with silence and solitude?
8. Compare and contrast the practice and benefits of seclusion and solitude.
9. What is the difference between seeking solitude and being solitary?
10. What can you do or plan to experience more times of solitude?

#### THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only."'" Matthew 4:10

'At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place.' Luke 4:42

#### PRAYER POINTERS

- Meditate for a few moments on Psalm 95 or Revelation 5:9-14 and then worship the Father and the Lamb.
- Find an appropriate place of solitude to meditate and pray.

### Session 4: Stewardship

27 JAN - 1 FEB

#### ICEBREAKERS

Describe occasions when you have been given good or poor service in a shop, restaurant etc. How should we serve people such as young mums, visitors, people with disabilities and pregnant women when they come to church?

#### KEY THOUGHT

A Christian is a steward who has been entrusted with the possessions and interests of God Himself.

#### KEY VERSE

'... serve one another in love.' Galatians 5:13

#### DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What could you reasonably neglect in order to be a better steward of what you have?
2. How could you more effectively plan your time without becoming obsessive?
3. What is your view of tithing (giving 10% of income to the Lord)? (See Mal. 3:8-10.)
4. How can money and wealth be both a blessing and a curse?
5. Discuss Selwyn's phrase, 'Every Christian is a servant of God'.
6. How does serving others demonstrate true godliness?

#### THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.' John 13:14-15

#### PRAYER POINTERS

- Ask for God's wisdom to use your time, talents and treasures more effectively.
- Ask God for opportunities to serve others in love.



## Session 5: Sharing our faith

2-6 FEB

### ICEBREAKER

How did you become a Christian?

### KEY THOUGHT

We should discipline ourselves to share by deed and word what we have discovered and experienced of God.

### KEY VERSE

'Jesus ... said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you ..."'  
Mark 5:19

### DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Does your outflow match your inflow?
2. Should we wait for opportunities or create them?
3. Discuss the quote, '... no life Christian that is not Christianising'.
4. What are the key elements of the gospel we should share?
5. Discuss the woman who found it difficult to share her faith and how you might be like her.

### THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'... whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.' John 12:50

### PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray for boldness.
- Pray for God to give you opportunities to share and for Him to speak through you.

## Session 6: Keep it simple

7-11 FEB

### ICEBREAKER

What are your 'simple pleasures'?

### KEY THOUGHT

Modern living is often very complicated with an 'insane attachment to things', but it is possible to have a full yet simple lifestyle.

### KEY VERSE

'... a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.' Luke 12:15

### DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Can we have a simple lifestyle in today's complex world?
2. Discuss the lines from the Quaker song.
3. Discuss the modern philosophy exemplified by Gordon Gekko in the film *Wall Street*: 'Greed is good.'
4. Should you change your shopping habits?
5. How do you respond to fashion and modern advertising methods?

### THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."' Matthew 8:20

### PRAYER POINTERS

- Ask God to show you where you could 'de-accumulate'.
- Prayerfully re-evaluate your priorities in order to seek God's kingdom first.

**Session 7: Fasting**

12-16 FEB

**ICEBREAKER**

What food would you particularly miss on a fast?

**KEY THOUGHT**

Fasting was taught and practised by Jesus, taken up by His disciples and has been part of the life of the Church for 2,000 years.

**KEY VERSE**

'When you fast ...' Matthew 6:16

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

1. How do you and your church view fasting?
2. Which is more important – feasting or fasting? (See Lev. 23:2ff.)
3. Why is fasting about much more than not eating?
4. What are the various reasons for entering into a fast?
5. How can we avoid the twin evils of guilt and pride when it comes to fasting?

**THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS**

'After fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.' Matthew 4:2

**PRAYER POINTERS**

- Pray for God's wisdom about the subject and personal discipline of fasting.
- Try a one-meal or one-day fast and devote yourself to prayer about an issue important to you.

**Session 8: Forgiveness**

17-21 FEB

**ICEBREAKER**

Discuss the merits of the Jubilee campaign to forgive the debts of Third World nations.

Using internet search facilities, find and discuss the story of Gordon Wilson, who forgave those who murdered his daughter Marie in N. Ireland.

**KEY THOUGHT**

Confession and forgiveness are not only important biblical disciplines but they are vital for our spiritual life.

**KEY VERSE**

'Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.' Ephesians 4:32

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

1. Why may confession be good for the soul?
2. What are the key elements of true confession?
3. What should we say to those who insist they can't forgive?
4. How could unforgiveness cause poor emotional and physical health?
5. Discuss Selwyn's contention that an unforgiving spirit is as harmful to the soul as poison to the body.

**THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS**

'Jesus said, "Father, forgive them ..."' Luke 23:34

**PRAYER POINTERS**

- Confess any known sin to remove guilt and experience the joy of God's forgiveness.
- Ask God to give you a forgiving spirit just like Jesus.



## Session 9: Perseverance

22-29 FEB

### ICEBREAKERS

Describe a time when you have experienced the rewards of perseverance, eg running a marathon, studying for an exam etc. How are you progressing with your new year resolutions?

### KEY THOUGHT

We do not want to begin well and end badly, but through God's power and personal endurance we can start well and finish gloriously.

### KEY VERSE

'... we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.' Romans 5:3-4

### DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why may some people start things and not finish or give up too easily?
2. What is your understanding and experience of the Holy Spirit?
3. How can we be self-controlled without becoming rigid killjoys?
4. Discuss the experience of Timothy Jones.
5. How can we achieve the correct balance of human effort and divine enabling?
6. Consider the quote of the great golfer, Gary Player: 'The more I practise, the luckier I get.'

7. How should we view spiritual disciplines?
8. Which disciplines do you need to work on?
9. What has most impacted you in this issue and how will you change as a result?

### THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.' Luke 9:51

### PRAYER POINTERS

- Share your needs and pray for one another.
- Emulate the experience of Timothy Jones to develop a more disciplined prayer life.