



SOIL & ROOTS

CULTIVATING DEEP DISCIPLESHIP

INTRODUCTION TO GREENHOUSES

Across the West, many people are experiencing a sense of disconnection, that there's more to the Christian life than what we typically experience. This includes Christians who may or may not be a part of local congregations. There is a yearning for depth, a more intimate relationship with God, others, and ourselves. We desire to journey into "deep discipleship."

Deep discipleship is best cultivated in small, intentional communities. Soil and Roots forms and supports these groups, called Greenhouses.

A Greenhouse is a committed group of 4-12 people who consistently and faithfully come together to become more like Jesus: to think like He thinks, act like He acts, desire what He desires, and love like He loves. We desire that our ideas be transformed into His ideas.

BASICS

Focus: to form genuine, mature disciples in small, committed, Kingdom-centric communities called Greenhouses.

Objectives: to become more like Jesus by knowing Him while discerning our own hearts and stories.

Key Elements: Committed time, specifically designed habits, intentional community, appropriate intimacy, and repetitious and increasingly complex instruction.

Who: Four to twelve individuals. Ideally (but not necessarily), Greenhouses are formed around people who are already in a relationship, be it through a family, hobby, church, geography, friendships, work, or other existing connections.

When: Greenhouses gather twice per week for 90 minutes each (one of which is a shared meal). The format of each gathering is provided below.

Location: Any place convenient for all, be it a home, place of business, or church. Soil and Roots suggests the meeting place and times be consistent so that a regular pattern may be established.

Roles: Each Greenhouse has a facilitator, host, and participants. The facilitator leads and administrates the gatherings, the host opens their residence or workplace for the gatherings and coordinates food, and participants are committed members of the community. The facilitator and host may be the same person.

WEEKLY GATHERING 1: REFLECTION AND EXPLORATION (90 MINUTES)

A central theme of Soil and Roots is “less monologue, more dialogue.” So, the facilitator’s role is generally not to present materials and teach. It’s to provide a forum for the Greenhouse to answer and raise questions, express doubts or confusion, and dig deep into the journey of spiritual formation in the Kingdom. Soil and Roots believes that material and ideas are best absorbed and transformative when they are wrestled with openly in a trusted group.

This first weekly gathering features two “rhythms:” Reflection and Exploration.

Facilitators lead a time of **Reflection**. Participants may discuss, explore, share, and raise anything this group discussed in either of the previous week’s meetings. This may involve how something impacted their journey, their story, and their walk with Jesus.

Then the Facilitator guides a time of **Exploration** using the Soil and Roots podcast episodes. New Greenhouses start with Episode 1 and move ahead in order with one new episode per week. Episodes range from 20-50 minutes, and many episodes are also provided in written format on the website.

The Soil and Roots podcast is designed to gradually guide a person through an increasingly deepening journey with Christ. It introduces ideas, concepts, and themes from the Bible, as well as insights and reflections on our current culture and age and how they impact our stories.

Each person will listen to the appropriate episode (provided by the facilitator) before Gathering 1 each week.

GATHERING 1 FORMAT

OPENING: 15 MINUTES

Prayer, hymn or worship song, segue. The “segue” is simply a chance for each person to share a short piece of personal or professional good news from the week. It serves as an icebreaker and a means to begin sharing.

REFLECTION: 20 MINUTES

The Facilitator may choose to use the provided questions as a guide, or simply lead the discussion as he/she sees fit. The point is to allow the Greenhouse to further explore the previous week’s sessions in light of their spiritual journey.

Sample Reflection Questions:

1. Has there been a verse, comment, theme, or point that has stood out to you from last week’s gatherings? Why do you think it has been on your mind or heart?
2. Were any of your ideas (unconscious assumptions or concepts) about your faith, life, or story challenged or solidified? If comfortable, please share how your understanding of Jesus’ story or your own story is being impacted.
3. Throughout the week, have you noticed God reminding you of something He brought into your heart from last week? Would you mind sharing how He did that?

EXPLORATION: 45 MINUTES

Sample discussion questions and Bible passages are provided to Facilitators for each episode. To encourage transparent, honest, open discussion, the facilitator may include other questions and points that encourage deeper biblical study, observations from personal lives or the culture, or points that relate to someone’s story and experience.

The objective for this portion is transparent sharing about the episode and how it relates to the story of Jesus and our own stories. It is not to lecture, judge, or even correct every perceived theological error. Doubt and dissent are welcomed, as are affirmation and clarification. Because many Christians don’t have access to communities where they feel safe to share their confusions and concerns, a facilitator should carefully create an environment where that type of engagement is welcomed and honored.

CLOSING: 10 MINUTES

Administrative issues and closing prayer

The facilitator and/or host may need to communicate other items, such as meal information in Gathering 2, holiday schedules, information on the next podcast episode, serving opportunities, etc. Then the facilitator will ask someone to close in prayer (or pray themselves).

WEEKLY GATHERING 2: SOUL CARE AND SPIRITUAL HABITS (90 MINUTES)

This Gathering is held in conjunction with a shared meal (a “Gastro Greenhouse”)!

Gathering 2 focuses on the care and spiritual practices of the participants in the community.

In the 1700s, John Wesley adopted and promoted a weekly, small gathering called the “Class Meeting.” Its format was simple, and the key question asked each week was, “How is it with your soul?”

Though **Soul Care** may be defined in various ways, here it refers to the state of our holistic relationship with God.

The intent is to open up a free-flowing dialogue about our journey of deep discipleship. As with Gathering 1, Facilitators lead and guide an appropriate discussion with kindness, patience, and gentleness, understanding participants are at various places and stages in their journey. Some participants are, right now, experiencing a “dark night of the soul,” and the Greenhouse may be their only place to allow others to suffer with them.

Secondly, each Greenhouse discusses and decides on a **Spiritual Discipline** (or habit) that the group wishes to test and explore for some time. Each week, the Greenhouse will discuss the habit and what they are experiencing as they practice it. There is no master list of habits, though some commonly accepted disciplines are prayer, solitude, silence, confession, celebration, service, heart listening, and fasting.

Though spiritual disciplines have been central to the life of Christians throughout church history, modern Christianity has largely lost the study and practice of these ancient habits. The Greenhouse is a place where we may recover what Christ modeled for us as we desire to become more like Him.

GATHERING 2: FORMAT

OPENING: 15 MINUTES

Prayer, hymn or worship song, segue

SOUL CARE: 45 MINUTES

The facilitator may open the discussion with a simple question such as: "How is your life with God?," "How is your walk with Jesus going?," or "How are you becoming more like Jesus in this season?"

The facilitator then leads a time of sharing, keeping the group focused on how each of us grows in Christ and the inward journey of exploring our stories. He or she should ensure that all parties who wish to share and contribute have the opportunity to do so. The Greenhouse should practice good listening, as well as providing encouragement, empathy, and guidance where appropriate and welcomed.

If the Greenhouse has worked through Season 2 and has become comfortable with Heartview, the facilitator may opt to ask a question specific to our Indicators, such as

"How has our thought life been this week?"

"Did we make financial decisions this week that reflect the heart of Jesus?"

"How are our emotions pointing us to what we truly desire?"

"Are we relating to others the way Jesus relates to us?"

SPIRITUAL HABITS: 20 MINUTES

Each Greenhouse will collaboratively discuss and decide to "practice" a spiritual habit for a period and talk openly about its impact. This may be something like "pray 15 minutes a day," or "spend 10 minutes in silence and scripture meditation three times per week." Or perhaps it may be to practice the habit of confession in an appropriate relationship.

Once the Greenhouse has decided on a habit it wishes to practice, the group then shares their experiences, asks questions, raises concerns, and learns from one another's stories. As with all rhythms of the Greenhouse, the group leans on the Holy Spirit for guidance regarding which habit to practice and for how long.

CLOSING: 10 MINUTES

Administrative issues and closing prayer