



# CULTIVATE

LIFE TOGETHER IN THE SPIRIT

JANUARY  
GROUP GUIDE



# Welcome to Cultivate. We're so glad you're here.

This year, we are inviting our church family into something simple, ancient, and deeply human: learning how to tend the soil of our lives so the Spirit of God can grow something beautiful within us. We believe every person was created to be a kind of living garden, a place where the very life of God takes root. Just like any garden, spiritual growth never happens by accident. It happens when we pay attention. It happens when we slow down enough to notice the small beginnings. It happens in community.

**Your group is one of those places.**



As a leader or participant, you are helping create a space where people can both belong and grow. A space where no one must pretend they already have all nine fruits of the Spirit in full bloom. A space where we can name the weeds honestly (the frustration, the hurry, the resentment, the old habits that grow without invitation), and a space where we can also celebrate the tender, surprising signs of new life: a reawakening, a spark of joy, a moment of peace, a burst of patience that wasn't there before.

This journey is not about striving or self-improvement. It's about making room and paying attention. With a little attention, the Spirit begins to cultivate something in us that we cannot grow on our own.

Throughout this year, your group will be a garden bed, a place set aside for God. Together, each group member will help guide people as they listen to Scripture, respond to the teaching, share their lives, and learn to trust the slow miracle of transformation. Nobody is expected to have all the answers. Together, we are simply creating a safe, warm, honest space where people can show up as they are and discover that God is already at work in their lives.

Thank you for opening your calendar, your hearts, and your life in this way.

Thank you for tending the soil with us and helping others around you do the same.

We believe that as we walk through this year together, God will cultivate a harvest in our community—one small beginning at a time.



# BEST PRACTICES AND INSIGHTS

## **Create space, don't fill it.**

Silence is not your enemy; it's a tool. Give people time to think and breathe. Growth often happens in the quiet, not the quick responses. Even though this will be challenging (especially the first month), do not feel the pressure to fill the silence every time.

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## **Ask open, honest questions.**

Your role isn't to teach another sermon but to help people pay attention. Use questions that invite reflection rather than questions that quiz. You are not intended to be the expert in the room, but the facilitator that ushers in questions, and conversation. Trust the wisdom of the room.

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## **Lead with warmth, not pressure.**

People don't need to feel like they have to "produce fruit" on the spot. Offer grace. Model honesty and let the Spirit do the cultivating.

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## **Expect every group to grow differently.**

Some groups will be expressive and talkative; others will be thoughtful and quiet. Trust that both can be good soil. Don't force a pace or style that doesn't fit. If there is a question that doesn't resonate with the group, feel free to move on despite the lack of reflection or response.

## Notice small beginnings.

If someone shares even a tiny insight or vulnerability, affirm it. Small moments matter. Transformation rarely shows up in big dramatic ways, instead it grows slowly, almost imperceptibly.

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## Be mindful of emotional boundaries.

Encourage authenticity without pushing anyone to share more than they want to. Honor confidentiality and remind the group that trust grows with time. Encourage the group to hold these relationships as sacred for the year.

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## Stay rooted in Scripture and the Spirit.

When conversation wanders, gently guide it back to the teaching or the theme of the month. You are tending the soil, not controlling it.

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## Pray as you lead, pray as you listen.

Silently ask God to help you discern when to lean in, when to ask more, and when to simply sit with someone's story. Trust God to show up in your group and conversation.

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## Keep expectations simple.

Your group doesn't need to reach a conclusion, solve a problem, or finish the outline. The goal of Cultivate is connection and formation, not finishing content.

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## Let God be the gardener.

You are creating space. God is doing the growing. Trust him with the process – in yourself and in the people you grow alongside.

# GROUP TIME

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This outline is simply a suggested flow for your time together, not a prescription you must follow. Every group has its own rhythm, personality, and needs, so feel free to adapt the structure in whatever way fosters meaningful conversation and connection. Use what serves your group, release what doesn't, and trust that the Spirit will guide you as you shape each gathering.

## JANUARY

### What It Means to Cultivate a Life With God

**Goal and Purpose:** Introduce the idea of cultivation, the “soil” of the self vs. the Spirit, and begin reflecting on early signs of spiritual growth.

#### **Themes for the Month:**

**Week 1:** What You Were Made For

**Week 2:** When Fear Takes Root

**Week 3:** God as Gardener

**Week 4:** The War Within

# SESSION

## 1. Welcome + Opening (5 minutes)

### Leader Says:

“Today, we begin our Cultivate journey. The goal of this series is not self-improvement but spiritual formation – becoming a garden where the life of God can grow. This month introduces that idea and helps us understand what it means to cultivate something with God.”

### Share:

Go around and have each person share one thing they hope God cultivates in them this year.

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## 2. Watch the Teaching Video with Pastor Rich (12–15 minutes)

### Leader Says:

“As you watch, listen for one idea or image that stands out to you. It might be a phrase, a metaphor, or a scripture that Rich shares.”



### Video Summary (for leader reference):

- Story of cultivating something for the first time.
- “Adam” in the original Hebrew means “earth and/or ground” – we were made to be a living garden.
- Cultivation = care, nurture, purpose.

- Soil of Self vs. Soil of Spirit (Galatians 6:7–9)
- Fruit grows through noticing small beginnings.
- God chooses to cultivate something beautiful in us. He chose YOU!

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### 3. Group Discussion (25 minutes)

#### Opening Question:

- What image or phrase stood out to you? Why?

#### Deepening Questions:

- What does the idea of being a “living garden” stir within you?
- Where do you see evidence of the “soil of the self” in our world?
- Which fruit feels **least** and/or **most** present in your life?
- What small beginnings do you sense right now?
- What might God be cultivating in you?



## 4. Spiritual Practice & Reflection (10 minutes)

In a journal or in the space below, take a few minutes in silence to set intentions for the new year.

### Leader Directions:

Invite your group into a quiet, unhurried moment. Encourage them to get comfortable, close their eyes if they'd like, and slow their breathing. Let them know this isn't about fixing themselves — it's simply a moment to pay attention to the soil of their lives and notice what the Spirit is already doing.

### Leader Says:

“We’re going to spend a few minutes in quiet reflection. Think of this as tending the soil of your heart by noticing what’s growing, what needs attention, and what new life God may be beginning in you. There’s no right or wrong way to do this. Just be open.”

### Reflection Prompts:

- “What’s growing in me these days? What thoughts, habits, emotions, or patterns seem to be taking up space in my heart?”
- “Where are the weeds taking root? Are there attitudes, reactions, or burdens that feel tangled or heavy?”
- “Where do I sense something new sprouting? Even if it’s small (a softened reaction, a moment of peace, a shift in perspective). What new life might the Spirit be growing?”
- “What do I want to cultivate more intentionally in the season ahead?”

## **Journaling Time:**

Give the group 2–3 minutes of true silence. Encourage them to write down responses in a place where they can find their intentions in later months.

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## **5. Closing + Prayer (5 minutes)**

### **Leader Says:**

“Cultivation takes time. You don’t have to force growth, you just have to be intentional and let the Spirit do the growing.”

### **Closing Prayer:**

Holy Spirit, tend the soil of my heart.

Expose what needs to be uprooted, heal what has grown hard, and strengthen what is beginning to take root.

Help me welcome your pruning and trust your timing.

Grow in me a life full of love, joy, peace, and every fruit you long to cultivate.

Make my life good soil for your kingdom. Amen.



## NOTES

