

# BEST. YEAR. EVER.

## Week One

### Opening Prayer

God, thank you for being with us here. Help us to see what you have for us today and for this new year. Amen.

### Talk It Over

This week we kicked off a new series that is all about heading into this year proactively looking to live our best year ever. This series goal doesn't deny the reality that challenges will come our way, rather it aims to help us intentionally do our part to live well despite the things outside our control.

During this series, we will be focusing on some key ways we too often get out of sorts when we run too hard, too fast, and too long without taking care of ourselves. Let's look at that list now.

### Some predictable ways we end up out of sorts when we are burned out, isolated, or overwhelmed:

1. **Out of sorts emotionally.** We get so stressed that we can't shut our mind down and truly relax. Often, we might look for ways to numb, minimize, or push down anything that stirs hurts, fear, or stress.
2. **Out of sorts physically.** Often times when we aren't in a good place, one of the first things we stop doing is basic self-care. We might struggle sleeping well, eating well, or moving our bodies enough.
3. **Out of sorts spiritually.** When we are pushed to our limits there is just no time for us to slow down and connect with God. Maybe we forget to pray, read the Bible, or live mindful of God. Maybe we even stop going to church, stop volunteering, or connecting in our Growth Group.
4. **Out of sorts financially.** Living on a budget takes intentionality and care, and often when life gets crazy, our financial habits lack discipline, focus, or healthy commitment.
5. **Out of sorts relationally.** When we are not well or we lack margin often times our relationships suffer. When we are out of sorts, relationally it's not uncommon of us to shut down, pull away, or get reactive.

- Of these common and predictable ways we get out of sorts, what is often your first sign of trouble?
- Tell us about a time last year you went too hard, too fast, too long and ended up paying the consequences somehow.

### This week we spent our time looking at ways we can live our best life spiritually this year.

This talk centered on a verse from the book of Micah that pointed to ways we can connect to God and live on purpose. In this next verse, we read how to Prophet Micah confronts those who have turned their back on God.

### Read Micah 6:6-8 (NIV)

Micah ends this verse highlighting three simple and powerful tools to live well. Let's look at those ideas now.

#### 1. Micah teaches us to act justly or do the right thing.

People with strong character are people who choose to do the right thing even when it's hard, uncommon, or a private issue. And while God's love isn't dependent on how well we behave, there are limits, consequences,

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rewards, and realities tied to our character or lack of. This includes spiritual realities. Living our best year ever spiritually will mean being intentional about acting justly and doing the right thing.

- Looking back at 2018, tell us about an area you found yourself regularly struggling to do the right thing? Why was that the case?
- Following up to the last question, what can you do to help 2019 be different in this area?
- Tell us about a time you struggled with doing the right thing but you chose well in the end. Consider sharing what good came from choosing to do the right thing or consequences you avoided by doing the right thing.

### **Read James 5:16**

Often times people of character are people who welcome accountability. Accountability being key people who know us well and help us be our best selves. These people are the sort of people we share openly with and give permission to speak truthfully to us.

- Who in your life serves as an accountability partner?
- If there is no one in your life who serves as honest accountability, who might be a good person to open up to for more for support?

### **2. Micah teaches us to love mercy or to show compassion.**

If Micah defines justice as doing the right thing, then we can say mercy defines what's in our hearts. This week we said showing mercy is about people who repair fabric wherever we see it is tearing apart.

- Looking back at 2018, can you note any areas you struggled to have compassion for others?
- How would your life look different if you were more intentional about offering mercy and compassion?

### **3. Micah teaches us to walk humbly with God or to stay close to Jesus.**

The most common metaphors used in the Bible to describe a life connected to God involve some sort of walk, path, journey, or run. These metaphors all point towards an ongoing process.

- Looking at your life, personality, schedule, and so forth, what are some weekly habits or routines you can use to ensure you stay connected to Jesus this new year? These may be habits you are always using or these may be new things you want to try.
- Tell us about someone you know who stays close to Jesus. Consider these questions as you share: From what you can see, what does their relationship with Jesus look like? How does it work?

### **Read Matthew 11:28-30 (MSG) three times slowly.**

- What phrase stood out to you the most in this passage? Why?
- If you could connect this verse to a specific area of your life this new year, what area would you connect it to and why?

### **Closing Prayer**

God, thank you for your unforced rhythms of grace. Help us to live freely and lightly. Help us to enjoy the gifts of walking closely with you; help us to love mercy and to be people of compassion; help us to be people of character and to act justly. We want to live our best lives spiritually this year; we want to journey well with you.

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### **How To Use this Discussion Guide**

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressure to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith in your specific group.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead.