



**Sermon Based Curriculum
for Small Groups or Individuals
8 & 15 February & 26 April to 24 May 2026**

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Introduction

Proverbs 3:5-9

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. Remember the Lord in everything you do, and he will show you the right way. Never let yourself think that you are wiser than you are; simply obey the Lord and refuse to do wrong. If you do, it will be like good medicine, healing your wounds and easing your pains. Honour the Lord by making him an offering from the best of all that your land produces.

In 2026 we, as a community, will look at the seven practices that show I am part of the growth of Trinity. This series looks deeply at these seven.

May God guide and lead us all in this time,
Brett

Planning Guide for Small Groups

This booklet is laid out so that, if using it for your gatherings as home-groups, each week will follow the four 'W's rhythm of Welcome, Worship, Word, Works. I hope this helps you and makes the journey meaningful. The times in brackets are a guideline that should help to keep you on track.

Welcome (10 minutes)

This is the time of fellowship, mutual concern and 'catch up' with each other.

Worship (10 minutes)

Use the Psalm for the week. Ask one person to read it slowly and prayerfully. As you listen to it allow this to be a moment of worship, love, devotion, adoration, thanksgiving and praise.

You can do your prayers of intercession for each other and society at this time, or at the end of the gathering.

Word (60 minutes)

Here I offer some notes on the reading and the theme for the week. You will then do a Bible Study together and discuss the theme and also the sermon you heard.

Sunday 8th February

Give Sacrificially each month

Welcome

Worship Psalm 96

Word 1 Corinthians 15:58-16:4 & 2 Samuel 24:18-25

1. Notes on the theme

In many places in our modern culture we treat money like a fortress to be guarded rather than a river intended to flow. We want the blessing of the harvest without the "sting" of the seed-sowing.

In many South African communities, we understand the *stokvel*—a collective sacrifice where people put in what they have so that everyone eventually thrives. It works because it's disciplined. Imagine if we approached the Kingdom of God not as a "spare change" jar, but as the ultimate *stokvel* for the soul.

It is good to develop a rhythm of sacrifice, the work of the Gospel and the life of each person who gives sacrificially can benefit from this as our faith is called to be "firm and steady" (1 Cor 15:58).

Paul Tillich argued that faith is a "state of being ultimately concerned." If our "ultimate concern" is our own security, our giving will always be sporadic. For Tillich, true sacrifice is the "courage to be" in the face of scarcity, trusting that our identity is found in God, not our bank balance.

In the Corinthians reading Paul takes time to link spiritual stability to practical service. For Trinity living out 'One Heart, Many Voices' in 2026 the need to translate spiritual stability to practical ways of living is important.

In the 2 Samuel reading David understood that for his gift to truly be a sacrifice it needed to "cost" him something. In this case it was the 50 silver pieces, but in our context the cost may not only be monetary but could also be a choice or a trade-off of some sort.

The heart of this Sunday will be to unpack and understand "planned generosity", and helping us understand that a deepening spirituality may

Sunday 15th February

Attend service regularly

Welcome

Worship Psalm 84

Word Hebrews 10:19-25, Psalm 122:1-9, Deuteronomy 31:9-13

1. Notes on the passage

You can't learn to swim by reading a book in a desert, and you can't fully experience the Body of Christ by watching a screen in isolation.

Think of a good old South African braai. You can have the best steak and the best spice, but if you take one coal out of the fire and set it on the bricks alone, it goes cold within minutes. We are those coals. We stay "on fire" only when we are touching one another.

Richard Rohr teaches that the "True Self" is never found in isolation. He suggests that communal worship is a "container" for our transformation. We come to church not to "get" God, but to realise that God is already present in the "other"—especially the person in the pew who is nothing like us.

Cynthia Bourgeault speaks of the "Eye of the Heart" in her book *Eye of the Heart: A Spiritual Journey into the Imaginal Realm*. In this she opens the central idea, which may help us in Trinity in 2026 that "We don't go to church to learn about God; we go to re-centre our hearts in God."

Psalm 122 picks up the gladness in going to God's house and what it can mean in a life that often sees only busyness.

It is important for each of us to see the place and the action of attending church in perspective. It is far more than a weekly routine, in fact: We don't just meet in a building; we meet as a Body. Together we become "the living way", as Epiphany reminds us that God became human, so attending services with others helps us to see that we become the body when we gather together – i.e. we reflect Christ better when we are together.

Jesus underscored the power of the gathering:

"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."
(Matthew 18:20)

We are also only able to practice grace when we are together – we can have grace on ourselves, yes, but only in a community can we experience grace fully.

This Sunday should emphasise community, accountability, and collective worship as means to draw closer to God.

2. Discussion or Reflection Questions

- In our "busy" culture, "attending service" often feels like a chore. How does shifting the focus to "re-centring our hearts" (Cynthia Bourgeault) change your motivation?
- How does the "habit" of meeting together help us "provoke" one another toward love in a country that often provokes us toward anger?
- What is one practical way we can make "the foreigner" (Deut. 31:12) feel like they truly belong in our Sunday gatherings?

3. Close in Prayer

Notes _____

Sunday 26th April

Use my gifts in service at Trinity

Welcome

Worship Psalm 100

Word **Matthew 25:14-30, 1 Peter 4:7-11, Romans 12:4-6**

1. Notes on the passage

A gift kept in its original packaging is just "stuff" taking up space. It only becomes a gift the moment it is handed over to someone else.

During a carols-by-candlelight service at Christmas time, if only one person has a candle it is beautiful but it's too small! But when the whole service has a lit candle, the room is transformed. Your gift might feel like a tiny candle, but without it, our "room" at Trinity is dimmer.

This theme gives us an exciting opportunity at Trinity to explore the practical idea that the Kingdom of God is not a static destination, but an energetic reality open to giving. The Parable of the Talents reminds us that: to keep a gift, you must give it away. Our talents and abilities are not possessions to be hoarded, but currency meant for circulation.

When we refuse to use our gifts in the church because we are afraid of failure, judgment, or being "used," we create a blockage in the spiritual circulatory system. By clinging to what we have, we inadvertently "bury" the divine energy entrusted to us, leaving ourselves—and our community—in danger of becoming spiritually stagnant.

To move beyond this stagnation, we must look to the heart of Christian service as described in 1 Peter. When Peter says, "Use whatever gift you have received to serve others," he is describing God's invitation to empty ourselves for others. This is not just giving away or giving out of a surplus, it is a spiritual practice of intentionally empty ourselves of our time, ego, and energy so that God's grace can flow through us to the community without obstruction.

Like a straw or a pipe, our value lies not in what we contain, but in what we allow to pass through us. Jesus defines the purpose of our abilities clearly: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

Ultimately, we are invited to shift our perspective from "volunteering" to "responding to God's invitation". True service happens when we are open to God's love to flow through us. We discover that we don't just "do work" for the church; we allow God to work through us. By using our gifts in service, we become active participants in the Great Circulation of Grace.

As followers of Christ we are reminded that after Christ's ascension he promised the Holy Spirit and that we will do the works Christ has been doing, and we will do even greater things than these (John 14:12), this means the Holy Spirit is a liberating force. Looking at it this way helps us to see that service is not a "burden" of the law, but a "play" of the Spirit. When we use our gifts, we are participating in the "divine joy" of creation. We don't serve to earn points; we serve because we are alive in Christ.

2. Discussion or Reflection Questions

- What is the "one talent" you've been tempted to bury because you're afraid it's not "spiritual" or "good enough"?
- In South Africa, we often look for "professional" solutions. How can we reclaim the "amateur" (done for love) service of the early church?
- How can we help each other identify our "special gifts" without falling into the trap of ego or comparison?

3. Close in Prayer

Notes _____

Sunday 3rd May

Participate faithfully in the groups I belong to

Welcome

Worship Psalm 133

Word Hebrews 10:19-25, Ephesians 4:1-16

1. Notes on the passage

Faith is a team sport played in the mud of real relationships, not a solo spectator event from the grandstands.

There is a consumer mindset that often plagues modern spirituality which the Hebrews and Ephesians readings help us to work against: we don't participate in groups to "get" something; we participate because we already have "complete freedom" to access God.

Think of a traditional South African choir. It's not just about the lead singer; it's about the isicathamiya—the way the group moves and breathes together. If one person goes off-beat or stops showing up for rehearsals, the whole "living body" of the song suffers.

This freedom is not a destination, nor is it something we necessarily strive toward, instead it is the very ground we stand on. When we gather together in groups at Trinity, whenever we say (and mean!) the phrase 'One Heart, Many Voices', we aren't trying to find a missing puzzle piece that will somehow complete us, instead we are expressing the "Living Way," recognising that faithfulness is a living practice, not a static obligation.

However, this living practice is seldom a path of pure comfort. Spiritual growth often requires a "holy friction", Hebrews 10:24 in some translations says to "provoke" or "stir up" one another, reminding us that we can practice a gentle "provoking love" in those groups we faithfully serve in. Groups where we serve faithfully become the "containers" where our ego is rubbed smooth by the presence of others. In this friction, our sharp edges are softened, and we begin to realize that Jesus' wisdom is able to bring us together. As Paul speaks of the "one body, one Spirit, one Lord," we see that our differences are not obstacles

to unity, but the very materials God uses to weave us together into a single, cohesive reality.

When we truly participate faithfully we can't help but see that "when each separate part works as it should, the whole body grows" (v. 16). It is a profound commitment to being a cell in a living, breathing Body of Wisdom. By showing up and offering our unique "ligament" or "joint" of grace, we ensure that the life-blood of the Spirit flows freely, sustaining a community that is much greater—and much more beautiful—than the sum of its parts.

Jesus makes community the primary evidence of faith: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35)

Paul Tillich, a well-known theologian, spoke of "The Courage to Be," which included the "courage to be a part." He argued that we only find our true individual meaning when we participate in a meaningful group. To be "faithful" to a group is to have the courage to let your sharp edges be softened by the "holy friction" of others.

2. Discussion or Reflection Questions

- What "holy friction" have you experienced in a church group lately, and how did it help you grow?
- How can our small groups move from "polite coffee chats" to becoming "joints and ligaments" (v.16) that actually hold the body together?
- Why is "showing up" even when you don't feel like it a vital spiritual discipline in our consumer-driven society?

3. Close in Prayer

Notes _____

Sunday 10th May

Appreciate and embrace all the diversity of our congregation

Welcome

Worship Psalm 67

Word Isaiah 56:1-8, Romans 15:7-13

2. Notes on the passage

Jesus' vision was always wider than His own immediate circle:

"I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd." (John 10:16)

If every instrument in an orchestra played the exact same note at the exact same time, it wouldn't be a symphony—it would just be a very loud, very boring siren.

We often think of a "House of Prayer for All" as just a physical church or a diverse guest list. But really, it's a state of mind.

In South Africa, we've become so used to labels like "foreigner" or "outsider" that they feel normal. We almost can't imagine a world without them. But when we "keep the Sabbath," we stop the frantic race to climb the social ladder or prove our status (the "horizontal" struggle). Instead, we rest in our "vertical" connection to God. In that space, those labels start to dissolve, revealing that we all belong to God in a way that goes much deeper than our differences.

How do we actually get along when we are so different? Think of it as the Law of Three. In any creative process, you usually have two opposing forces:

1. The Affirming Force: This is often our tradition, our history, and the way our ancestors did things.
2. The Denying Force: This is the "other"—the person who is unfamiliar or different from us.

Usually, these two just clash or ignore each other. But God introduces a Third Force: The Mercy of Christ.

Christ's mercy doesn't pick a side. Instead, it acts as a bridge, pulling both sides together. Accepting one another isn't just about being "polite" or

"putting up" with someone; it's about using the energy and even the friction of our differences to create more hope and joy. At Trinity, we see this every Sunday through our different services that span different languages, ages, and styles.

Jurgan Moltmann suggests there is a "Theology of Hope" in that the Trinity itself is the ultimate model of diversity. The Parent, Child and Holy Spirit are not the same, yet they are one. He argues that an "open" church must reflect this "open Trinity"—a community that is always expanding to include the "other" because God is always expanding.

We have two ways of looking at the world:

- The Brain: Constantly categorizes and lists how we are different.
- The Heart: Looks for resonance—recognizing that, at our core, we are the same and one in Christ.

We don't value diversity just because it's "nice" or politically correct. It's a spiritual necessity. A "monoculture" (where everyone is the same) can't show the full picture of God. Just like white light is made up of a whole spectrum of colours, we need the full "rainbow" of people to truly reflect God's light.

The Challenge: Are you seeing the world through your brain's divisions or your heart's resonance?

How are you embracing the massive variety of people in our community? Let's go from thinking about 'One Heart, Many Voices' to actually being the Body of Christ.

2. Discussion or Reflection Questions

- How can we move from tolerating diversity (being polite) to appreciating it (seeing it as a spiritual necessity)?
- Isaiah 56 mentions "foreigners" and those usually excluded. Who are the outsiders in our specific Randburg context that we need to invite in?
- In what ways does our congregation's diversity help you see a side of God you wouldn't see in a "monoculture"?

3. Close in Prayer

Sunday 17th May

*Invite non-church going friends, neighbours,
colleagues, family to church event*

Welcome

Worship Psalm 34

Word Psalm 34:1-22, Acts 2:43-47

1. Notes on the passage

Have you ever found a gem of a restaurant—one with the best coffee and the friendliest service? You don't keep it a secret; you tell everyone! "You have to try this place". If our experience of God is truly "good" (Psalm 34:8), why do we act like it's a state secret?

A healthy way to see church is to realise that the Gospel is about the entire physical universe being a sacred, tangible expression of God's presence. When we invite someone to church, we aren't bringing them into a holy building away from a "secular world"; we are inviting them to open their eyes to the Christ who is already present in their lives. We are inviting them to see differently.

It might be why many people turn down church invitations – because they're expecting to be taken into a closed building to receive a dry lecture or a data dump. This Sunday, we're looking at an invitation that is way more exciting: moving from just hearing information about God to experiencing a transformation of who we are.

God isn't a distant boss watching from a desk. Instead, God is described as a "Lure". Think of it like a pull toward something beautiful, kind, and connected.

When Psalm 34:8 says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good," it's an invitation to a living laboratory. We aren't just reading a textbook; we're experimenting with the Spirit. When we invite friends to Trinity, we aren't saying, "Come listen to our logic". We're saying, "Come see what God is actually doing here".

In our Methodist tradition we are reminded that following God is a choice (it's partly why Wesley set up the 'Holy Club' to keep accountable

and to take seriously the decision to follow Jesus daily), Wesley's '22 Questions' helps us to see this.

This shift does require something of us though: A change in how we see ourselves in the world and how we relate to the world. In Psalm 34:11 we read about the "Fear of the Lord", the Psalmist isn't speaking about cowering dread, but about Awe for God. Some places refer to this as "prehension"—the moment we realise we are not the centre of the universe! Instead, through Christ, we are able to see a much bigger picture: we are a vital part of an interconnected web of becoming. By letting go of the need to control our image or our surroundings, we become open to the divine possibility that is constantly being birthed in our world through God. We can move from being isolated individuals to becoming part of a larger, evolving story where every moment is an opportunity for "newness."

Spiritual energy needs a place to live. In the book of Acts, the early church wasn't just a meeting; it was a "collective heart."

- They ate together.
- They shared their lives with "glad and humble hearts."
- They created a container—a space where God's invitation didn't just feel like a whisper, but a shout.

When we invite people to Home Groups or church events, we're asking them to add their unique voice to the mix. We aren't just talking about God; we are working with God to build a more loving reality right now.

2. Discussion or Reflection Questions

- What is the "fear" that stops you from inviting a colleague or neighbour? (Is it fear of rejection, or fear that the church won't "deliver"?)
- Acts 2 describes a community that "enjoyed the good will of all the people." Does Trinity have "good will" in our local neighbourhood? How can we build it?
- How can we make our invitations sound less like "come to a lecture" and more like "come find out how good the Lord is"?

3. Close in Prayer

Take responsibility for my care and growth

Welcome

Worship Psalm 139

Word Galatians 6:1-10, Proverbs 4:20-27

1. Notes on the passage

In this last Sunday of the Gather, Give, Grow Series we explore the often-difficult transition from being a passive observer of our lives to becoming aware of our own responsibility to steward our souls. The church can provide the gym equipment, the training manual, and the community, but it cannot do the push-ups for you.

We sometimes fall into the trap of 'asleep' living, that is, waiting for the circumstances that surround us to shift or for others to help fix our problems. Often, we blame our natural desires or our environment that we can never find peace. But faith in Christ isn't a static destination provided to us by the church, but a "scary, beautiful, and deeply personal"* journey of owning our own lives (*Rachel Held-Evans). The first, and sometimes the most difficult thing we need to do is stop expecting the external world to provide the care and growth that can only be cultivated internally on our heart.

Growth isn't just about reading more facts; it's about the centred act of the soul choosing God. Taking responsibility for your growth is the ultimate act of freedom—choosing to no longer be a victim of your circumstances.

To really be in control of your own spiritual life, you have to be willing to spend significant time looking inward. If you don't take charge of what's happening in your head, your thoughts can turn into a runaway train—speeding toward anxiety and stress instead of keeping you grounded in the present.

Galatians 6 makes an interesting distinction between two kinds of loads we carry. Think of it like this:

- The "Shared Burden": This is a massive crisis that is too heavy for one person to lift. We are called to step in and radically support each other when things get this heavy.

- The "Owned Load": This is your personal backpack. It's your character, your honesty, and your own mental health. While people can support you, they can't carry this for you.

One of the hardest truths about spiritual growth is that it's a DIY project. You can't hire someone to do your push-ups for you, and you can't ask someone else to do your evolving for you.

Taking responsibility for your spiritual life means realising that no one else can make you a better person—that's something you have to do for yourself. When you show up for yourself and do the work, you stop just reacting to the world and start actually living in it.

As we navigate this path, we must redefine how we handle our failures. Following the wisdom of Galatians 6:1, when we catch ourselves 'in wrongdoing', we resist the religious urge to use shame as a weapon. Instead, we use gentleness. Responsibility is not an exercise in self-punishment—this only keeps us stuck in the cycles we hate—but a courageous act of self-correction. By guarding what we allow into our hearts as instructed in Proverbs 4:24-26, we begin to plan carefully, ensuring our outer actions align with our inner silence rather than the noise of public expectation.

Finally, we acknowledge that this growth is a slow, hidden work. Galatians 6:9 encourages us not to 'become tired of doing good', even when the results aren't immediate. This is the long obedience in the same direction. We move away from the need for immediate ego-validation or a quick-fix spirituality. Instead, we settle into the patient rhythm of the Spirit, trusting that by taking responsibility for our own care and growth today, we are planting the seeds for a 'harvest of eternal life' that will eventually sustain both ourselves and our communities.

2. Discussion or Reflection Questions

- What is the difference between the "burden" we carry for each other and the "load" we must carry ourselves (Gal 6:2,5)?
- "Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts" (Prov 4:23). What South African "narratives" (complaining, fear, pessimism) do you need to stop planting in your heart?
- What is one practical "field of the Spirit" (Gal 6:8) you commit to planting in this week—prayer, silence, study, or service?

3. Close in Prayer