

# CHRISTIAN FORMATION COHORT – LENT 2026

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## Overview

*(Sundays, 1:30–3:30 p.m., February 22 – March 29, with childcare)*

*“Train yourself in godliness; for while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way...” (1 Tim. 4:7–8).*

Christian formation is a slow but immensely rewarding work in which the Lord reshapes a life from the inside out. We do not drift into maturity; formation cannot happen by accident. We must choose it day by day. And yet even our choosing cannot change our heart without the Spirit’s power. He does His work when we clear space, set aside distractions, yield our wills, and obey.

The aim of this cohort is to form habits that keep you near Christ. Think of the disciplines as tools, trellises upon which the Spirit grows His fruit—love, joy, peace, etc—while we build the frame that helps that growth flourish. In this cohort, we take up one or two practices each week. We discuss them, practice them, and return the following to share our experience. We add new practices each week to our rhythm so that by the end of these six weeks, we have a pattern that should feel natural: daily time with the Lord, weekly surrender, and a slower way of life that can last past Lent.

## COURSE STRUCTURE

### Week 0 – Before the First Class

Prepare for the cohort through quiet, honest prayer using the guide we provide. During this time, identify your hopes, fears, pressures, and burdens, and set them before God. Choose life-giving activities to take up in place of what you set aside, and use a simple time-inventory sheet (that we will provide) to see how your days are truly spent. Lastly, you will also choose a small object that shows the present state of your soul. Bring it on the first day, ready to tell your group in a few plain words why you chose it.

### Week 1 – Daily Prayer, and Scripture Immersion

This week you will learn how to work with the Holy Spirit in a steady, disciplined way. You will begin the practice of praying for at least thirty minutes a day. You will also start

Scriptural immersion: committing passages to memory and reading or listening to Scripture throughout the day. We will provide clear immersion plans to guide you.

## **Week 2 – Weekly Sabbath and Fasting**

In this second week we add sabbath and fasting. Sabbath is the practice of rest and joy in the Lord, deliberately remembering the covenant He has made with us. Fasting turns us from food to the deeper joy of seeking Jesus—sometimes through sorrow, sometimes through delight.

## **Week 3 – Weekly Service and Giving**

Week 3 introduces two actionable postures: service and giving. Service emphasizes loving our neighbor through acts of kindness and justice. This disposition naturally encourages us to utilize our resources to support the work of the kingdom.

## **Week 4 – Addressing Wounds**

This week does not add a discipline, but reshapes one of the prayer times. You will designate thirty minutes of your weekly prayer pattern to invite Christ to let God search our hearts and tend to the deeper places of the soul—wounds, sins, weariness, bitterness, shame—through repentance, forgiveness, and renunciation.

## **Week 5 – Preparing for a Personal Retreat**

This week we introduce the practice of a personal retreat, which you will complete before the first dinner in May. Jesus often withdrew to quiet places to pray, sometimes spending the whole night with the Father. A personal retreat follows this pattern. You will learn how to shape such a day: how to implement silence and Scripture, how to intercede, and how to spend unhurried time with the Lord.

## **Week 6 – The Dark Night of the Soul**

You will be given tools to navigate seasons in which God seems absent: dryness, confusion, the collapse of spiritual feelings. Drawing from Psalm 13 and the biblical witnesses of Elijah, David, Jeremiah, and Job, you will learn to endure without despair .

## **Two Meals Together (May & June)**

We will gather for a meal on Sunday May 10th, 2026 and Sunday June 7, 2026 (from 1:00pm - 2:30pm) to reflect on our progress, struggles, victories, and questions. The first meal will center on how to walk through seasons when spiritual disciplines falter or feel strained. The second will focus on how to reset when we drift and how to keep these practices in a steady, sustainable way.

## THE PLEDGE

The cohort will meet weekly Sundays, 1:30pm - 3:30pm from February 22nd to March 29th. If you want to participate in the cohort, you must sign the commitment below indicating your intention to follow through with the program. A commitment is helpful for the following reasons:

1. It will help you be deliberate about establishing priorities so that you use your time and resources well.
2. Pledging underscores an intentional pursuit of discipleship amid the changing circumstances of our lives. People who sign a commitment form are more likely to follow through on their promises.
3. It's a reminder to be proactive about being and becoming faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

## The Commitment

With the Lord as my helper, I commit to the following:

1. I will strive to attend all meetings from February 22nd to March 29th and make a good faith effort to attend the check-in meals on May 10, 2026 and June 7, 2026.
2. I will commit to Christian formation by practicing detachment during the six weeks of classes in the following ways:
  - a. No social media beyond what's necessary for work;
  - b. Engaging prayerfully with the news.
  - c. No visual streaming services, movies, video games, or television except if done as a social activity with friends or family for no more than 3 hours a week. These should conform to Philippians 4:8.
  - d. No audio streaming services except for that which conforms to Philippians 4:8. For example, Bibles, sermons, Christ-centered music, etc.
  - e. No non-work related reading except for Scripture and content that fits Philippians 4:8.

3. I will ask for clarification if I'm uncertain whether or not to detach from a practice not specifically mentioned in (2).
4. I will commit to Christian formation by practicing attachment disciplines during the six weeks of classes through:

**a. From February 22nd:**

- i. Daily prayer for 30 mins in a posture of surrender (such as kneeling, lying prostrate, sitting on the floor)
- ii. Scripture Immersion, including at least 30 minutes of Bible reading or listening three times a week (can be done on a commute, while walking, or doing household chores, etc.) and 15mins of memorization time at least three times a week beginning.
- iii. Continuing these practices until the end of the cohort (March 29th)
- iv. Time Commitment: At the minimum level, prayer and scripture immersion will sum up to 5–6 hours per week, **which averages to roughly 45–50 minutes a day.**

**b. From March 1:**

- i. Practice a Sabbath: One full day of covenant rest as defined by Scripture, and intentional, restful practices throughout the week.
- ii. Weekly 24 hour fasting - whether partial or full, incorporating prayer during meal times.
- iii. Continuing these practices until the end of the cohort (March 29th).

**c. From March 8:**

- i. Service: Forming a heart of true biblical justice—giving your time to organized volunteer work and also taking up quiet acts of mercy on your own.
- ii. Giving: intentionally consider postures of giving in budgeting, tithing, mission-partner support (local and otherwise) and those in need.

**d. March 15:**

- i. Addressing Wounds: Take one of your 30 minute prayer times to address blocks to spiritual formation such as wounds, bitterness, shame through repentance, forgiveness, and unrepentance.
- ii. Intercessors will be available to help you pray through this if needed.
- iii. Continuing this practice until the end of the cohort (March 29th).

**e. March 22:**

- i. Start planning for a personal retreat of at least 10 hours. No new discipline required this week.
- ii. Retreat will be completed before May 10, 2026

**f. March 29**

- i. The Dark Night of the Soul: No new discipline introduced.
- ii. Prayer will be available for those who need it after the cohort.

**5. Group Discussions:**

- a. I will engage faithfully in group discussions during the class and be accountable to cohort members.
- b. I will strive to speak with honesty and humility, to listen without rushing to fix or correct, and to guard the dignity of those who share.
- c. I will avoid burdensome speech—words that scold, shame, or make light of others—and instead offer patience, grace, and a calm presence.
- d. I will let others finish their thoughts, resist the urge to dominate the conversation, and refrain from giving advice unless it is asked for.
- e. I will hold what is shared in confidence and seek the good of the whole group, trusting that the Spirit works through our quiet presence as much as through our words.

**6. Reattachment**

- a. When the classes end, I will take time in prayer to discern whether, and to what extent, I should bring social media, streaming, and other forms of entertainment back into my life.
  - b. I will weigh their pull on my heart, the peace or distraction they bring, and whether they help or hinder my walk with Christ.
  - c. I will reintroduce them, if at all, with clear limits and a watchful spirit rather than by habit or drift.
  - d. *Note: March 29th is the beginning of Holy Week and the facilitators encourage participants to consider reattachment AFTER Easter, April 5, 2026*
7. I will make a good faith effort to attend the two shared meals:
- a. May 10, 2026 at 1:00pm
  - b. June 7, 2026 at 1:00pm

#### **8. Grace:**

- a. I will be gracious to myself. I know these practices do not save me; God has already done that through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. My worth does not rise or fall with my performance.
- b. If I fail, I will resist the pull of shame and guilt. I will turn again to the Lord's mercy, receive His forgiveness, and begin the work afresh with a steady heart.
- c. I will remember that growth is slow, that setbacks are normal, and that Christ is patient with those who seek Him.

I ask God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - to help me fulfill this commitment.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **This cohort seems pretty intense. Is it really necessary?**

We know that Jesus calls us to love God and our neighbor. This is only possible as we practice the art of Christian living, building momentum as disciples through developing healthy habits. Scripture commands us to "... train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the

present life and also for the life to come” (1 Tim. 4:7-8). So, yes, it’s pretty intense, truly necessary, and richly rewarding.

### **What if I can’t attend every class?**

Life happens, and that’s okay. If you cannot commit to attending all the classes, consider waiting for the next iteration of this course sometime in the summer or fall. If you join the cohort, other things may come up. However, there are true emergencies, and then there are avoidable inconveniences. Training for godliness requires both discipline and sacrifice, and this commitment is part of the formation process.

### **How do I pray for 30 mins?**

The first class is about prayer!

### **Are you saying social media, streaming content, and non-Christian material are bad?**

They can be! Some content is simply sinful. Some content can be unhelpful, either for you individually, given your proclivities, or for you in a particular season. Detachment aims to reassess the things we imbibe and ascertain that we’re not slaves to the good things we enjoy. As Scripture says, “‘All things are lawful for me,’ but not all things are helpful. ‘All things are lawful for me,’ but I will not be dominated by anything” (1 Corinthians 6:12).

Social media and streaming services are also profoundly distracting. Even the best content in the world can distract us from the voice of the Lord. So, it is good for Christians to have regular seasons of detaching themselves from various forms of media to better hear the voice of the Shepherd.

Consider Philippians 4:8 as you determine what you will permit yourself during this season: *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is [g]lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (NASB)*

### **What if I can’t fast because of medical reasons?**

No problem! There are various ways to fast, and we will discuss how best to accommodate your situation. Please do not let a medical condition or disability prevent you from joining this course.

### **What if I can’t do a one-day fast? I’ve never done it before.**

Again, no problem! Odds are, you will probably fail, at least in some way, and that’s okay! God calls us to strive for him, so just as you will fail in a workout, but that failure

strengthens you to succeed later, you might fail in this discipline, but the failure can strengthen you to succeed later.

Remember, these disciplines do not change the fact that we are saved by the object of our faith, not the strength of our faith. Nevertheless, God is worthy of our full devotion, and this course is an effort to devote ourselves to him fully.

**This cohort requires a one-day retreat, but what if I can't take an entire day off because of responsibilities at home and work?**

The wonderful thing about setting aside a whole day to be with the Lord is that it makes the duties of life much easier to bear. Solutions will vary based on life situations. For example, if you are married, consider alternating retreat days every month with your spouse. If your work schedule is inconsistent and demanding, you might consider a Sunday from 6 am - 4 pm (in which case you'd attend the evening service) or 11pm - 9 pm after the 9am service.