

A SIX-WEEK COMPANION GUIDE

LIVING NEPHESH

Becoming Whole in Breath and Body

LEADER GUIDE

Weeks One Through Six

Payton B. Foust, MD

How to Use This Guide

This guide walks a small group leader through all six sessions of the Living Nephesh class, one chapter of the book at a time. Each week includes a Session Goal, a full facilitation script, discussion questions, and a closing reading drawn directly from the book. Leader Tip callouts (◆) offer practical guidance for running the room, and Say Something Like passages give you exact language you're free to read aloud or make your own. No clinical or theological background is assumed — just a willingness to lead.

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Week 1 — You Are a Living Soul

Tone: Welcoming. Curious. Grounding. | Emotional Arc: Curiosity → Recognition → Longing

Session Goal: Cast a vision of original wholeness. Help participants rethink what it means to be human as an integrated 'living soul.' Establish shared language around fragmentation and integration.

◆ **Leader Tip:** You don't need a medical or counseling background to lead this series. Anywhere the guide draws on clinical experience, a script is provided that you can read or paraphrase in your own voice. Personal stories are always welcome, but never required.

Welcome & Norms (0–5 Minutes)

Set norms: share what you're comfortable sharing, listen without fixing, respect confidentiality.

Say something like: “We live in a time with more health information, more specialists, and more self-improvement tools than any generation before us — and yet a lot of us still feel fragmented, like our body, our emotions, and our spiritual life are being handled in separate rooms with no one connecting them. Over the next six weeks, we're going to ask a different question: not how do I optimize myself, but what would it mean to be whole?”

◆ **Leader Tip:** If you have your own story of feeling pulled in fragmented directions — physically, emotionally, spiritually — this is a natural place to share it briefly. If not, the line above stands on its own.

Icebreaker — The Five Buckets (5–10 Minutes)

Physical | Spiritual | Relationships | Work | Rest

Prompt: Which feels strongest? Which feels weakest?

Most of us don't feel broken in one place. We feel broken in pieces.

◆ **Leader Tip:** Give people 30 seconds of quiet to actually think before anyone answers out loud — this question is easy to rush past. If the group is slow to open up, share your own weakest bucket first.

Opening Breath Prayer (10–15 Minutes)

Introduce Genesis 2:7.

Inhale: From dust you formed me.

Exhale: With breath you fill me.

Allow ~2 minutes of silence. Brief table reflection.

◆ **Leader Tip:** The silence will feel longer to you than it does to the room. Resist the urge to fill it early — let it sit for the full two minutes.

Teaching Block 1 — The Tension of Fragmented Healing (15–25 Minutes)

Say something like: “Think about how health care usually works: one appointment for your body, another for your mental health, maybe another — if it exists at all — for your spiritual life. We've built systems that treat a person like separate departments instead of one integrated being. And most of us do the same thing internally: we sort our lives into boxes labeled physical, spiritual, emotional, relational, and hope they don't interfere with each other.”

We have more tools for healing than ever before... but we don't seem more whole.

Introduce Irenaeus: ‘The glory of God is a human being fully alive.’

◆ **Leader Tip:** If anyone in the room has walked through healthcare, therapy, or church life and felt treated as parts instead of a whole person, this is a good moment to invite (not require) one story from the group.

Teaching Block 2 — Genesis 2:7 (25–35 Minutes)

Dust (physical, good), Breath (ruach), Living nephesh (integrated being).

| **God did not make a body and insert a soul. God made a living soul.**

Venn Diagram — Integration vs. Balance (35–40 Minutes)

Draw this in three steps, live on a whiteboard or flip chart — narrate each step as you draw it:

1. Draw five small, separate circles scattered across the board. Label them Physical, Spiritual, Relational, Work, Rest — the same five buckets from tonight's icebreaker.

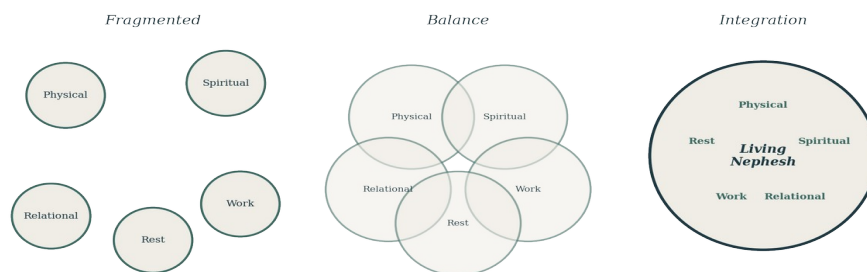
| **Say something like:** “This is how most of us actually live — five separate compartments, each one competing for attention, none of them touching.”

2. Without erasing, draw the same five circles again, closer together this time, overlapping at the edges.

| **Say something like:** “This is what balance tries to do. It doesn't change the compartments — it just tries to manage the overlap. Keep the plates spinning without letting them crash into each other.”

3. Erase all five circles. Draw one single large circle, and write all five words inside it, together.

| **Say something like:** “This is integration. Not separate parts pulled closer together — one whole life. That's what nephesh means: not a soul added to a body, but a person who is already, fundamentally, one thing.”



Reference: the three-step progression — fragmented, balanced, integrated. Print or project this if you'd rather not draw freehand.

Prompt: How is integration different from balance?

What to Listen For:

- Balance language: managing competing demands, keeping plates spinning, fitting it all in.
- Integration language: one life, one self, things belonging together rather than being juggled.

Teaching Block 3 — Nephesh in the Psalms (40–55 Minutes)

Assign tables Psalm 42, 63, 103, and 107.

Prompt: What words stand out?

◆ **Leader Tip:** The word to listen for is 'soul' — that's nephesh in the Hebrew. Don't lead with this; let the table notice it first, then confirm the connection. Translations vary, so know your Bible before class:

What to Listen For:

- Psalm 42:1 — 'my soul pants for you' (ESV and NIV agree: nephesh = 'soul').
- Psalm 63:1 — ESV: 'my soul thirsts for you.' NIV instead reads 'I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you' — nephesh = 'whole being,' not 'soul,' in the NIV here. Worth naming if your group uses NIV.
- Psalm 103:1 — 'Bless the LORD, O my soul' (ESV, NIV, NKJV all agree: nephesh = 'soul').

- Psalm 107:9 — ESV: 'the longing soul... the hungry soul' (nephesh appears twice in this verse). NIV drops 'soul' entirely here: 'he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry' — worth pointing out that the word is still there in Hebrew even when an English translation doesn't show it.

Highlight hunger, thirst, praise as embodied spirituality.

Add Leviticus 17:11 — Life (nephesh) in the blood.

◆ **Leader Tip:** Walk the room while tables discuss — you don't need expertise to facilitate this well, just presence. If a table finishes early, ask: 'What surprised you about how physical this language is?'

Whole-Bible Reinforcement (55–65 Minutes)

Shema (Deut 6:4–5), Incarnation, Resurrection.

| **God did not rescue us from embodiment. He redeemed it.**

Final Reflection + Eden Reading (65–75 Minutes)

Table prompt: What feels hopeful? What feels challenging?

Read the passage below aloud, slowly. Let silence sit afterward.

◆ Closing Reading

It is easy to think of Eden as a place long lost, its gates sealed behind us. But perhaps Eden is not so much a place as it is a posture—a way of being. A way of breathing. A way of remembering that wholeness was our beginning. That we were not made to be fragmented, hurried, or isolated but to live integrated in the rhythm of God's own breath.

That rhythm calls to us still. Even now when our days feel scattered and our bodies tired, the invitation lingers like a fragrance on the air. It is not a call to recreate Eden by our own efforts. It is a call to return to the breath that made us. To remember that before anything broke, we were made whole.

— from Living Nephesh, Chapter 1: Breath and Dust

◆ **Leader Tip:** Read this section more slowly than feels natural. This is a closing, not a summary — the room doesn't need you to add anything after the reading. Let it land, then move to the practice.

Practice for the Week

Daily 60-second pause:

Inhale: From dust you formed me.

Exhale: With breath you fill me.

Week 2 — The Fracture & The False Framework

Tone: Measured. Grounded. Clear. | Emotional Arc: Connection → Sobriety → Clarity → Ache

Session Goal: Help participants recognize the origin and depth of human fragmentation — internal, relational, and vocational — and see how the philosophical frameworks that followed (Plato, Gnosticism, Descartes) reinforced the fracture rather than healing it.

◆ **Leader Tip:** This is the longest session in the series — roughly 85 minutes, versus 60–77 for the other five weeks. That's real: this week covers both the fracture itself and its full philosophical genealogy. If your group has less time, Teaching Block 2 is the place to trim — you don't need equal depth on all three of Plato, Gnosticism, and Descartes to make the point.

Opening Breath Prayer (0–5 Minutes)

Inhale: You are near to the broken.

Exhale: Here I am, Lord.

Repeat slowly for 2 minutes.

Icebreaker (5–12 Minutes)

When something goes wrong unexpectedly, what is your first reflex?

Transition: In Genesis 3, we see humanity's first reflex.

◆ **Leader Tip:** If the room is slow to answer, name a few common reflexes to prime the pump — blame someone else, withdraw, control the situation, fix it immediately — then ask which one they recognize in themselves.

Teaching Block 1 — The Fracture (Genesis 3) (12–35 Minutes)

Genesis 3:1–5

Internal Disruption — Genesis 3:7

They realize they are naked. God does not name their nakedness; they perceive it themselves.

The fracture changes perception before it changes behavior. Shame emerges from rupture, not from God.

Fear & Hiding — Genesis 3:8–10

'I was afraid.' Fear enters. Self-protection begins.

In the garden, relationship came first. After the fracture, self-protection came first.

Blame & Relational Fracture — Genesis 3:11–13

Blame displaces responsibility and fractures unity.

Toll and Strain — Genesis 3:17–19

The fracture doesn't stop at emotion. It enters vocation.

Work becomes heavy. Provision becomes anxious. Identity becomes tied to productivity.

This is where performance spirituality begins.

Knowledge Without Capacity — Genesis 3:5

The serpent offers autonomy. Their eyes are opened. They gain moral awareness without divine capacity.

Say something like: “We carry an almost unlimited stream of information and outrage every day — global news, other people's opinions, endless comparison. Our nervous systems were never built to process that much awareness. The problem was never knowledge itself. It's autonomy without dependence — trying to function like we have infinite capacity when we don't.”

When finite creatures try to function like infinite ones, fragmentation follows.

Table Discussion (35–47 Minutes)

Internal fracture

- Where do you see this awareness of nakedness or shame showing up today?

What to Listen For:

- Hiding, image management, or performing okay-ness.
- There's no right answer here — you're listening for honest noticing, not a tidy conclusion.

Relational fracture

- What did people notice about hiding or blame?

Vocational fracture

- Where do you experience toil or strain in work or responsibility?

◆ **Leader Tip:** This table discussion runs long (12 minutes). Give a two-minute warning before wrapping so tables aren't cut off mid-thought.

Teaching Block 2 — The False Framework (47–75 Minutes)

Plato — Separation

Body treated as lesser; soul elevated as true self. Contrast with Genesis 2: dust animated by breath becomes a living soul.

Gnosticism — Spiritualized Escape

Matter viewed as corrupt; salvation as escape. Rejected as heresy, yet its instincts lingered.

Descartes — Mechanization

‘I think, therefore I am.’ Identity located in the mind. Modern medicine inherits this split: body, mind, spirit compartmentalized.

Plato separated. Gnosticism spiritualized. Descartes mechanized. Somewhere along the way, we forgot Genesis 2.

The Clinical Gaze — Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963)

Say something like: “Foucault noticed something in the history of medicine: at some point, the way doctors looked at patients shifted from knowing a person to managing a case. That same shift happens outside of medicine too — anytime we start observing, labeling, and analyzing someone instead of knowing and connecting with them. And this pattern didn't start with institutions. It started in the garden, the moment Adam and Eve began observing themselves instead of simply being known.”

Fragmentation moves from theology into institutions and relationships.

◆ **Leader Tip:** This section can sound academic on paper. You don't need to explain Foucault as a historical figure — one sentence of context is enough. The point that matters is the shift from knowing to managing, which everyone in the room has experienced somewhere.

The Landing (75–85 Minutes)

If the fracture runs this deep — into perception, bodies, and institutions — then no technique will fix it. No optimization will cure it. No system will heal it.

| *Which means the answer cannot come from inside the fracture.*

Read the passage below aloud, slowly, to close the session.

◆ Closing Reading

The fracture is not final. The story that began in dust and breath does not end in separation. The Breath-Giver has not abandoned His most cherished creation. Jesus shows us the fullness of God and the fullness of what it means to be human. He did not come to rescue us from embodiment but to redeem it.

The way of Jesus is incarnation, not escape. Embodied love, not disembodied striving. And through Him the invitation still stands: to be made whole again.

— from Living Nephesh, Chapter 3: The False Framework

◆ **Leader Tip:** This is a deliberate cliffhanger — next week opens with Jesus entering the fracture. You don't need to soften the ache of tonight's material or resolve it before people leave.

Practice for the Week

Invite participants to notice this week when they slip into managing a part of themselves instead of bringing it honestly to God — and to name it, even briefly, in prayer.

Week 3 — A Return to Eden

Tone: Tender. Hopeful. Restorative. | Emotional Arc: Recognition → Wonder → Longing for restoration

Session Goal: Show how Jesus enters the fracture named in Week 2 — restoring rather than diagnosing — and introduce salvation (sōtēria) as the healing of the whole person.

Opening Breath Prayer (0–3 Minutes)

Inhale: *The Breath-Giver is near.*

Exhale: *And He makes all things whole.*

Invite the room into breath prayer for 2 minutes.

Leader Transition (3–5 Minutes)

Say something like: “Last week we explored the fracture introduced in Genesis 3 — shame, hiding, disconnection, and the ways that fracture continues to shape our lives and even the systems meant to heal us. Tonight we turn toward the center of the Christian story: God does not leave the fracture untouched. In Jesus Christ, God moves toward us to restore what was lost.”

Icebreaker (5–13 Minutes)

At your tables discuss: What is the worst or funniest nickname you have ever heard — or been given?

Allow quick sharing around the table.

Leader note: Nicknames can be playful, but labels can also stick. Sometimes people become reduced to a reputation, a mistake, or a category. Last week we discussed the ‘clinical gaze’ — the tendency to reduce people to labels or diagnoses. Tonight we will see how Jesus encounters people very differently.

◆ **Leader Tip:** *Some people carry a genuinely painful nickname or label. Keep this light and let anyone pass without pressure — the goal is a smile before the turn toward something deeper, not vulnerability yet.*

Teaching Block 1 — The Breath of New Creation (13–23 Minutes)

Read John 20:22 aloud.

Explain the Greek word: ἐνεφύσησεν (enephysēsen) — Pronunciation: en-eh-FYOO-say-sen — Meaning: ‘He breathed into them.’

This same verb appears in the Greek translation of Genesis 2:7 when God breathes life into Adam.

◆ **This moment is not random. It is new creation.**

◆ **Leader Tip:** *You don't need Greek fluency to teach this well — the pronunciation guide is there so you can read the word aloud with confidence. The point is simple: the same breath from Eden is now breathed again by the risen Christ.*

Table Discussion (23–31 Minutes)

- Why might John intentionally connect this moment to Genesis?
- What does it suggest about what Jesus came to restore?

What to Listen For:

- *Language of restoration, undoing, starting over, or being remade — rather than simply forgiveness.*

Teaching Block 2 — Salvation as Wholeness (31–41 Minutes)

Introduce the Greek word *sōtēria*. Often translated ‘salvation,’ but the meaning includes healing, restoration, renewal, and wholeness.

Salvation is more than the forgiveness of sins. It includes the restoration of the whole person — the healing of nephesh.

Teaching Block 3 — The Healing Gaze of Jesus (41–51 Minutes)

Contrast with last week's concept of the clinical gaze.

Clinical gaze: analyzes • labels • fragments

Healing gaze of Jesus: sees • recognizes • restores

Walk through the following passages and invite observation.

Mark 5:25–34 — The Woman with the Bleeding Disorder

- What stands out about the way Jesus addresses her?
- Why might the word ‘daughter’ matter?

Luke 19:1–10 — Zacchaeus

- What does Jesus do that restores Zacchaeus' dignity?
- Why might calling him by name matter?

Mark 1:40–45 — The Leper

- What does Jesus do before healing him?
- Why would touch be so significant in this moment?

Mark 10:46–52 — Bartimaeus

- Why might Jesus ask, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’
- What does this reveal about how Jesus sees people?

◆ **Leader Tip:** You don't need to cover all four passages in depth if time is short — pick two that resonate most with you and go deeper, rather than rushing through all four.

Breakout Discussion (51–63 Minutes)

- Where in your life do you most need the gaze of Jesus — not as scrutiny but as love?
- What parts of your life feel fractured or disconnected?
- What might restoration look like there?

◆ **Leader Tip:** This is the most vulnerable moment of the night. Model it by answering briefly yourself before opening it to the table, and don't require anyone to share out loud if they'd rather sit with it quietly.

Close by reading the passage below aloud, slowly.

◆ Closing Reading

We were not made to live in pieces. We were made to live as living souls—fully human, fully known, fully whole. In Him the weight becomes light. The yoke easy. The burden no longer ours to bear alone.

This is the invitation of Jesus: to cease striving, to live fuller, to be made whole again. Receive it now.

— from Living Nephesh, Chapter 4: A Return to Eden

Practice for the Week

Invite participants to practice offering someone the healing gaze of Jesus this week — full attention, without labels or agenda — in at least one conversation.

Week 4 — Discerning Disintegration

Tone: Honest. Gentle. Unhurried. | Emotional Arc: Recognition → Relief → Discernment

Session Goal: Help participants recognize the quiet signs of disintegration in their lives and introduce the Prayer of Examen as a historic Christian practice of discernment.

◆ **Leader Tip:** This week touches on emotional and mental health. You're not diagnosing anyone, and you don't need clinical training to lead it well — you're simply naming a common human experience and creating space for honesty. If someone shares something that sounds like it needs more support than a small group can offer, follow up with them personally afterward and, if appropriate, point them toward pastoral care or a counselor.

Opening Breath Prayer (0–5 Minutes)

Inhale: Search me, God.

Exhale: Heal my soul.

Icebreaker (5–10 Minutes)

What is one small way life has felt slightly “off” lately?

Examples: sleep, busyness, distraction, stress, prayer life, relationships

◆ **Leader Tip:** Offer one of the examples about yourself first — this question can feel exposing without a low-stakes example to follow.

Teaching Block 1 — Naming Disintegration (10–20 Minutes)

Say something like: “Disintegration rarely begins dramatically. It's not usually a crisis — it's quieter than that. It looks like fatigue without any real crisis behind it, distance from people or from God without any dramatic falling out, just a persistent sense that something is off. And here's what makes it tricky: most people experiencing this are still functioning. Still working, still serving, still showing up.”

Disintegration rarely announces itself. It slips in through the cracks.

Spiritual Entropy

Signs may include: persistent fatigue, emotional dullness, spiritual numbness, compulsive busyness, loss of joy.

Portraits of Disintegration

The High-Capacity Leader — still showing up and delivering, but joy has faded.

The Devoted Parent — constantly pouring out with little space to breathe.

The Perfectionist Christian — faith becomes performance; devotions become checklists.

Reminder: these portraits are not meant to accuse but to awaken.

Breakout Discussion #1 (20–30 Minutes)

- Which description of disintegration resonated most with you? Any of these, or something else?
- Why does quiet drift often go unnoticed?
- What makes it difficult to recognize when something is off in our inner lives?

What to Listen For:

- *Recognition rather than diagnosis* — you're listening for 'that's me' moments, not trying to assess anyone's mental health.

Teaching Block 2 — The Silent Shame of the Faithful (30–40 Minutes)

Many Christians feel shame when they experience spiritual fatigue. But Scripture shows otherwise:

- Elijah collapsing in exhaustion
- David lamenting in the Psalms
- Jesus grieving and weeping

| Scripture never hides its exhausted people. It canonizes them.

What the DSM Misses

Say something like: “The DSM — the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, the standard reference clinicians use to diagnose mental health conditions — is a genuinely useful tool. But some suffering lives between its categories. You can fall short of meeting the criteria for depression or anxiety and still feel depleted, disconnected, or adrift. That gap doesn't mean nothing is wrong. It means the soul doesn't always speak in checklists.”

| The soul rarely speaks in checklists.

◆ **Leader Tip:** The point is not to teach diagnostic criteria — it's to give people permission to name genuine suffering even when it doesn't fit a formal category.

Teaching Block 3 — The Prayer of Examen (40–50 Minutes)

Developed by Ignatius of Loyola in the 1500s. A daily practice of noticing where God was present and where we drifted away.

Traditional pattern:

- Gratitude
- Presence
- Attention
- Confession and Release
- Invitation

Mini-Examen

Two questions: Where did I feel close to God today? Where did I resist Him?

Breakout Discussion #2 (50–60 Minutes)

- What do you notice when you slow down and reflect on your day?
- Is it easier to notice where God was present or where you resisted Him?
- What makes practices like the Examen difficult today?
- Could daily reflection help you recognize drift earlier?

Closing (60–65 Minutes)

Psalm 139:23–24 — Search me, God, and know my heart...

| To feel lost is not to be lost. To feel disintegrated is not to be disqualified.

Read the passage below aloud, slowly, to close the session.

◆ Closing Reading

In the end, discerning disintegration is not a call to hypervigilance or self-criticism. It is an invitation.

An invitation to notice—to pay attention to the small signals, the quiet longings, the places of unrest within. An invitation to yield—to lay those places before God without shame or defense, trusting that what feels like failure is often the starting point of grace. And an invitation to be restored by the gentle work of the Spirit, who brings wholeness where we have frayed—not by our striving.

This is the movement of living nephesh.

— from Living Nephesh, Chapter 6: Discerning Disintegration

Practice for the Week

Invite participants to try the two Examen questions each evening this week: Where did I feel close to God today? Where did I resist Him?

Week 5 — Practicing Wholeness

Tone: Encouraging. Practical. Freeing. | Emotional Arc: Overwhelm → Permission → Small Hope

Session Goal: To help participants move from awareness of disintegration into simple, sustainable practices of wholeness.

Opening Breath Prayer (0–5 Minutes)

Inhale: Bless these steps, Lord.

Exhale: Make them faithful.

Icebreaker (5–10 Minutes)

What is one small habit or rhythm that has helped you feel more like yourself at some point in your life?

Teaching Block 1 — Why We Struggle to Change (10–18 Minutes)

Say something like: “Most of us already know what would help us — rest, movement, prayer, connection. The problem usually isn't information. It's that we think about change in terms of overhaul: 'I need to fix everything.' And a life at rest tends to stay at rest. Overhaul leads to overwhelm. Overwhelm leads to inaction.”

Motivational Inertia

A life at rest tends to stay at rest. Overhaul leads to overwhelm. Overwhelm leads to inaction.

Teaching Block 2 — The Grace of Small Steps (18–26 Minutes)

Practicing wholeness is not about mastering everything at once. It is about beginning — gently and humbly — again and again.

Mark 4:26–29 (seed growing)

Growth is: slow • quiet • often unseen. The kingdom grows through small, faithful rhythms.

Breakout Discussion #1 (26–36 Minutes)

- When have you tried to “fix everything” and felt overwhelmed?
- Why is it difficult to start small?
- Where do you feel stuck right now?

◆ **Leader Tip:** This is a good moment for a little self-deprecating honesty from you — naming your own overhaul-and-crash cycle makes it much easier for the table to admit theirs.

Teaching Block 3 — What Practices Are (36–44 Minutes)

Practices are not: self-improvement projects, checklists, performance.

They are: small acts of alignment. Acts of integration — body, mind, and spirit together.

| **These are not tasks to achieve. They are invitations to return.**

Teaching Block 4 — A Catalog of Small Practices (44–56 Minutes)

Breath

- three slow breaths before checking your phone

- a breath prayer

Body

- walk without headphones
- eat one meal without distraction

Belonging

- ask someone, “How is your soul?”
- share a meal

Becoming

- journal for five minutes
- reflect: what am I drawn toward?

Blessing

- bless someone quietly
- speak a word of encouragement

◆ **Leader Tip:** Resist the urge to have people pick a practice from every category — the whole point of this week is one small thing, not five. If someone tries to build a five-part plan, gently redirect them back to just one.

Guided Reflection (56–62 Minutes)

- What stirred something in you?
- What feels like an invitation — not a burden?

Breakout Discussion #2 (62–72 Minutes)

- What practice are you drawn toward right now?
- Why that one?
- What would make it sustainable this week?
- Who could help you remember or stay aware?

Closing (72–77 Minutes)

You are not beginning from absence. You are beginning from the presence of God already at work in you.

Wholeness is practiced, not achieved.

Read the passage below aloud, slowly, to close the session.

◆ Closing Reading

Every small act of alignment, every quiet moment of return, every breath offered in surrender—none of it is insignificant. It is all part of God's mending work in you.

Wholeness is not a finish line to cross. It is a lifelong practice: of presence, of becoming, of allowing God to restore you again and again. So as you rise, as you move into the ordinary and sacred spaces of your life, carry this truth: You are being made whole. And God, the Breath-Giver, goes with you.

— from Living Nephesh, Chapter 7: Practicing Wholeness

◆ **Leader Tip:** *Before people leave, give them 30 seconds to actually write down the one practice they landed on in Breakout Discussion #2. If it only stays spoken, it's easy to lose by Tuesday. A written line is far more likely to survive the week.*

Practice for the Week

Invite each person to name one practice — just one — from tonight's catalog, and commit to it for the week ahead.

Next week: forming a rhythm of life.

Week 6 — Rules of Life for the Living Soul

Tone: Warm. Settling. Forward-looking. | Emotional Arc: Longing → Clarity → Commitment

Session Goal: To help participants take the small, grace-filled practices of wholeness and gently shape them into a simple, sustainable Rule of Life across the 5 Bs.

Opening Breath Prayer (0–5 Minutes)

Inhale: *You are the vine, Lord.*

Exhale: *Help me abide.*

Icebreaker — The Ideal Day (5–10 Minutes)

What's one thing you imagine doing in your ideal version of a really put-together day? How often does that actually happen?

Say something like: *"Most of us already have a sense of the life we want to live. We can picture it. But the gap between imagining it and actually living it can feel wide. Last week, we talked about not fixing everything — but simply beginning. Tonight, we take that beginning and give it a place to live."*

Teaching Block 1 — From Practices to Pattern (10–18 Minutes)

Last week was about practicing wholeness — small, grace-filled steps. Not overhaul. Not perfection. Just beginning.

But if those practices don't have a place to live, they fade. Small practices need a home. A rule of life gives them that home.

| We don't change by trying harder. We change by living differently—consistently.

Teaching Block 2 — What a Rule of Life Is (18–26 Minutes)

A rule of life is not: a checklist, a program, a perfect system.

It is: a rhythm, a structure, a trellis.

| The trellis does not create life. It supports it so it can grow.

A rule of life is a way of holding onto the small things that bring you back to life. It makes space for growth.

Teaching Block 3 — The Rule of Life and the 5 Bs (26–36 Minutes)

A rule of life is a rhythm across your whole life:

- Breath — returning to God
- Body — tending your physical life
- Belonging — relationships and community
- Becoming — growth over time
- Blessing — love moving outward

| This is not five separate lists. This is one life, held together.

Breakout Discussion #1 — Awareness (36–46 Minutes)

- What practice stayed with you from last week?

- Where did you feel a sense of life or return?
- Where did things feel difficult?

Teaching Block 4 — Building a Gentle Rule (46–56 Minutes)

You are not building a perfect system. You are shaping a livable rhythm.

One small practice per B. Keep it simple, realistic, and flexible. Each should feel almost too small to matter.

| This is not about doing more. It is about living one life with intention.

◆ **Leader Tip:** Walk the room table by table during this exercise — people often need a nudge to keep their practices small. If someone writes something ambitious ('exercise five days a week'), gently ask, 'What would the smallest version of that look like?'

Guided Reflection (56–62 Minutes)

What is one small practice for each area? Breath, Body, Belonging, Becoming, Blessing.

Breakout Discussion #2 — Naming Your Rule (62–72 Minutes)

- Share one or two practices.
- Which feels most natural or difficult?
- What will help you follow through?
- What needs flexibility?

Closing (72–77 Minutes)

| You are not becoming someone new. You are learning to live as a whole person.

Wholeness is practiced—and becomes a way of life.

Read the passage below aloud, slowly, to close the session and the series.

◆ Closing Reading

In the end, crafting a rule of life is not a call to master our days or perfect our practices.

It is an invitation. To return. To align. To abide.

— from Living Nephesh, Chapter 8: Rules of Life for the Living Soul

Beyond This Room

Say something like: “Before we close tonight, I want to name something. This class has walked through the first half of Living Nephesh — the vision of what we lost, and the formation of learning to live whole again. Tonight you built a rule of life. That's not the end of the book, and it doesn't have to be the end of this work. There's one chapter we intentionally skipped along the way: Chapter 5, 'What Is Living Nephesh?' It ties together everything we've covered as a bridge into what's ahead. I'd encourage you to read it this week, on your own, before you go any further. From there, the book's third section — 'The Embodiment: Living It Out' — takes everything we've named here and tests it against real life: relationships, family, suffering, work, ministry, witness. You don't need a group to read those chapters. You need the rule of life you just wrote. Let it be the lens you bring to each one.”

Reading Ahead, On Your Own

- Chapter 5: What Is Living Nephesh? — the bridge we skipped as a class

- Chapter 9: Wholeness in the Presence of Others
- Chapter 10: Families as Living Souls
- Chapter 11: Becoming Whole in Suffering
- Chapter 12: Embodied Stewardship
- Chapter 13: Healing in the Field
- Chapter 14: Wholeness and Witness
- Epilogue: A Genesis Moment

Appendix C offers more room to keep shaping the rule of life you started tonight. Appendices A, B, D, and E offer further tools if you want to keep going deeper on your own.

◆ **Leader Tip:** Consider handing out or posting this reading list separately so people leave with it in hand, not just in the room. This is the most important handoff of the whole series — worth more than an ad-libbed closing line. If your church or group plans a follow-up gathering, name the date now while everyone is still in the room.

About Living Nephesh

Living Nephesh explores what it means to live whole — body, soul, and spirit — in a world that often pulls us apart. Rooted in Genesis and the teachings of Jesus, the book invites us to return to the integrated life God intended, drawing from Scripture, clinical stories, and personal transformation to revive the ancient Hebrew idea of nephesh — the living soul.

Living Nephesh is available in paperback, hardcover, and Kindle wherever books are sold.

www.livingnephesh.com