

3 CELL – being alone with God

Application questions from the book (page 62)

- Where, if anywhere, do you experience Cell?
- If you have a place, what characterises it?
- How could a parent of children under five attempt Cell?
- Write down your understanding of the saying, ‘Go sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything.’
- What have you found are the challenges to overcome to allow Cell to work?
- What benefits have you found from being in the Cell?
- How might you begin to practise Cell differently, having read this chapter?

Additional material

- 1 **Flight, landing, luggage retrieval and arrival lounge.** Prepare and then lead the group through the following four stages:
 - a. All group members sit in silence for ten minutes.
 - b. Near the end of the ten minutes, invite the group to get ready mentally to come out of the silence and talk about what the experience was like.
 - c. Each group member collects their own thoughts, temptations, distractions and impressions encountered. Was anything lost or something found?
 - d. With each person sharing as much or as little as they want with their fellow travellers, discuss how was your flight and coming back to earth?
- 2 **Walk and then talk.** Prepare the group for the following process: each member goes for a half-hour walk by themselves. They come back and share tea and biscuits, as a coming back together process. Then, either to the whole group or in pairs, each person in turn unpacks what the walk was like.
- 3 When you begin a private time with God, what helps you to settle? Are there certain prayers or songs you regularly use to help you focus? How did you find them?
- 4 What do you find either distracts you or even stops you doing Cell? How has this aspect of life been during the Covid-19 lockdown and what might you want to keep from that period?
- 5 Jesus commended secret acts of devotion and charity. What have been your feelings when you have specially prayed in your Cell for someone or secretly given them a gift or present? What’s it like to be a ‘spiritual secret Santa’?
- 6 Do you use, or have you used, a ‘pocket piece’ – a crucifix, holding cross, rosary beads or suitable pebble, that you carry around and finger in your pocket. How do you find it helps?
- 7 Do you have any recurring dreams? If so, what do you wake up feeling? Should you consider starting a dream diary? Who might you disclose this information to?
- 8 How would you portray/draw/colour two images: the real you and the public you? How different are the two? What the extent to which they overlap?
- 9 In Cell we face our afflictions. Who would be a safe and appropriate person with whom to name your characteristic thought battles? How much would it be right to tell a small group about? How could they support you in this battle?
- 10 **Spiritual sleeping lions – or treading in Samuel’s footsteps** (for adults or children). Group members sit in a chair or lie on the floor. They close their eyes, sit or lie still, trying to empty their minds except for openness to God’s voice. The leader either walks or looks round the group, praying silently for each in turn. After 5–10 minutes, the lions ‘awake’ – what did anyone hear?
- 11 Invite the group to make a prayer covenant. Try to agree a period of the day, however early or late, however short, when each person will enter their Cell and pray for others of the covenant group. A week later explore how that went.

4 CHAPEL – corporate public worship

Application questions from the book (page 76)

- If life in Cell is being spiritually productive, for what reasons do Christians need Chapel?
- Why would you say, honestly, you go to your church's worship service?
- What do you find you gain from its public worship?
- Are you frustrated by it? If so, in what way?
- What part do you think public worship should play in a Christian community?
- What elements of being a Christian community cannot be provided by Chapel?

Additional material

- 1 What inspires you in public worship? Instead of answering the question verbally, you could draw a picture. For example, consider how you might depict the sense of wonder.
- 2 Are there ways the worship you participate in feeds your sense of calling, purpose and identity? (Some people would call this awareness their charism.) What are the particular texts, songs, aspects or actions in worship that help you in this way?
- 3 Find a compline (a short late evening prayer service) for all individuals in the group to try using daily for a week, last thing at night. Report back on your experience.
- 4 Do you have favourite seasons of public worship across the church year? If so, what are they and why might that be? Are there seasons you find hard going? Explain why.
- 5 What emotions do you find expressed in the Psalms? What do you make of their great variety? Which emotions or responses do you identify with? Which ones give you permission to be more real with God? You could look at pages 70–72 of *Seven Sacred Spaces*.
- 6 How do you understand the complementary differences between praying by yourself and public worship? Pages 64–66 and 73–75 of *Seven Sacred Spaces* will give you some starting points.
- 7 In corporate prayer, what do you think helps attenders truly connect with God?
- 8 What practices and attitudes can help the attenders get beyond being just watchers or consumers in public worship?

5 CHAPTER – making decisions

Application questions from the book (page 85)

- What makes the meetings called to decide things inspiring and transformative?
- Is conflict always to be avoided? How can it be used constructively?
- What helps meetings progress beyond their difficult points?
- What might be better than decisions by majority voting?
- What is consensus and how is it discerned?

Additional material

- 1 What is your style when you are either facing conflict or seeking resolution?
- 2 In meetings do you tend to talk more or talk less? How do you understand your tendency?
- 3 How do you prepare yourself emotionally for an upcoming meeting, especially if you suspect it might be a difficult one?
- 4 How might churches make practical Benedict's comment that the Lord often reveals what is better to the younger (see *Seven Sacred Spaces*, page 82)?
- 5 What qualities, processes and practical arrangements help to make 'safe spaces' for meetings? Pages 79–82 might be a starting point.
- 6 Do you think 'getting the business done' in meetings is the most important thing? What other considerations are there?
- 7 What have you seen that helps hold together disagreement and unity?
- 8 Reflect on the behaviour you would most like others to change and what you yourself could offer to change. Make your offer and see what happens.

6 CLOISTER – planned and surprising meetings

Application questions from the book (page 94)

- Recall a surprise positive encounter. How did it arrive and what happened?
- How could your beliefs affect those encounters which happen by chance?
- What makes meetings good?
- How might your faith, and its view of others, affect meeting people you find difficult?
- Who might find it difficult to meet you, and why?
- Where are the joining places in your church?
- What have you learnt about yourself and your walk as a Christian through surprising encounters?

Additional material

- 1 What happened in your day or week that you did not expect? What were your reactions?
- 2 Think about the joining or in-between places in your life, for example your commute, the intervals between meetings or the corridors you walk. How do you view them? What use are you making of these? How might seeing them as 'cloisters' change their significance for you?
- 3 Reflect on the big surprises in your life or the curve balls it threw you. In what ways do you think these have changed you? Was that process good or bad, easy or difficult?
- 4 It is normal that we find some people in community difficult – indeed others may think of us in that way! In one-to-one meetings how do you cope with people you find difficult? (We advise not naming them!)
- 5 What can be learnt from Jesus' unexpected meetings, e.g. children, Zacchaeus, the Canaanite mother, Nicodemus, the woman with internal bleeding, the pair on the road to Emmaus?
- 6 Many say they find life is too busy; its 24/7 pace is intense. How might cloister – or the other six spaces – help you regulate a full life?
- 7 Life can contain many pre-planned events and meetings, some in quick succession. How can we ensure we get enough 'changing gear time' in life?
- 8 Go to a public place and simply sit and watch people passing by. What do you notice? Compare notes later.
- 9 Make a point of making eye contact with people you pass in your street (lockdown may well have made this less common). Think about a greeting, such as 'How are you?', 'It's a lovely day' or just 'Good morning/day/evening'. Remember to smile (if you are not wearing a mask)!
- 10 How could you practise 'lurking with intent' to engage with those you might be prompted to speak to?
- 11 Explore whether a charity could find you a pen pal in another country.
- 12 Link up a housebound person with a teenager in your church or community. Weeks or months later ask them what they are discovering in this relationship.

7 GARDEN – the place of work

Application questions from the book (page 103)

- What would you say is the point of work?
- At your stage of life, what ‘work’ do you think God is calling you to?
- Explore whether you can see your work as a ‘vocation’.
- How might you begin to learn the attitude of Brother Lawrence?
- How well does the balance of ‘work, rest and play’ get expressed in your life?
- In what ways should a Christian respond to the ecological crisis?
- How could your church help its members celebrate the role of work – and not just paid work?

Additional material

- 1 How could those in a ‘secular’ job or those feeling ‘it just pays the bills’ begin to see their work as a calling? What help comes from *Seven Sacred Spaces*, pages 101–102? The TGI Monday! website (tgimonday.org) also has some videos that give some other clues.
- 2 How could your church get to hear about the working life of its members across a wide variety of occupations?
- 3 How can voluntary work be recognised and honoured in your community?
- 4 Over the course of a few weeks, each member of the group, including the retired and unemployed, considers the question ‘Where is God in my work?’ After the few weeks are finished, report back signs of God’s presence or absence.
- 5 Identify and affirm others’ gifts. Do this occasionally over some weeks. Each time only two group members, identified the week beforehand, have their gifts named by others. A scribe writes down the qualities and abilities and gives the list to the named person. That helps because embarrassment or denial may make receivers forget or dismiss what others see.
- 6 Examine the balance of mental and physical work in your life. What physical work do you do and what effect does it have on you? This work could include household tasks, gardening, hobbies and DIY. If you have no time for physical work, what is that telling you?

8 REFECTORY – food and hospitality

Application questions from the book (page 112)

- Think about a positive, and also a negative, experience of hospitality you have known. What were the differences?
- What do you think is important in being a good host?
- What is equally important in being a good guest?
- Which do you find easier, and why?
- How much of a role does Refectory play in your local church?
- What do you think would help your church become more like a home?

Additional material

- 1 Describe your best and worst experiences of community – at church or some other grouping.
- 2 Draw where you are in relation to a community: at the edge, the middle or somewhere else? How does this connect with where you often stand, or how often you speak, in a group?
- 3 Does a group you belong to ever eat together? If not, should you give it a try? If you already do, how often does that happen and what difference do you think it makes?
- 4 Think about your week. How often do you eat on the run? How often is your eating done sitting in front of the TV, tablet or laptop?
- 5 What is God's call to you about hospitality? In your culture how does hospitality work?
- 6 If you are single, what is your experience of hospitality?
- 7 How different are conversations when people are eating together? What helps get beyond merely polite conversation?
- 8 Take a meal or some garden produce to a neighbour and try explaining that you are 'exploring monastic values and living' or that food is sacred and not to be wasted.

9 SCRIPTORIUM – study and knowledge

Application questions from the book (page 121)

- What do you think is the point of learning?
- What is the best Christian book, DVD, podcast, etc. that you have come across recently? How has it begun to change you?
- Choose a book that you are going to practise slow reading with.
- How do you ensure that you keep learning?
- What knowledge do you think you have passed on to others? How did that happen or how might it occur?

Additional material

- 1 Apart from the Bible, what would you say is the book, film or play that has helped you most in your spiritual life? Endeavour to describe its impact and consequences.
- 2 Try fasting from social media for a week, especially at mealtimes and last thing at night. What effects do you notice? What do you miss? What have you gained?
- 3 A key feature of Scriptorium is passing on knowledge. Let's make those connections visible. Use strips of paper to make paperchains. On the first link write your name, then reflect on who has influenced your spiritual journey and write their names on the next links. Ponder who had a similar effect on them – how far back can you go? Now also go forward. Make more links for those names whom you have influenced. I wonder whom they in turn influenced.
- 4 Try the Examen and its four questions for a week – see *Seven Sacred Spaces*, page 119. A week later ponder how this discipline has felt, what it made you notice and any changes of perception it brought.
- 5 Here's a way to read the Bible differently. Cover up the text on the page – or on the screen of your phone or tablet – with a strip of card or paper, so that only the first line is showing. Read that line just under your breath to yourself and respond to God about it. When that conversation ends, only then disclose the next line and repeat the process. In that way you might slowly encounter a parable, a group of sayings, a short story, some instructions in a letter. The point is not how much you read, but what intimacy with God occurs as you read.
- 6 Another slow reading habit is the over-stitching approach, also described on page 119. Once more, the method is not the point; rather, notice what difference it is making to your engagement with the presence of Christ.
- 7 Collect or bring out some pebbles or stones that you like for their shape or colour. What would you say you have learnt from at least one of them? Do any of them represent a person who has been important in your life? As you talk you could make a cairn of these pebbles, either as an individual or group.

10 Why we learn from monasticism

Application questions from the book (page 144)

- Jot down a summary of your view of monasticism before you read this chapter.
- If this has now changed, in what ways? How far is your own church 'a community of resistance'?
- What do you think would help us to avoid having an addictive lifestyle?
- How can the church's image and witness best be enhanced?
- How could modal and sodal church serve each other well?
- In the grids on page 141 assessing a current stance to one's own church, which category did you most identify with?

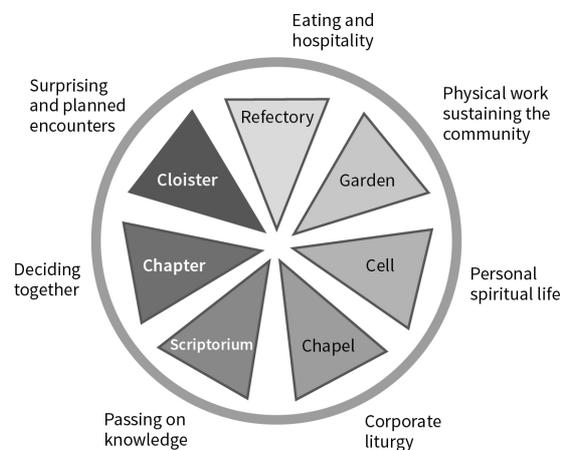
Additional material

- 1 What do you think are today's powerful idols? Come up with your own view, then compare that with those named on *Seven Sacred Spaces*, pages 129–130. More to the point, explore how such forces are resisted, not merely criticised. Sometimes, as in Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, the starting point is confessing our own captivity to some of them.
- 2 What makes you agree or disagree with the comment, 'Consumerism is alive and well and living in the church'? If you agree, what might help counter this?
- 3 What do you make of the contrasts listed in the bullet points on page 131? Which one of them would you choose to apply to yourself and admit to a group you belonged to? How would you like the group to support your desire for positive transformation?
- 4 Make your own assessment of the church being too indistinct (see page 132 onwards). What do you see as healthy sources of disturbance across the church?
- 5 Discuss as a group what factors make you decide whether we are living in a new dark age, as pages 135–136 explore.
- 6 Look at the variety of images used by Jesus of this followers (page 139). Some images suggest church is 'gathered'; others convey that it is 'dispersed'. How are the two sets to be related? What are the weaknesses of too much reliance on the gathered ones?

11 The seven sacred spaces and life

Application questions from the book (page 156)

- Use the wheel diagram below (from page 148) showing the seven sacred spaces in balance.
- Decide which arena of life you want to apply it to. That could be your own life, the corporate life of your church or your wider community.
- Explore which aspects are well expressed and which are weak.
- It would be good to do this with at least one other person do this exercise, so you can compare the results – and you will find you are already doing Chapter!
- Best of all come back to it in at least a year's time and see what has changed.



Additional material

- 1 In which other buildings have you seen the seven sacred spaces at work? Where did they work well and why? Which spaces were being given priority in that context? What did you think of the choices about priority that were made?
- 2 How do you think seven sacred spaces connect with what it is to be human? Which aspects come easily and which need the most work?
- 3 What do you think are the key values that lie behind the seven sacred spaces? You could compare your view with *Seven Sacred Spaces*, pages 153–155.

12 The seven sacred spaces and mission

Application questions from the book (page 163)

- Who are the contemplatives and who are the evangelists in your community?
- Which model of community is yours more like – the Benedictine, Celtic or Franciscan?
- What would make you think your Christian community was too inward-looking?
- In what ways do you think your church demonstrates being outward-looking?
- How do you assess the balance in your own life of ‘come’ and ‘go’?
- Scribble down some headlines of the dynamic between monastery and mission.

Additional material

- 1 What negative words do people associate with the word ‘evangelism’?
- 2 Honestly describe your own reactions (positive or negative) to this word. How do your reactions compare with what is named in *Seven Sacred Spaces*, pages 160–161?
- 3 What reasons could there be for continuing to use the evangelism word?
- 4 What attitudes and practices are necessary to enable evangelism to be conducted in a way that is acceptable to those who do not share the Christian faith?
- 5 In what sense is living out the seven sacred spaces well a form of evangelism in itself?
- 6 How is ‘persuading others’ done by the rest of the secular world? How common do you think this is?

13 The seven sacred spaces and discipleship

Application questions from the book (page 177)

- Jot down what you think is the essence of being a Christian.
- Where does your local church put the emphasis around the triangle of three learnings: formal, non-formal or socialisation?
- What evidence is there in your church of the apprentice model at work?
- How many of the seven sacred spaces does your local church community have?
- Describe the parenting style within your congregation/church (compare page 176).
- What effect did the section on *theosis* (pages 171–173) have upon you? Turn your reactions into prayer.

Additional material

- 1 What do you learn from statements like these: ‘You did not choose me, I chose you’; ‘I belong to Christ’; ‘Jesus is Lord’; ‘I am a slave of Christ’?
- 2 Who do you honestly think you belong to? How does that connect to how you view the Bible’s use of the word ‘obedience’ (see *Seven Sacred Spaces*, page 166)?
- 3 In what ways does the word ‘apprentice’ change what you thought was the heart of being a disciple? What other contemporary words might be used instead of ‘disciple’?
- 4 What Christian courses have you attended? What difference did they make? If some were more effective than others, why do you think that was?
- 5 Consult *Seven Sacred Spaces*, pages 174–175. Which of the connections between the seven sacred spaces and aspects of apprenticeship do you think you are most in need of developing? Explain that choice to others in your group.
- 6 Reviewing chapter 13 of *Seven Sacred Spaces*, what would you say is the single most important kind of learning that a Christian does? What has been true for you?

14 Stories about the seven sacred spaces

Additional material

- 1 Choose the story from chapter 14 that is closest to your own experience. Jot down some headlines of what was true for you. By yourself, pray through the story, giving thanks for guidance received and asking God to continue to show you how to live out that story.
- 2 Alternatively, after you have made those notes, tell your story to a group.
- 3 Choose the story in chapter 14 that most fires your imagination. What is it evoking within you?

15 Making your own journey

Additional material

- 1 *Seven Sacred Spaces*, pages 203–208, teases out the ways this approach should not be used. Which of them might be a danger in your context? How do you think that peril could be resisted?
- 2 Pages 209–210 liken the seven spaces to a **diet**. If you enter the phrase ‘balanced diet’ in Google one entertaining sentence among the search results reads: ‘The seven components of a balanced diet are Carbohydrates, Proteins, Fats, Vitamins, Minerals, Fibre and Water.’ Have fun discussing how one might match the seven sacred spaces and the seven dietary components.
- 3 Which sacred space did you decide was like water, and for what reasons?
- 4 Discuss what happens if a literal diet gets out of balance. You could even admit which part of the literal or spiritual diet you tend to be short on, and which can be excessive!
- 5 Have any group members gone on a diet? What was that like? What were the short-term and long-term results?
- 6 Page 211 explores the image of the seven sacred spaces as a **lens**. Talk through what different lenses do: spectacles, contact lenses, binoculars, magnifying glasses, microscopes, telescopes.
- 7 What is it like, and what do you feel, when you lose either your glasses or contact lenses?
- 8 What are the advantages and dangers of needing to use lenses?
- 9 Page 212 draws out comment on seven sacred spaces as a **portal** and lists some literature that makes use of this literary device. What do all these examples have in common? Why is it important to think that the seven sacred spaces are only a portal?
- 10 Have any group members had a ‘portal experience’ – going through a place, an event or a particular time that proved to be an entry into a different perspective.

Engaging with seven sacred spaces as a whole

- 1 The front cover of the book *Seven Sacred Spaces* suggests that the seven sacred spaces are in different but related **colours**. The colours are reminiscent of the classic seven colours of the rainbow, which itself is a biblical image. What connections do you see between the seven spaces as a whole and the image of the rainbow?
- 2 Work with this set of colours and explain which one you think belongs to which space.
- 3 You could choose a quite different range of colours. What would they be and how would you explain your choice to someone else?
- 4 Print a copy of **Seven sacred spaces: virtues and vices** for each group member. Explain that it is not the case that only one virtue or vice applies to one specific space. Some links are closer than others and other connections apply very widely.
- 5 **Seven sacred spaces: introductory questions**. This set of nine questions can act as an introductory session for the group or it could be used by a group only wanting to spend one session looking at the spaces. The questions can be handed out at the meeting or emailed to group members beforehand.
- 6 **Seven sacred spaces: digging deeper**. These four questions enable groups to link the seven spaces to New Testament evidence and church history and to begin applying them to themselves.
- 7 **Seven sacred spaces: their roles**. This worksheet is for group members to work on in pairs. Give the pairs time to work and then compare answers across the group.
- 8 **Applying one of the seven spaces**. After either reading a chapter or hearing a talk being given on one of the seven spaces, each group member spends three minutes thinking about what has been their own best experience of the space just described, making notes as they do so. They then spend another three minutes in pairs conveying the essence of what they wrote to each other. Then take three more minutes to listen to everyone's account of what was best for them.
- 9 **Assessing one of the seven spaces in your own church's life**. In pairs, take a couple of minutes to assess the life of your local church in relation to one of the seven sacred spaces. Which of the following words would be your summary: Absent / Weak / Mediocre / Improving / Healthy / Strong? Spend about ten minutes explaining your choice to your partner and listening to their view.
- 10 Print a copy of the worksheet **Seven sacred space: what is their overall shape?** for each member of the group. From the twelve shapes on the sheet, each group member cuts out seven, each representing one of the sacred spaces. They then place the chosen shapes on a blank sheet to express connections and priorities between these spaces. Discussion can cover their linkage of particular shapes to specific spaces and the resultant floor plan. There isn't a right answer!