A person with curly hair is seen from behind, looking out over a city at night. The city lights are blurred in the background, creating a bokeh effect. The person is wearing a dark jacket.

JESUS ON... IDENTITY

RMPP EVENT 36

SCHEDULE

Welcome and Zoom Etiquette

Opening Prayer

Speaker Introduction

Message: *Jesus On...Identity*

Q&A and Discussion

Breakout Rooms

Closing Prayer

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JESUS ON... IDENTITY

SYNOPSIS

Who are you? What do you do? Where are you from? All questions relating to identity. You may be confused about how to answer these questions, but Jesus provides clarity. So then, what does He say?

| **Audio Link:** <https://on.soundcloud.com/MVQhg>

| **Scripture Reflection**

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. - *Galatians 2:20 (NIV)*

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. - *Ezekiel 36:26 (NIV)*

EVENT

36

| *Personal Reflection*

1. If you look at yourself, being the new creation God says you are, how do you feel? Write down one or two words that reflect your feelings.

2. Now, if you look at yourself, being the new creation God says you are, how are you living that?

| *Personal Application*

1. What needs to change in you to become more like the new creation you are in Christ?

2. What can you share with your close friend(s) or spouse about your need to change? How will you do that?

| *Recommended Reading*

Who I Am In Christ: A Devotional: *by Neil T. Anderson*

The Search for Significance: *by Robert S. McGee*

A WORD FROM...

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Identity in Christ; is a topic that can keep us repeatedly needing to re-focus since we are often ruled by 'the old nature', or the 'old man' within us. Paul refers to the 'old man' in the following verses:

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. - Romans 6:6 (NIV)

By setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace. - Ephesians 2:15 (NIV)

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. - Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV)

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. - Colossians 3:9-11 (NIV)

How do we know in our hearts that we have a new identity, namely being born again, walking in the light, shunning things that drag us down to darkness? It is by reminding ourselves that we cannot do anything by ourselves to improve our attitudes and lifestyle, but we need to depend on the Holy Spirit working together with our will to renew us on a daily basis.

There can be times when we slide back into old habits and behaviors. Let us stay awake and tell ourselves to stay on the path of righteousness. We also need other men to help us remember what we believe and how we can practice that more. That's what is so powerful about RMPP - you don't have to do it alone. We are here to remind each other and help one another to practice that life of holiness and new life. We are new creations in Christ and have the privilege of becoming more like Christ daily!

Rex DeKoning

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

DEVOTIONAL 1

The Bible clearly states that we have a spiritual identity through Christ, in Christ, and with Christ. Have you fully embraced who you are in Christ?

Jesus once asked the question, “Who do you say that I am (Matthew 16:15)?” I ask you, who does Jesus say that you are? Here are three aspects of our identity in Christ.

1. You are a child - God is your Father.

“Pray then in this way - Our Father, who is in heaven...”
(Matthew 6:9)

To think of the Creator of the universe as being my Father is amazing! But this is who Jesus says God is to those who've given their lives to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. In Christ, God is my heavenly father, and I am his child.

Our Heavenly Father is “compassionate and gracious, slow

to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness...As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his lovingkindness toward those who fear him (Psalm 103:8,11).” It gives me great peace knowing God not only accepts me but loves me! It’s also very comforting to address God as my Father. Do you see yourself as a child of God? Do you rest in the fact that God is your heavenly father?

“See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God, and that is who we are... (1 John 3:1).”

2. You are a sheep - Jesus is your shepherd. “

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep... I know my own, and my own know me...” (John 10:11, 14)

I can’t say I’ve ever aspired to becoming a sheep until I understood why Jesus calls me one, and tells me he is my shepherd. Sheep don’t have a reputation for being very intelligent! Without a shepherd, sheep tend to get lost and injured. The Bible says all of us like sheep have gone astray, each turning to our own way (Isaiah 53:6). Without Jesus, he sees us “like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36).”

Jesus is the good shepherd for those of us in Christ. Jesus sacrificed his life for us. He knows us, and we know him. We can trust Jesus to love us, lead us, guide us, and protect us. “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul, He guides me in the paths of righteousness...your rod and your staff, they comfort me... (Psalm 23:1-4).”

I am comforted to know Jesus is my Savior and shepherd. Do you see yourself as a sheep? Do you rest in Jesus as your shepherd?

3. You are a branch - Jesus is the Vine.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser...Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing.” (John 15:1-5)

We were never created to be totally independent; instead, we were created to be dependent upon God and reliant upon Him working through us. We are unable to live a victorious and fruitful life when relying only upon our own strength. Only as we abide in Jesus can we live a life pleasing and useful to

God. Jesus is our true vine. As branches, we draw our strength and godly character from Jesus as we abide in him. Apart from Jesus, we are unable to do anything pleasing to God or of lasting value.

I am greatly comforted knowing I don't have to rely upon my own strength and ability to please God. When I realize I am weak in my own strength, God chooses to work through me in the power of Jesus (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Do you see yourself as a branch abiding in Jesus and relying upon His strength?

We can rejoice in being a child, because God is our heavenly father. We can be comforted in being a sheep, because Jesus is our shepherd. We can be confident in being a branch, because Jesus is our true vine, and our Heavenly Father is the vinedresser. Our true identity is in Christ!

After several careers, Roger is now retired and living in Bangkok, Thailand with his wife. He continues to learn about following Jesus, and welcomes others to join him in this adventure.

| ***Discussion Questions***

1. How are you comforted to know God is your Father?
2. What does Jesus as your shepherd mean to you?
3. What does it mean for you to abide in Jesus?

| ***Read***

Philippians 1:21

| ***Reflect on This***

“Never forget who you are in Christ...God is about yielded hearts and people who are willing to step out in faith because they discover who they are in Christ.” - *Robby Dawkins*

HOW CAN I SAFEGUARD MY IDENTITY?

DEVOTIONAL 2

Like anything precious, you should take great care in protecting what is considered priceless. How are you stewarding your priceless spiritual identity?

In late 2022, I was introduced to what is colloquially known as “The Shiplife”. For the uninitiated, “The Shiplife” is the privileged yet bizarre lifestyle that goes along with working aboard a cruise ship. I was fortunate enough to secure a temporary contract working in the medical facility aboard a luxury liner. I gladly took the employment opportunity and looked forward to an adventure. However, upon embarking on this exciting journey, reality struck. When crewmembers talk about “Shiplife” they are referencing a lifestyle of seemingly unbridled indulgence onboard when inhibitions are thrown off. I discovered that while traversing the open ocean the opportunity for unfettered sexual indulgences were readily available, if not overtly encouraged. The crew “wellness” committee would throw raunchy, adult themed parties regularly. Drunkenness was encouraged at the “crew bar”

where alcohol was deeply discounted and oftentimes free. The spirit that seemed to dominate all levels of crew from Captain down to the housekeepers and cleaning staff, was to indulge the flesh while away from home. A floating Sodom and Gomorrah in the middle of the ocean. I faced a tremendous challenge, and wondered how I, as a Christian, could safeguard my identity as a man of God while surrounded by temptation at every turn. The answer to this challenge was the simple instructional verse found in Proverbs 4:23:

“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”

When God speaks to the heart, he does so in a wonderfully concise way. This verse, admonishing me to guard my heart, was impressed upon me by the Holy Spirit throughout my time aboard. When temptation would arise, which it would with a frightening frequency, I was reminded, “guard your heart!” To guard your heart is to guard your life. In Colossians 3:3 we are told:

“For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”

My identity, my true identity, is a hidden life. It is one that exists in relationship with the Holy Spirit, with the Living

God himself. When this relationship is kept pure, when it is protected and nourished, it is the source of all goodness, joy and peace. When the Holy Spirit communes with a man, this is truly life at its best. My heart, the very center of my being, becomes that wellspring that bursts forth with life. Jesus described our hearts as having “rivers of living water” in John 7:38. Thus, we are instructed to be on guard, to protect that living relationship between ourselves and the Holy Spirit. We are to identify with Christ and guard our hearts against sinful incursions.

Near the end of my contract, I met a musician named “Joe”. As Joe and I were sharing a meal in the crew mess, he told me he had worked aboard ships for the past 6 years. Joe’s job was to play the guitar and entertain guests. Though on stage he was a talented and engaging artist, privately, he struck me as a deeply unhappy person. He was open about how, for the past 6 years, he had lived promiscuously. He shared how heartbroken he was over relationships with women as they would come and go. To me, Joe was an example of a man, separated from God, his heart exposed and left unguarded. He was living with the mental and emotional anguish of such a life. He went on to tell how “messed up” his emotions were over a recent encounter with a female crew member who had signed off the ship. The relationship ended and he was left heartbroken and frustrated. It was the typical story of love

and loss, but Joe had been living that cycle repeatedly for 6 years. He was a tired, lonely man. He ended our conversation with a pained smile and a shrug of the shoulders, “It’s Shiplife.”

As men pursuing God, we must be protecting that which is most precious and that which is so easily broken and damaged - our hearts. Resisting temptation is difficult. It takes effort on our part to deny ourselves what, in a moment, seems most appealing. However, God desires us to live a life empowered and animated by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in scripture, we are told to guard our hearts, to protect our identity in Christ. As we grow and mature in this determination to staunchly guard our hearts against the allurements this world provides, we find ourselves in harmony with Holy Spirit. We then find ourselves receiving, in increasing degrees, rivers of living water outpouring from that wellspring of life, our hearts.

Rob is an average Canadian guy, who also enjoys being a world traveler. Through a series of surprising and unexpected associations while travelling through Europe, Rob was connected with RMPP. Rob studied Philosophy at the University of Toronto and earns his living by being an Advanced Life Support Paramedic. He continues on the journey of life, along with his brothers in RMPP, pursuing a greater relationship with the Lord.

| **Discussion Questions**

1. Where are some potential blind spots in your life where you have not or are not actively guarding your heart against encroachments of sinfulness?
2. What does it mean to have an identity rooted in Christ? Describe what that means to you.
3. How do you safeguard your heart in normal, everyday circumstances? Provide some practical examples.

| **Read**

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

| **Reflect on This**

“Jesus came to announce to us that an identity based on success, popularity and power is a false identity - an illusion! Loudly and clearly he says: ‘You are not what the world makes you; but you are children of God.’” - *Henri Nouwen*

A FOUNDATIONAL BLOCK

DEVOTIONAL 3

Foundational blocks provide strength and stability, and your spiritual identity does the same. How does knowing who you are enable you to fulfill God's call on your life?

A number of years ago when I was still living with my parents, we noticed a crack in the foundation of the house that needed to be fixed. It was a serious issue but God provided for us in that situation. Knowing how crucial foundations are to a structure, likewise, we as men need to build solid foundations in our lives by building foundation blocks necessary to live the Christian life. One of these foundations is knowing our identity in Christ. In fact, identity is a core issue for many men as we tend to place our identity in our jobs and often do not realize that we need a broader identity than that. As someone currently not working, the lack of work does bring to mind questions about our identity.

Identity issues are not new to me. I was born with cerebral

palsy and this disease has shaped my identity, both as a man and as a Christian. Growing up, of course, I experienced teasing at the hands of my classmates, (which unfortunately happened quite a lot not only to me but others as well). But in my case, the teasing was compounded by my disability and therefore resulted in struggles with my own identity. Am I identified by my disability, or is it something beyond that? One of the protective mechanisms I developed growing up was to distance myself from, and ignore, the disability. I was not, and am not, cerebral palsy but rather CP is something that I have to deal with. Embedded in this was a quest of who I was as a person. This became more complex as I approached adulthood and my relationships during that stage, especially with the opposite sex, since that was kept from me. I knew my parents and friends loved me but romantic relationships have always alluded me. I often justified my struggles with porn and watching less “pure” material on the grounds that God hadn’t provided a relationship for me and therefore I needed it. Of course, this was simply a justification for sin, but it was the reality that I had to work with.

Finding my identity in Christ was a process that happened through recognizing the call he has placed on my life: to be an evangelist and writer and really learning what the Word says about who we are in Christ. Jesus likens those who build their lives on his words as those who have built a house on a

rock whereas those who build on something else as those who build their lives on sand (Matthew 7:24-27). It matters what we base our lives and identity on because it shapes who we are. A foundation of any building provides stability to that building and whether or not it is strong enough to hold against the weather of the area it is built in. So, a house in Canada will look different than a house in Africa as they have different climates to deal with.

Foundations do something else that is important for today's devotional. Foundations dictate what the structure of the house or building will look like. You can look at the foundation of any building going up and have a rough idea of what the shape of the building will be. Likewise, what you build your life on shapes who you are, or who you will become as a man. If I am building my life around pornography, that will shape who I am as a man and how I relate to women and people in general. If I build my life around God's word and seek purity in my life, that too will shape how I relate to others. It is making a choice about the kind of man I want to be. As I lay my foundation on God, I am actually growing into the man that he designed me to be. This means I am going to live the most effective life that I can. Think of buying a new gadget. Now many men, including myself, when we buy something new, we simply lay the instruction manual aside and jump into working with whatever we bought. I do it with laptops. I am so used to

working with computers so I am unlikely to look at the manual unless a problem comes up. Yet the manual is there to show me how I can use the computer to its most optimal performance.

Our manual is God's word. When we, by the Spirit, live by it, we live optimally. When we live according to the flesh, we don't. Today, which will you choose?

Robert is currently waiting on God for what He wants him to do for work. He lives in Toronto, actively participates in his church, and enjoys growing in Jesus. He currently writes a blog which he invites you to read at www.walkingwithjesus.co.

| ***Discussion Questions***

1. What foundation are you building your life on?
2. If your foundation is the word of God, is there anything that is seeping in that may be causing a crack in your foundation? Could this be shaping you in a way that is contrary to God's design for your life?
3. Where is your identity found? Is it in your job? In your relationships? In something other than Christ?

| ***Read***

2 Timothy 2:19

| ***Reflect on This***

“Any foundation which cannot cope with the ultimate torrent of death, is too flimsy upon which to build your life.” - *Alistair Begg*

IDENTITY IMPACTS EVERYTHING!

DEVOTIONAL 4

All too often, what we think about ourselves impacts how we view and interact with others. Do you have the proper perspective, or do you need to make some changes?

One of the most famous scriptures amongst believers and non-believers alike is known as the golden rule. “So, in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 7:12, NIV) It is pretty much the “gold” standard for how you should interact with other people around you and generally be a good member of society. However, from what I’ve observed of the people I come in contact with, this isn’t always how things actually happen. And even worse, this isn’t always how I myself behave. Why is this? I mean, I agree with this general rule and instruction from the Bible and would like to think of myself as a good person who treats people well. But I fall short. I would like to blame this on the occasional bad mood or perhaps a bad night of sleep and place the responsibility on an external source, but

I think the problem might be worse. It might be deeper and exponentially closer to home. We are supposed to treat others how we want to be treated. But what if we are treating others how we internally treat ourselves - with condemnation. What if we are treating others how we treat ourselves but in return expect others to treat us better than we treat ourselves? How are we treating ourselves in our own head? It's something that is easy to miss.

When we hear how others interact, we can hear it and we pay attention. But the quiet voice inside our own head can be subtle. This is a scary notion because it might suggest that we aren't even aware of how we treat ourselves, so how can we be aware of how we treat others? I don't know about you, but this is even more motivation for me to pay attention to my self-talk or inner dialogue with myself. How often do we think negatively of ourselves or condemn our actions while withholding any mercy or compassion? But we shouldn't do this. After all, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21, NIV). Even the God of the universe himself doesn't condemn us. Christ died for our sins, so if we condemn ourselves, we are trying to pay or suffer for something that has already been paid and suffered for by Jesus.

Jesus died so that we would become the righteousness of God. As it says in 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT), “This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” I propose that if we work to truly believe this to our core, it will change how we interact with people. From a place of internal mercy, forgiveness, and peace from God, we can approach other people with a better perspective and treat them how God calls us to treat them. Jesus exhibits this for us throughout scripture. He is the living embodiment of God in human form and he treats people how God calls us to treat people. A way that Jesus models this for us is that he knows who he is. At the beginning of his ministry, he is baptized by John the Baptist and immediately after “a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17, NIV).

From that point on Jesus showed us what it is to operate from a place of deep understanding of his own identity. Jesus knows that the Lord God is his father, that God loves him, and that he makes God happy. We can all share in this because, as it says in 1 John 3:1 (NIV), “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” We are all children of God and He loves us and delights in us. As God’s children, how should we act? From this sense of identity, we too can go and interact with others from a posture of love as we are commanded to do. For Jesus said

that the greatest commandment is to love God, and equally as important is to love others. When you step into a place of recognition of how God sees you, it is easier to see others as God sees them. In this way we can more easily treat others as God would have us do and share with them the amazing relationship that God wants with them.

Nick is a husband and father living in Maryland, USA. He works as an analyst in the state correctional system and has a heart for walking with men to pursue God and the vision He sets out for purity in their lives.

| ***Discussion Questions***

1. How do you think God feels about you? Do you feel that deep inside or do you feel something else?
2. Think back to a time when you treated someone differently than you would have wanted to be treated. Why do you think that happened?
3. If you embraced the truth that you are God's child, He loves you, and you make Him happy, how could it change your interactions with people?

| ***Read***

Matthew 22:34-40

| ***Reflect on This***

“Know thyself.” – *Socrates*

UNDER ATTACK

DEVOTIONAL 5

Your spiritual identity is under attack from all angles, all the time. And if you aren't careful, you'll soon find yourself under the enemy's influence. How can you stand firm against his tactics of deception and confusion?

When God made us, he said, "Very Good." We are called his children, his friends, his workmanship, his servants - full representatives of the Kingdom of God - the place where all things are as God desires. We are also called, "those whose names are written in the Book of Life." And it doesn't seem like we "earn" these identities. Rather, they are freely and generously offered to us. And then, we either remember who we are and walk in that identity, or we don't.

When I was invited to write a devotional on this topic, I laughed. In the past 3 months especially, I have been experiencing a massive temptation to forget what Jesus has said about who I am. I don't have to go off the deep end into addictive behavior to be derailed; I just need to start second-guessing, playing it safe, seeking to please the perceived

voices of those around me who I figure “don’t get me.”

Here’s one way the enemy works: maybe you make a mistake and say something that creates some misunderstanding or pain in the life of someone you know. That is just life. But the enemy, who is the accuser of our souls, might start shooting messages your way - messages that you think are your very own thoughts. They can either be about self-justification, i.e., “Why are they so sensitive, I didn’t mean it that way, what’s wrong with them?” or self-condemnation that leads to isolation, i.e., “What’s wrong with me? I always do this, I’ll never know how to say the right thing, they’ll never understand me, it’s just not worth it to be their friend, too much drama, too much pain...”

All the enemy really needs to do to derail us from God’s plan to be his people, his children who think and feel and act like their dad, is to interrupt our connection to our identity of belonging to the beloved family of God. Sometimes this happens by turning our eyes towards ourselves and our own performance or our own perception of our identity. When we do this and our eyes are turned inwardly and we try to figure everything out, then we aren’t able to look up and see God’s approving gaze, the affirmation of his love and our purpose and ability to partner with his purposes - which is sometimes communicated by the Holy Spirit directly to our hearts (Rom 5), and sometimes is passed onto us through the encouragement of a friend or passing fellow believer.

Some additional strategies of the enemy: he will try to sow unbelief, hopelessness, and apathy (the opposites of faith, hope and love). He may tempt us to provide for our own needs through eating, gossiping, substance abuse, porn, entertainment or other distractions, rather than seeking out the connection with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that touches our deepest self, and is often communicated to us through others in the family of God.

When these temptations first come, resist them. It is much easier to resist a lie or temptation or feeling of despair at the beginning - rather than thinking about it or arguing with it or trying to get as close to the line as you can without crossing over.

Next, the enemy will tempt us to secrecy or isolation. “Don’t tell anyone about this thought or feeling or temptation.” If you feel like hiding something, that is a key sign that you should find someone trustworthy to share it with who will help you to remember who you are. It helps if this is a person who loves Jesus, cares about you, who won’t condemn you, but also won’t say “mai pen rai” (it doesn’t matter) as they do in Thailand (where I used to live).

There is no substitute for spending time in scripture so that you can learn to tell the difference between the voice of the liar: “you aren’t good enough, try harder, it will always be this way...”, from the voice of the Good Shepherd: “I love

you. I have always loved you. I will always love you. You are always welcome to come back to me - even to enter my throne room in Heaven (Hebrews 4) - in the midst of your deep need and failure.” When Jesus was faced with direct identity confrontation in the wilderness He responded directly from the word of God (Matthew 4). Practicing worship and intentional gratitude can also anchor us when lies assault our identity.

Remembering, community, scripture...all of these can help us. But at the end of the day Jesus is more committed to us than we are to him - He will make a way to escape when we are tempted (1 Corinthians 10)!

After almost a lifetime of listening to negative, judgemental thoughts in his head, Iven is learning to receive the friendship of Jesus unconditionally. He has a lot of help from his wife, six children, and friends near and far. Iven and his family were in Bangkok, Thailand, for many years but now live in the Pacific Northwest of the USA.

| **Discussion Questions**

1. Can you remember a time that you felt like your identity was under attack? What sort of help did God bring you that helped to bring you through that season?
2. What sort of specific lies do you hear in your head that are darts of personal-identity poison perfectly suited for and aimed at you to derail you? How might you practice identifying the sound of that voice of the accuser so quickly that you immediately reject those lies at the first moment you notice yourself under attack?
3. Who can you ask for help when you find yourself under attack? Is this connect group a place you turn to to be reminded of who you are? If it isn't yet, what would you need to do as a group to become such a place?

| **Read**

John 8:12-16

| **Reflect on This**

“...It is proper to the enemy to weaken and lose heart, fleeing and ceasing his temptations when the person who is exercising himself in spiritual things confronts the temptations of the enemy firmly, doing what is diametrically opposed to them...”-
Ignatius of Loyola

AS ALWAYS, JESUS SETS THE EXAMPLE

DEVOTIONAL 6

Jesus was confident and secure in who He was and in His relationship with God and others. There's a lot we can learn from Jesus - are you listening?

In 1 Corinthians 11:1, the apostle Paul gives us this exhortation, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” This from a man who had fiercely persecuted followers of Christ in the belief that he was doing the godly thing! But when he encountered the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus, he experienced a dramatic transformation and became a faithful and ardent imitator of Christ, thereby impacting many generations with the Gospel. Paul discovered that Christ was not only confident and secure in who He was as well as in His relationship with God and others, but He was also certainly aware of how much His life mattered for our salvation.

Whether in matters of faith, life in general or even relationships, Jesus always sets the example. What we must remember though is

that following Jesus' example involves our inward being and not just our outward actions. In fact, it is only when our inner being is moved and surrendered to the will of Jesus, that our outward being responds in the most appropriate manner.

How well do you respond to the needs of others when you find yourself either overwhelmed by challenges around you or thrust in the limelight? Does the attitude of "me first" come to the fore? That's almost a rhetorical question because I want us to consider the example of Jesus. Wherever He went, Jesus always drew crowds and on one occasion, in spite of the fact that He was surrounded by a crowd of people jostling him from every side, Jesus was still able to sense the touch of a woman who needed healing from a disease that caused her to bleed for 12 years. He immediately stopped and paid attention to her suffering. What an example of selflessness!

On another occasion, Jesus saw beyond the narrow-minded focus of a condemning mob and the sin of the poor woman who stood accused in their midst. Jesus chose to highlight the worth of this individual and sent her away loved and totally transformed. If you had been there instead of Jesus, would you have joined the stone throwing mob or would you have followed His example? Peer pressure can rob us of the courage (even joy) of doing things the Jesus way.

In this fast-paced world where the strong and prosperous seem to rule the day, it is easy to neglect those around us who seem to have nothing significant to offer or perhaps who are marginalized because they don't fit. We unconsciously do that in our offices; we also do it in our community. Jesus had a different attitude. For instance, He picked out tiny Zacchaeus, a detested tax collector, from among the many people surrounding him and even interrupted His historic journey to Jerusalem to dine at his house. As a result, Zacchaeus was completely transformed and his whole family came to faith in an instant. Following Christ's example affects the way we relate to others, even though it can be a slow and challenging process. I personally often struggle with this and sometimes find myself unable to live out a selfless life where the "me" does not take centre stage.

This was my experience when I had to confront a brother who had stubbornly refused to conform to godly standards, preferring to display unpleasantness towards anybody who dared to "correct" him. I remember spending time in the Word, trying to understand what Jesus had done for me and then kneeling at His feet as I asked for forgiveness and the grace to love the way He loves. It was that same love that drove Jesus, while hanging in agony on the cross, to overlook His own suffering and not only comfort a criminal hanging

next to Him who was crying for salvation, but also to reach out with caring concern to His mother who was quietly weeping at the foot of the cross. You see, we get so wrapped up in our needs and cares that we don't have a thought for those around us who might be suffering. Our Lord sets us a great example to emulate.

Brothers, we live in a world where there are so many who are willing to say, "Do as I say", but few, if any, can say, "Do as I do." Only Christ can serve as our ideal and perfect model. Only He can declare without reservation, "I am the way and the truth and the life."

In the words of an American preacher, if we can pattern our life after the Master and take His teachings and example as the supreme pattern for our own, we will not find it difficult to be consistent and loyal in every walk of life, for we will be committed to a single sacred standard of conduct and belief.

Steve is on the pastoral team at the Evangelical Church of Bangkok where he oversees the LIFE Group and Men's ministries. He has lived in Thailand for the past twelve years and resides in Bangkok with his wife Liz.

| ***Discussion Questions***

1. What are some of the ways, Jesus' example has influenced you?
2. How can you be more courageous in following Jesus' example?
3. How might your life be different if you did not have the influence of Jesus' teachings and example?

| ***Read***

Ephesians 5:1-2

| ***Reflect on This***

“The two most important days of your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.” - *Mark Twain*

LOOKING BACK...

DEVOTIONALS 1-6

During this connect group cycle, we pray that you have been challenged, encouraged, and inspired as you pursue greater sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity in your life. We want to encourage you to now take some time to reflect on the last six devotionals and see how you can consistently apply the many truths that have been shared and that you have learned in your life.

Devotional 1

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 2

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 3

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 4

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 5

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 6

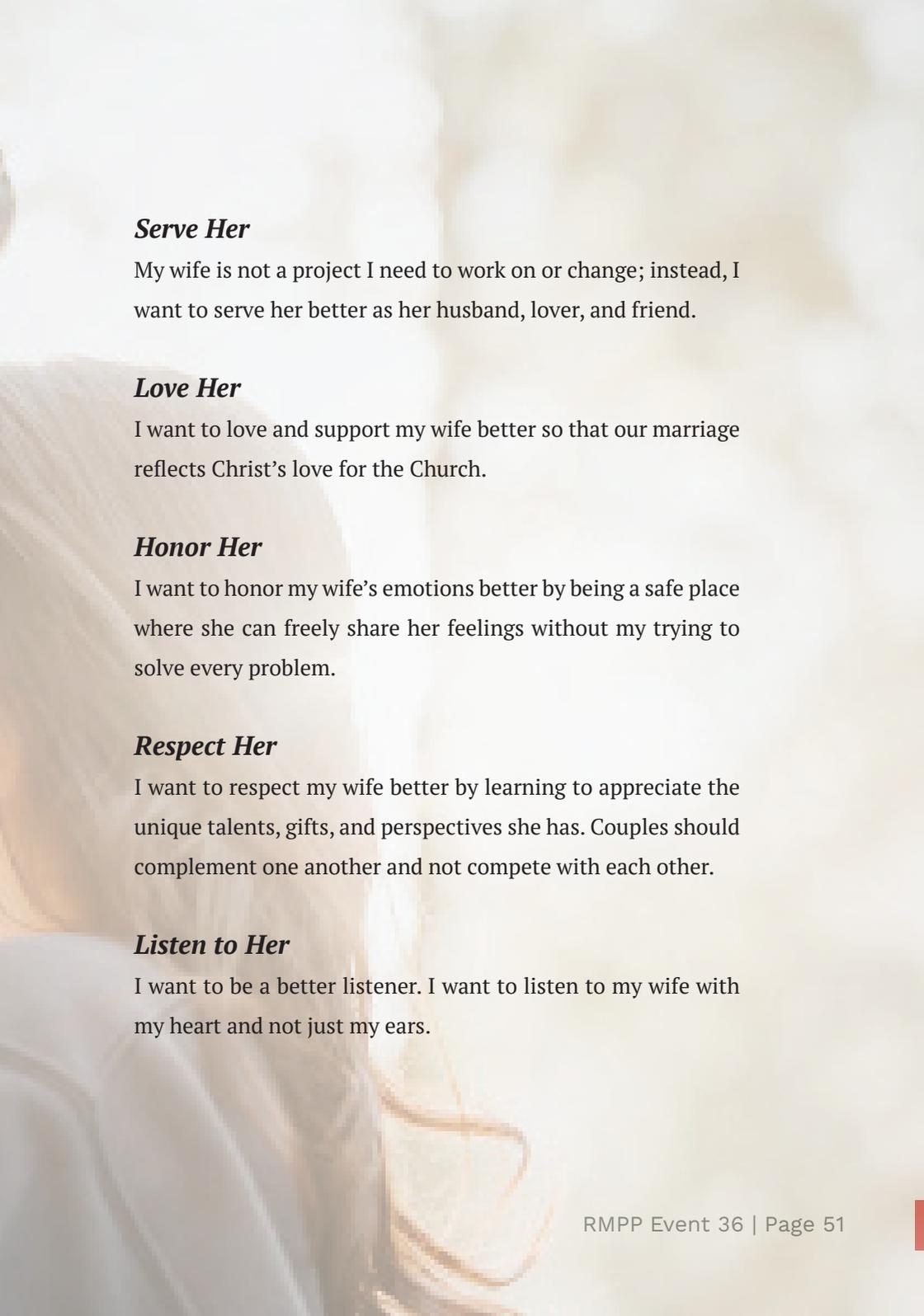
What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

A young man and woman are shown in profile, facing each other and smiling warmly. They appear to be outdoors, with a bright, slightly hazy background. The man is on the left, wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a dark grey hoodie. Their hands are clasped together in front of them. The overall mood is romantic and joyful.

FAST AND PRAY FOR YOUR WIFE

Each month, we encourage you to set aside a time to fast and pray for your wife (or future wife) for one or all of the following points. As husbands (or future husbands) commit to praying and fasting for their wives, we will see a significant spiritual breakthrough and a spiritual legacy created.



Serve Her

My wife is not a project I need to work on or change; instead, I want to serve her better as her husband, lover, and friend.

Love Her

I want to love and support my wife better so that our marriage reflects Christ's love for the Church.

Honor Her

I want to honor my wife's emotions better by being a safe place where she can freely share her feelings without my trying to solve every problem.

Respect Her

I want to respect my wife better by learning to appreciate the unique talents, gifts, and perspectives she has. Couples should complement one another and not compete with each other.

Listen to Her

I want to be a better listener. I want to listen to my wife with my heart and not just my ears.

INTRODUCING RMPP

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

| *What Is RMPP?*

Real Men Pursuing Purity (RMPP) is a community of men who are committed to growing in integrity, purity and wholeness through relevant teachings, accountability, mentoring and honest dialogue. You might not be sure that you really need to be part of a community like this because you don't struggle with compulsive addictions or sexual sin. While it is very important for many men to focus primarily on resisting sexual temptation and sin, we want to inspire and challenge you to pursue more. Although growing in purity is a big part of the vision for RMPP, it's much more than that. It's also learning about deep-rooted insecurities, developing proper work boundaries, embracing our identity in Christ, confronting fears and anxiety, expressing ourselves emotionally in a healthy way, and pursuing holiness in a safe environment with like-minded brothers. We believe that when we invite Him into these areas, He will extend His healing hand and bring about wholeness. Max Lucado says this very well.

EST. 2014

“Our Savior kneels down and gazes upon the darkest acts of our lives. But rather than recoil in horror, he reaches out in kindness and says, “I can clean that if you want.”

We are men who are not willing to settle for a life of spiritual mediocrity. We choose to relentlessly pursue greater depths of purity and wholeness for ourselves and for our families. Welcome to the RMPP community.

| How does RMPP support the local church?

RMPP does not intend to replace or represent a church; it only creates a safe place for men who want to stay active in their own church community. When a man joins the RMPP community he joins other like-minded men who desire to pursue greater spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. He is choosing to walk out in greater honesty and vulnerability. He is choosing to pursue purity in all aspects of his life. Aspects such as deep-rooted insecurities, developing proper work

boundaries, embracing our identity in Christ, confronting fears and anxiety, expressing ourselves emotionally in a healthy way, and pursuing holiness in a safe environment.

We then pray that as these men grow in greater maturity that they would influence their families. That they would impact their communities and their work places, and that they would be an example for other men in their home church. We believe that as men take hold of the awesome and holy call to live lives that reflect Christ, that the church will be inspired and the world will take notice.

| *What happens next?*

If you have ever attended a men's retreat, you probably remember being deeply impacted by worship, challenged by teaching, and being in community with many men who shared your excitement and enthusiasm for growth and change. A few weeks or months down the road, the gathering became a distant memory as you settled back into the routines of daily life. We don't want to create just another mountain top experience. We are committed to creating a long-term mentoring relationship for everyone who attends an event. That is why you are holding this devotional book in your hands. As you flip through these pages you will see that there devotionals with corresponding

questions. Each devotional is meant to solidify the teaching of the event by encouraging and challenging you, as well as helping to stimulate discussion through thought provoking questions, verses and quotes.

| *Who writes the devotionals?*

Christian men from around the world have written these devotionals and have overcome real issues in their life through God's grace, goodness, mercy and love. We hope and pray that their testimonies and stories inspire, challenge and point you to Christ.

| *What are RMPP connect groups?*

RMPP connect groups are a safe place for men to pursue both purity and wholeness within an environment of peer support and encouragement. The journey to greater purity and wholeness is a journey that involves inviting other men to walk alongside of you. It is a place where you can share your prayer requests, victories, and struggles and where you can be heard, prayed for and challenged to grow in all areas of life. A connect group is designed to be a support system for you for as long as you want.

During your time in a connect group you will be:

Challenged: You will be challenged to grow in your love for Biblical truth. The men in your group will challenge you to grow in your knowledge and application of God's Word thereby enabling you to stand firm in the midst of life's trials.

Encouraged: You will be encouraged to persevere when life, work, and numerous responsibilities may seem overwhelming. The men in your group will support you through prayer, encouragement and a listening ear.

Inspired: You will be inspired to pursue greater spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. While pursuing Christ-likeness may not always be easy, it will also be worth it. The men in your group will be there to inspire you on that journey.

Accountable: The men in your group, as well as your group leader, will support you and hold you accountable as you pursue greater freedom and victory. Be assured that whatever you share in your group will be strictly confidential.

| *When are the events held?*

RMPP events are held online 4x a year in February, May, August, and November.

| *Who can attend?*

RMPP events are open to all men worldwide.

| *What about privacy?*

Because of the sensitive nature of RMPP events, video or audio recording by participants is not allowed. Also, details of personal testimonies are not to be published via email, social media, or in any other form. Thank you for contributing to a safe and secure environment that helps build honesty and vulnerability.

| *Who started RMPP?*

Real Men Pursuing Purity was founded in 2014. RMPP is a joint initiative of The MST Project and New Counseling Service.

MEET THE TEAM

THE MST GLOBAL BOARD

Christian Lenty is the founder and director of The MST Project, a ministry that seeks to mentor men into a pursuit of sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity. Christian has lived in Thailand for over 21 years and resides in Bangkok with his wife.

Rex DeKoning is the 60-year old husband and father of a large family. A former nurse and pastor, he now works in Thailand with New Counseling Service as a counselor. Rex has experienced great healing of addictive behaviors after he confessed everything and began to live an accountable life. Rex is highly motivated to inspire other men to seek out a mentor, as it has helped him to walk freely, build honesty and vulnerability.

Nick Chilver is married and is part of a blended family containing 6 children. He is grateful for the people God has brought into his life and across his path. And as he continues to learn to better reflect Him, it is his prayer that God will grant

him the privilege of helping others on the path to freedom and into the Light. He resides in Thailand with his wife.

Roger Mitiska and his wife are retired and living in Thailand. They are members of Evangelical Church of Bangkok. Greatly blessed by God, Roger desires to be used by Him to assist others in walking with Jesus. Roger's passion is Christian discipleship through understanding God's Word and applying it to everyday living.

Mike B. Wood is married to his wonderful wife of 28 years. He is a Pastoral Counselor in the area of sexual recovery therapy. He is a man in process, passionate about bringing men together to share life together. This is where we study God's Word together and share the challenges we face. This inspires us to accept what God has freely given us: His love, mercy, grace and acceptance. He and his wife have lived in Thailand for 18 years.

RESOURCES

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

| *New Counseling Service*

New Counseling Service provides counseling and therapy for individuals and families in Bangkok. NCS provides services for expatriates as well as for locals.

W: ncsbkk.com

E: newcounselingservice@gmail.com

| *Pathway To Purity*

The book, Pathway to Purity, is meant to transform your way of thinking about purity, taking you through an initial 16 sessions of encouraging, challenging and application of the material. Pathway to Purity will transform the way you think and live, putting you on a lifetime path of purity and wholeness leading to consistent victory.

W: themstproject.com/pathway-to-purity

E: hello@themstproject.com

THANK YOU

| *With Gratitude*

We would like say thank you to the following for their contribution to RMPP.

Financial Donors

Thank you for generously providing funding that allows for RMPP events, seminars, and translation of materials.

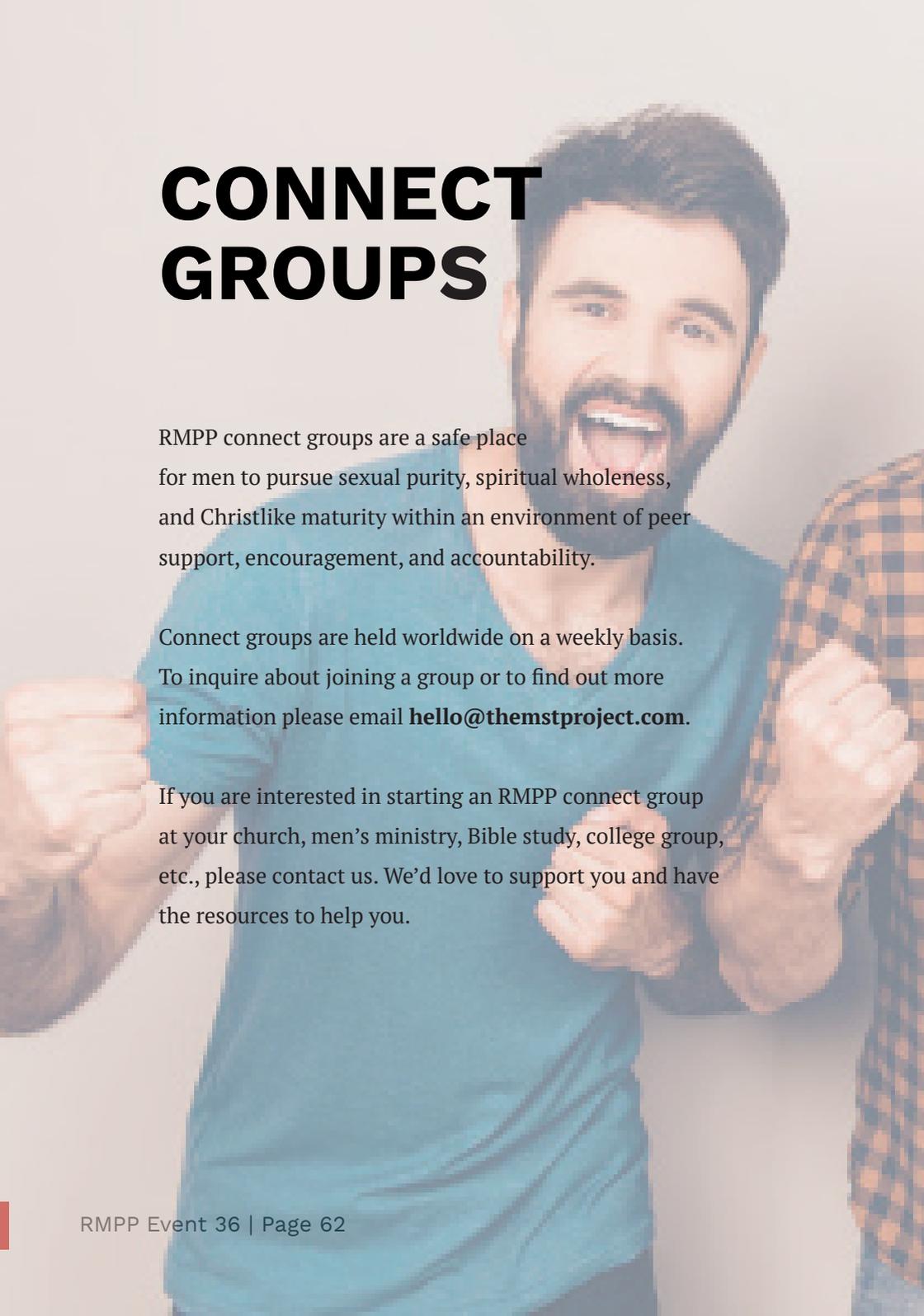
Devotional Authors

Thank you for writing devotionals that inspire, encourage and challenge each of us to pursue greater sexual purity, spiritual wholeness and Christlike maturity.

| *Scriptural Oversight Team*

RMPP has a Scriptural Oversight Team consisting of several pastors from local churches that review all devotionals for theological integrity.

CONNECT GROUPS



RMPP connect groups are a safe place for men to pursue sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity within an environment of peer support, encouragement, and accountability.

Connect groups are held worldwide on a weekly basis. To inquire about joining a group or to find out more information please email hello@themstproject.com.

If you are interested in starting an RMPP connect group at your church, men's ministry, Bible study, college group, etc., please contact us. We'd love to support you and have the resources to help you.

A photograph of two young men with short brown hair and light beards, both smiling broadly and cheering. The man on the left is wearing a brown and black checkered button-down shirt and has his mouth wide open in a shout. The man on the right is wearing a grey and white patterned button-down shirt and also has his mouth wide open. Both men have their fists clenched in a celebratory gesture. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**JOIN ONE
TODAY!**

FEBRUARY 2023