

WEEK 4

FORMED TOGETHER

Reading: Chapters 6-7 - Sharpened, Not Shamed + Walking Close: Share the Load

WEEKLY FOCUS

Healthy community does more than comfort us. God uses people to **form us**. Sometimes that formation comes through truth that sharpens us. Other times it comes through people who step close enough to help carry what has become too heavy. This week explores both sides of mature community: **allowing trusted people to speak into our lives and learning both to carry and to be carried.**

THE AIM

By Week 4, the group has talked about connection, hiding, and relational access. Now the journey moves into formation. The aim is to help participants see that closeness is not only about having people who make us feel supported. Healthy relationships also help us grow, tell us the truth without shaming us, and show up practically when life becomes heavy.

BEFORE YOU GATHER

- Read Chapters 6-7.
- Complete the personal Reflection questions at the end of both chapters.
- Review the Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 Discussion Guide sections in the back of the book.
- Come prepared to consider two questions: **Who can sharpen me?** and **Who is close enough to help carry what I am carrying?**

LEADER PREPARATION

These chapters create two different but connected conversations. Chapter 6 deals with correction and truth. Chapter 7 deals with burden-bearing and receiving help. Do not let the group reduce either idea to extremes. Sharpening is not permission to shame or control people. Burden-bearing is not permission to take responsibility for someone else's life.

LEADER NOTE

Healthy community learns the difference between **correction and condemnation**, and between **carrying a burden and controlling a person**. Keep bringing the conversation back to love, trust, wisdom, responsibility, and becoming more like Christ.

CONNECT | 10 MINUTES

Begin with the opening question from Chapter 6:

START HERE

What happens inside you when someone corrects you?

Let people answer honestly. Some may become defensive. Others may shut down, explain themselves, feel ashamed, or immediately assume they have failed. This is a good entry point into the difference between being sharpened and being shamed.

LOOK BACK | 10 MINUTES

Ask: **What stayed with you from Chapters 6 and 7?**

Then ask the group to reflect on whether it is easier for them to **give** help or **receive** it. Chapter 7 specifically invites readers to examine both sides of community.

DISCUSS + GO DEEPER | 30-35 MINUTES

Use the existing Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 Discussion Guide questions as the backbone. Chapter 6 explores correction, condemnation, trust, truth, and who has permission to challenge us. Chapter 7 explores burden-bearing, receiving help, noticing what others carry, and moving from simply caring about a burden to helping carry it.

You do not need to finish both lists. Choose the questions that are opening the most honest conversation.

GO DEEPER - LEADER PROMPTS

What makes correction feel threatening?

What makes someone safe enough to tell you the truth?

How can truth be spoken without shame?

Why can receiving help be harder than giving it?

Is there a burden you have become so accustomed to carrying that you no longer ask for help?

Are you helping someone carry a burden, or have you started carrying a responsibility that belongs to them?

READ TOGETHER

SCRIPTURE - PROVERBS 27:17

Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens another.

Notice that sharpening requires contact. Invite the group to consider what this picture teaches about relationships and spiritual growth.

SCRIPTURE - GALATIANS 6:2

Share each other's burdens.

Ask what would change if this were treated as something to obey rather than simply a beautiful idea. The chapter also holds this beside personal responsibility: healthy community helps without taking over.

LEADER EMPHASIS

We need people close enough to tell us the truth and close enough to put a shoulder under the weight.

Chapter 7 makes an especially important distinction: receiving support is not weakness. A person can look deeply connected because everyone depends on them while remaining hidden because they depend on no one. Healthy community teaches us both how to carry and how to be carried.

LIVE IT TOGETHER | 10 MINUTES

THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE - TRUTH + TANGIBLE SUPPORT

Step 1: Invite sharpening.

Choose someone you trust and ask: "Is there anything you see in my life that could be keeping me from becoming who God has called me to be?" Then listen before defending or explaining.

Step 2: Put burden-bearing into action.

Identify one legitimate burden someone around you is carrying and do something tangible to make it lighter. Make the call. Provide the meal. Help with the task. Show up. Sit with them. Meet a need you can responsibly meet.

PRAY TOGETHER | 10 MINUTES

Invite the group to name one area where they need either **strength to receive truth** or **strength to receive help**. Then pray specifically for one another.

- Pray for humility to receive correction without immediately becoming defensive.
- Pray for wisdom to speak truth without shaming people.
- Pray for attentiveness to burdens that are easy to miss.
- Pray for humility to receive support when our own capacity is limited.
- Pray that the group becomes a community with both truth and tangible care.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Remind the group that biblical community is reciprocal. We are not only looking for people who can sharpen and carry us. We are becoming people who can be trusted to sharpen with love and carry with wisdom.

NEXT WEEK

Read Chapters 8-9: Together in His Presence + Stay Present Under Pressure.

Next week moves into what happens when community gathers around **Jesus** and what it looks like to remain relationally present when relationships become uncomfortable.

YOU WERE NEVER MEANT TO DO THIS ALONE.