

This guide, part of Antioch's *Spiritual Formation Series*, focuses on spiritual wellness through communal care. Rooted in the biblical principle of *Ubuntu* — “I am because we are” — it introduces five care systems that ensure no one grows alone. Practical steps and a personal planning section help participants both receive and extend Christlike care within the church.

Spiritual Formation Series

Living in Community Through
Ubuntu

Pastor Hawkins



Antioch Ubuntu

Ubuntu Care: A Philosophy of Christian Community and Growth

Introduction

At Antioch, spiritual growth happens through a grace-filled journey supported by three interconnected frameworks:

- **Identity Through Purpose** — You are uniquely made by God. Discover your identity and live with intentionality.
- **Community Through Ubuntu** — We grow better together. Ubuntu Care helps us love and support one another.
- **Maturity Through the 7 Commitments** — Growth doesn't happen by accident. These commitments help us take meaningful next steps in faith.

This guide focuses on *Community Through Ubuntu* — our framework for living in connection with the church and world. It includes both the philosophy and the practical systems that help us live and grow together in Christ.

Antioch Ubuntu is a strategic initiative designed to help our church live out its mission through a unified approach to pastoral care and discipleship. It is built on interconnected systems of care that promote resilience, healing, and maturity by integrating Christian identity, spiritual formation, Christian care, and biblical justice. Together, these systems form a comprehensive network that transforms lives and communities for the glory of God.

Applying the Spirit of Ubuntu

Beyond formal care systems, Ubuntu is a mindset. It means:

- Embracing connectedness.
- Choosing community over isolation.
- Engaging in biblical justice.
- Being present for others and letting others be present for you.

As we grow in Christ, Ubuntu invites us to say with our lives: *"I am because we are."*

Philosophical, Biblical, and Theological Foundations

Ubuntu is an African philosophy meaning, “I am only because we are.” It reflects our biblical calling to live in compassionate, connected community shaped by the many “one another” commands of the New Testament.

Christian Identity affirms that every believer is a “new creation” in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), growing through spiritual disciplines and reflection within trusted Christian relationships.

Spiritual Formation is the lifelong journey of becoming like Christ (Romans 8:29), shaped by both personal devotion and shared spiritual practices.

Christian Care is the intentional demonstration of compassion that helps others face life’s challenges while continuing to grow in faith and community.

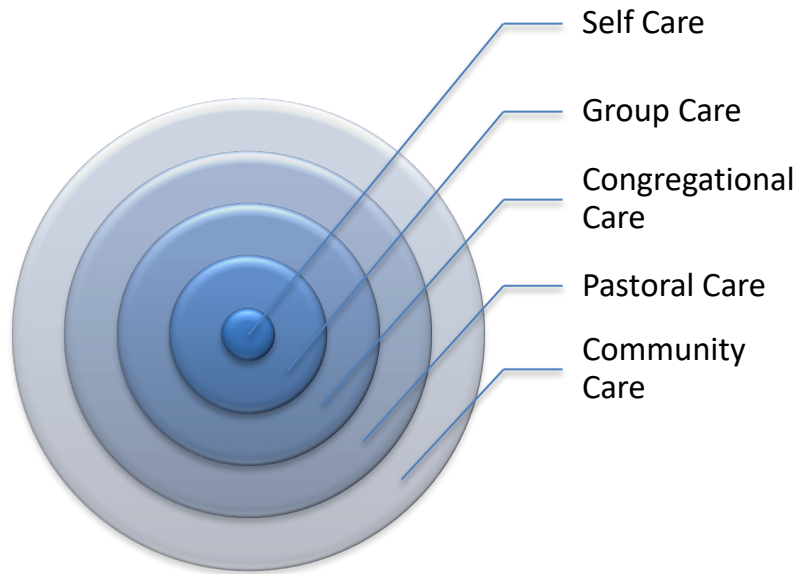
Biblical Justice affirms the dignity of all people created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26–27) and calls us to respond to injustice with truth and compassion.

Resilience is the spiritual capacity to endure hardship and “press on toward the goal” (Philippians 3:14) through faith, supported by God and Christian community.

Healing is the restoration of the soul (Psalm 23:3), made possible by God and nurtured through environments of grace, forgiveness, and love.

Maturity is the pursuit of Christlikeness (Colossians 1:28–29), nurtured through intentional spiritual growth and total dependence on God.

Ubuntu Care recognizes that each person has a soul - the sacred container of thoughts, emotions, and desires that shape our actions. The soul at any given moment can be healthy or unhealthy and requires intentional tending for flourishing. Our five care systems work together to nurture comprehensive soul wellness, recognizing that healthy souls create transformed individuals who then transform their communities.



Ubuntu Care: Our Five Interconnected Systems of Care

Ubuntu Care is organized into five care systems that work together to support spiritual growth and well-being across our church and community:

1. **Self-Care** Encouraging personal spiritual and emotional growth through daily, weekly and monthly spiritual rhythms of self-care.
2. **Group Care** Facilitating care through small groups and ministries where mutual support, accountability, and growth can happen.
3. **Congregational Care** Ensuring every member is seen, supported, and encouraged through structured support from the diaconate and church leadership.
4. **Pastoral Care** Providing specialized support from the pastor during times of transition, crisis, or discernment.
5. **Community Care** Extending care beyond the church through partnerships, service projects, and local outreach to meet needs in the broader community.

These systems overlap and strengthen one another. When they work together, we build a culture where compassion is consistent, growth is intentional, and care is shared.

System 1: Self-Care *Encouraging personal spiritual and emotional growth through intentional rhythms*

Foundation Self-care in the Ubuntu framework isn't self-indulgence—it's stewardship of the life God has given you. When you care for yourself well, you're better able to care for others and serve God's purposes.

Key Components

Daily Rhythms - Scripture reading and prayer

Weekly Rhythms - Corporate worship

Monthly Rhythms - Fasting and fellowship

Reflection Questions

- Which of these three rhythms (daily, weekly, monthly) do I need to strengthen most right now?
- Are there any additional self-care rhythms that might benefit me?
- How do my spiritual rhythms contribute to my ability to care for others?

Action Steps

1. Choose ONE daily rhythm to establish or strengthen this month
 2. Commit to consistent weekly worship and Sabbath rest
 3. Participate in the next monthly Fast & Fellowship gathering
 4. Identify one person who can encourage your spiritual rhythm journey
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System 2: Group Care *Facilitating mutual support, accountability, and growth in small communities*

Describing and Assessing Maturity Our Describing Maturity framework outlines what a mature disciple looks like across four dimensions: Head (knowledge), Heart (values), Corporate Hands (group behaviors), and Individual Hands (personal practices). We offer a twice-a-year assessment to help you choose the right track.

Discipleship Tracks Our intentional learning pathways develop specific areas of maturity through community.

 **Track 1: Biblical Foundations** *Learn the Bible deeply and live it faithfully.*

Adult Sunday School Class

 **Track 2: Spiritual Formation** *Grow from the inside out.*

Wednesdays in the Word

Antioch Life Groups

 **Track 3: Quality Care** *Care like Christ.*

Fast & Fellowship

Reflection Questions

- Which area of maturity (head, heart, corporate hands, individual hands) do I most need to develop right now?
- How can I contribute to the health of my chosen track?
- How is God using this discipleship track to shape me?
- How does this track-based community contribute to my soul wellness?

Action Steps

1. Take the Spiritual Maturity Assessment to identify your growth areas
2. Select and commit to a specific discipleship track for this season
3. Identify one way to contribute to your track's health
4. Reach out to one track member this week

System 3: Congregational Care *Ensuring every member is seen, supported, and encouraged through church leadership*

Foundation Congregational care recognizes that the church is a family. Every member deserves to be known, cared for, and supported by the broader community through structured pastoral oversight.

How It Works Diaconate Structure: Each member/family is connected to a specific deacon or care leader who provides:

- Regular check-ins and prayer
- Connection to church life and opportunities
- Support during transitions or difficulties
- Bridge to additional care resources when needed

Care Team Approach: Deacons work with ministry leaders and the Pastor to ensure no one falls through the cracks, care needs are identified early, resources are mobilized effectively, and long-term support is sustained.

What to Expect from Your Care Leader

- **Regular Contact:** Periodic check-ins via phone, text, or in-person
- **Prayer Support:** Committed prayer for you and your family
- **Resource Connection:** Help finding appropriate ministries, groups, or services
- **Crisis Support:** Immediate care during emergencies or difficult seasons

Reflection Questions

- How well do I know my assigned care leader?
- What care needs do I have that I haven't shared?
- How can I better support the congregational care system?
- What soul care needs do I have that I haven't shared with my care leader?

Action Steps

1. Connect with your assigned care leader this month
2. Share one specific prayer request or life update
3. Ask how you can support their ministry
4. Identify one person in the congregation you could encourage

System 4: Pastoral Care *Providing specialized support from the pastor during times of transition, crisis, or discernment*

Foundation Pastoral care offers professional, confidential support for complex life situations that require additional expertise, time, or spiritual authority. Pastor Hawkins is a Pastoral Care Specialist with Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) training, providing professional-level support grounded in clinical expertise and biblical foundations.

Four Integrated Components

Informal Care Encounters - Ongoing pastoral presence through conversations, hospital visits, crisis support, and spiritual guidance with confidential documentation.

Formal Care Sessions - Structured individual and marital support using specialized clinical training. Members receive up to 5 individual or 7 marital sessions; non-members receive up to 3 sessions with community resource connections.

Equipping Others - Quality Care Curriculum: 18-lesson formation series based on ACPE standards training members in quality Christian care.

Care Systems Integration - Ubuntu Care philosophy ensuring interconnected care through five levels: self-care, group care, congregational care, pastoral care, and community care.

Reflection Questions

- Are there any areas of my life where I need pastoral support?
- What prevents me from seeking help when I need it?
- What spiritual growth areas could benefit from pastoral guidance?
- Are there areas where my soul needs specialized pastoral intervention?

Action Steps

1. Identify any current needs for pastoral care
2. Complete consent form and schedule if needed
3. Pray for your pastor and their care ministry
4. Consider how you might support the pastoral care system

System 5: Community Care *Extending care beyond the church through partnerships and outreach*

Foundation Community care recognizes that our Ubuntu philosophy extends beyond church walls. We're called to love our neighbors and work for justice and healing in our broader community.

Areas of Community Care Employment assistance, housing resources, financial counseling, educational support, healthcare navigation, legal aid, addiction recovery, food security, homeless services, educational partnerships, healthcare access, environmental stewardship, economic development, criminal justice reform

Partnership Approach We collaborate with local nonprofits, government programs, other churches, schools, healthcare systems, and civic organizations to maximize our impact.

How to Engage in Community Care As Someone Needing Support: Don't hesitate to ask for help, work with your care leader to identify resources, accept assistance gracefully **As Someone Offering Support:** Volunteer with outreach ministries, use your professional skills to help others, advocate for justice, build community relationships

Resource Development We maintain an updated resource directory, develop community partnerships, train volunteers, and advocate for policy changes that help vulnerable populations.

Reflection Questions

- What community resources do I need that my church cannot provide?
- What barriers prevent me from seek the resources I need from the community?
- How can our church better connect people with community resources?
- How does access to community resources contribute to soul wellness?

Action Steps

1. Review the Community Resource Directory
2. Identify one community need you could address
3. Connect with a community service opportunity
4. Pray for our city and its leaders regularly

My Community Care Plan

Ubuntu Care invites you to reflect on your needs and how you'll stay connected. Use this section to create a simple, personal care plan. For detailed guidance on each system, see the Five Systems Guide.

Self-Care

- What spiritual rhythm do I need to strengthen right now?
- Which tool or rhythm resource will support me?

✂ Tools Available:

- [Daily Bible reading plan](#)

Group Care

- Which discipleship track(s) and group(s) will I engage?
- How will I contribute to the health of this group?

✂ Tools Available:

- [Choosing a discipleship track and group](#)

Congregational Care

- Who is my assigned diaconate/care leader?
 - How will I stay connected to them or share care needs this season?
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Pastoral Care

- **Are there any issues that I need additional support from the pastor?**
(Examples: premarital, marital, divorce, grief and loss, trauma, conflict, spiritual development)

✂ Tools Available:

- [Pastoral Care Details](#)
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Community Care

- **Are there any issues that I need additional support from the community?**
(Examples: grief and loss, addiction, abuse, employment, financial, housing, education, etc.)

✂ Tools Available:

- [Community Resource Directory](#)
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Next Steps & Follow-Up

- **Transfer my care plan into My Personal Growth Plan**
- **Who can I share my plan with for encouragement and accountability?**

Ready for Deeper Formation? For those called to advanced caregiving ministry, our **Foundations of Christian Care** curriculum provides 18 months of professional-level training based on Clinical Pastoral Education standards. This comprehensive program includes detailed study of care methodologies, spiritual formation practices, and hands-on caregiving experience.