Session 42: Service Under Strain: Showing Up When It Costs

Phase 5 — Giving Back: Service, Leadership & Purpose · Block 1 — Service: Giving Back

Date: _____ My craving today (0–10): _____ One word for my week: _____

What we're learning

Service loads the same systems recovery does: sleep, mood, pride, and time. Strain shows up early and quietly — irritability at the people you serve, fantasies of applause or escape, a craving hiding inside the sentence 'I deserve a break from all of this.' The warning-sign chain (Session 28) applies to the helper as much as to the newcomer: catch the chain at stage one, while it is still just a tired Tuesday.

- Strain has stages Tired, then resentful, then grandiose or gone. Each stage has an exit: rest at stage one, an honest conversation at stage two, a clean handoff before stage three.
- If–then beats willpower 'If it is my service day and my craving score is above a six, then I call my accountability partner before the shift and I tell the post leader I am having a hard day.' Written in advance (Session 29), it holds when motivation does not.
- A clean handoff is faithful Stepping back with notice and a prepared replacement protects the post and the people. Vanishing is the failure; handing back is stewardship.

Goals for this session

- ☐ I can name my personal early-warning signs that service is becoming strain
- ☐ I can build an if–then plan for the hard day (Session 29 method) for my service post
- ☐ I can state when stepping back from a post is faithfulness, not failure — and how to hand a post back cleanly

Check-in

Tell about a commitment — any commitment — you kept on a day you wanted to quit. What carried you through that day?

Discussion — write your answers

Write what you would say out loud — and more, if it comes. There is no right-length answer; there is only an honest one.

1. What is your earliest personal sign that service is turning into strain?

2. What does 'I deserve a break' usually mean in your mouth — rest, or escape?

3. Write your if–then for the hard service day: what is the trigger, and what exactly happens next?

4. Where will you keep your service if–then card, so the strain finds it first?

Session 42 — Skill Practice

Chain check — a four-stage service-strain exercise, distinct from the five-stage Warning-Sign Chain (solo, then pairs): each person writes their service-strain chain in four stages — trigger, thought, feeling, urge — and marks the earliest point they can honestly catch it. Pairs exchange chains and each partner adds one interruption the writer missed. Remind the room: chains shared here stay here, under the group agreements.

My service-strain chain — trigger, thought, feeling, urge — and the earliest point I can catch it:

My service if–then plan, written for a card:

My takeaway

The one thing from this session I most need to remember — in my own words:

Homework — this week's application

☐ Write your service if–then plan on a card and keep it where the strain will find you — wallet, phone case, or workbook cover. Bring the card to the next session.

Space to do the homework and note how it went:

An optional Scripture handout for this session is available from your facilitator on request.