

Small Group Ministry

Spring 2023 – Week 3

Opening Prayer:

Common to all Small Groups

Lord, we thank you for today and for this time to gather as friends in faith. We pray for our church and our community. Guide us and help us to deepen friendships and seek to grow in faith together. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Opening Discussion

1. How is everyone? Highs /lows from the week?

2. Are you a worrier? If/when you let your mind wander, where does it tend to go?

What is a Small Group?

- Faith Exercise - Intentionally deepening our relationship with God.
- Building Community - Intentionally deepening our relationship with others in faith.
- Common Interest – Intentionally celebrating common ground.

Group Parameters:

- In-person gatherings will adhere to most up-to-date health guidelines
- Gatherings will begin with Prayer & Scripture to unify this ministry across the groups.
- Members will remain courteous and ensure that everyone is given the opportunity to share.
- Thoughts and feelings shared are private and should remain confidential.
- You are encouraged to share news but cautioned about crossing into the territory of gossip.
- Grow in friendship, faith, and community with one another through this experience.

Colossians 3:1-4

The New Life in Christ

3 So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth, **3** for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Matthew 28:1-10

The Resurrection of Jesus

28 After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. **2** And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. **3** His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. **4** For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. **5** But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. **6** He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. **7** Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." **8** So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. **9** Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. **10** Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Psalm 91 Assurance of God's Protection

¹You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
²will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust."
³For he will deliver you from the snare of the hunter
and from the deadly pestilence;
⁴he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and defense.
⁵You will not fear the terror of the night
or the arrow that flies by day
⁶or the pestilence that stalks in darkness
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.
⁷A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.
⁸You will only look with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.
⁹Because you have made the Lord your refuge,
the Most High your dwelling place,
¹⁰no evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your tent.
¹¹For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
¹²On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.
¹³You will tread on the lion and the adder;
the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.
¹⁴Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.
¹⁵When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble;
I will rescue them and honor them.
¹⁶With long life I will satisfy them
and show them my salvation.

Discussion Questions:

Colossians 3:1-4

If taken out of context these words from Colossians seem to be pointing to a 'pie in the sky' and 'otherworldly' kind of faith that removes the believer from the 'day to day' grind of life. However, consider the following snippet of a commentary...

Actually, and rather surprisingly, Colossians suggests that heaven and earth were in the same boat, so to speak. Christ came to reconcile "all things, whether on earth or in heaven." He did so not by lordly fiat or a miraculous airlift of the worthy out of the domain of suffering but by "making peace by the blood of his cross" (1:20), "in his body of flesh by his death" (1:22). You can't get any more this-worldly than a body bleeding to death on a cross.

Those who are now transferred into the kingdom of light, the church, are to grow to maturity in their faith and their life together, "being knit together in love" (2:2). ... Having the mind set on "things above" is no escape from the tasks and struggles of this earth. It's rather having the Star of Bethlehem to orient one's journey.

What does it mean that we have a God who has so consistently and profoundly worked at making peace with us? What does it mean to orient our faith walk by being deeply committed to seeking 'the things that are above'?

Psalm 91

*You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust."*

As one author notes, "this Psalm would have served Israel well during David's reign, when Israel was beset by many enemies. It would have served them well during the Babylonian Exile, when only the eyes of faith could see the possibility that they would ever again see Jerusalem. It would have served them well when King Cyrus of Persia defeated Babylon and freed Israelites to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city, where they found a ruined city and were faced with many enemies."

As we move out from the pandemic, in what ways did you discover strength from faith in the midst of the fear and deep challenge garnered as we wrestled with the global pandemic (remember - we are not the first in our long history as a people of faith to have met with adversity).

Musical Reflection: Psalm 91 – Jonathan Ogden

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbFBhGQdorY>



Matthew 28:1-10

"In Matthew the two Marys respond in at least three ways: fear, joy, and obedience. Fear is precisely how a good biblical character responds to angels and other divine manifestations. Fear is also how mortals respond when we are confronted with a new truth that will change our lives. In this sense fear and joy are not strangers. We experience them when we draw close to a friend, when we fall in love, when a baby is on the way, and when sickness and death draw near. Why should not fear and joy accompany us when we are called to live into God's good news?"

Fear can be debilitating, destructive, deathly (think cancer diagnosis) – OR – Fear can be exhilarating, exciting, enlivening (think roller-coaster). We as a people constantly wrestle with fear. **How does faith invite/equip us, even in the midst of frightening times, to live life joyfully/abundantly/richly?**

How can the group pray for you this week?

Therefore welcome one another as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God. – Romans 15:7