

Small Group Ministry

Spring 2023 – Week 4

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. What is your hope for your family/friends in this season?

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.

1 Peter 1:3-9
A Living Hope

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead⁴ and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, ⁷ so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Although you have not seen him, you love him, and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

John 20:19-31

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Jesus and Thomas

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

The Purpose of This Book

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Psalm 16

Song of Trust and Security in God

A Miktam of David.

¹Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

²I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;

I have no good apart from you."

³As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble ones in whom is all my delight.

⁴Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;

their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out

or take their names upon my lips.

⁵The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;

you hold my lot.

⁶The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;

I have a goodly heritage.

⁷I bless the Lord, who gives me counsel;

in the night also my heart instructs me.

⁸I keep the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

⁹Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;

my body also rests secure.

¹⁰For you do not give me up to Sheol

or let your faithful one see the Pit.

¹¹You show me the path of life.

In your presence there is fullness of joy;

in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Discussion Questions:

Psalm 16

The importance of Psalm 16:

"In the Acts 2:25-28 story of Pentecost, Peter recites Psalm 16:8-11 in his address to the gathered people about the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, thus linking the death and resurrection of Jesus to the words of Psalm 16."

(This is why we read this on the second Sunday of Easter)

Consider this, "Psalm 16 invites ever-new appropriations of its words in the lives of the faithful. With each breathing moment, we humans must decide between "other gods" (Psalm 16:4) and the one true God, between that which offers immediate gratification or easy answers to life's pressing issues and that which remains unchanging throughout life."

What other 'gods' are vying for attention in your life (vs 4)?

1 Peter 1:3-9

Written to a community suffering through trials and persecutions and dramatic cultural change, these words offer encouragement and promise. In our own day, "we are anxious as the world is changing before us in ways that we did not anticipate and do not clearly understand and, for the most part, are out of our control. The uncertainty of the near future, however, is overshadowed by the blessed assurances knowing that Jesus knows the future, holds the future and holds our hand. That is, Jesus is a companion in our suffering."

How are times of suffering/worrying/fretting affected by faith in Jesus Christ? Have there been times when the Peace of Christ has broken into your life to bring reassurance and hope?

John 20:19-31

The first part of the reading takes place on the evening of the day of Resurrection and the second part occurs one week later. To their utter astonishment Jesus stands in their midst. They saw him crucified. Yet he stands in their midst. Some of them saw him buried. Yet he stands in their midst. They abandoned him and denied knowing him. Yet he stands in their midst and fills the room with his Peace (it is more than a simple greeting he gives them---it becomes a lived reality as he stands with them in the room). Thomas refuses to believe. Yet, one week later, Jesus again stands in their midst. In their imperfect state of knowledge and belief Jesus says, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

What does it mean that...

a) we have a very persistent God who is always first to love and forgive and pursue us; and

b) we are now joined to the ministry of Jesus Christ in the world, as we are sent by him to the world?

Musical Reflection: Living Hope – Phil Wickham

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-1fwZtKJSM>

How can the group pray for you this week?

