

# Small Group Ministry

## Spring 2023 – Week 8

### 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 are you currently nurturing?

A garden?

A friendship?

A child?

A marriage?

### 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:

- 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 3:13-22

<sup>13</sup> Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, <sup>15</sup> but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you, <sup>16</sup> yet do it with gentleness and respect. Maintain a good conscience so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. <sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, <sup>19</sup> in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, <sup>20</sup> who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight lives, were saved through water. <sup>21</sup> And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

### John 14:15-24

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

<sup>15</sup> "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. <sup>17</sup> This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you. <sup>18</sup> "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. <sup>19</sup> In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup> They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me, and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." <sup>22</sup> Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?" <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. <sup>24</sup> Whoever does not love me does not keep my words, and the word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me.

## Psalm 66

### Praise for God's Goodness to Israel

*To the leader. A Song. A Psalm.*

- <sup>1</sup> Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth;  
<sup>2</sup> sing the glory of his name;  
give to him glorious praise.  
<sup>3</sup> Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!  
Because of your great power, your enemies  
cringe before you.  
<sup>4</sup> All the earth worships you;  
they sing praises to you,  
sing praises to your name." *Selah*  
<sup>5</sup> Come and see what God has done:  
he is awesome in his deeds among mortals.  
<sup>6</sup> He turned the sea into dry land;  
they passed through the river on foot.  
There we rejoiced in him,  
<sup>7</sup> who rules by his might forever,  
whose eyes keep watch on the nations—  
let the rebellious not exalt themselves. *Selah*  
<sup>8</sup> Bless our God, O peoples;  
let the sound of his praise be heard,  
<sup>9</sup> who has kept us among the living  
and has not let our feet slip.  
<sup>10</sup> For you, O God, have tested us;  
you have tried us as silver is tried.  
<sup>11</sup> You brought us into the net;  
you laid burdens on our backs;  
<sup>12</sup> you let people ride over our heads;  
we went through fire and through water;  
yet you have brought us out to a spacious place.  
<sup>13</sup> I will come into your house with burnt offerings;  
I will pay you my vows,  
<sup>14</sup> those that my lips uttered  
and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.  
<sup>15</sup> I will offer to you burnt offerings of fatted calves,  
with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;  
I will make an offering of bulls and goats. *Selah*  
<sup>16</sup> Come and hear, all you who fear God,  
and I will tell what he has done for me.  
<sup>17</sup> I cried aloud to him,  
and he was extolled with my tongue.  
<sup>18</sup> If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,  
the Lord would not have listened.  
<sup>19</sup> But truly God has listened;  
he has heard the words of my prayer.  
<sup>20</sup> Blessed be God,  
who has not rejected my prayer  
or removed his steadfast love from me.

## Discussion Questions:

### Psalm 66:8-20

The people are remembering God's deliverance and are offering their Thanksgiving. The Exodus story (fleeing Egypt and arriving, eventually, in the promised land) is the archetype memory for encouraging believers throughout the ages as they encounter many of the difficult places/people/challenges in life and how they can trust in God's ultimate rescue plan. **As we remember God's activity in our own lives, what thanksgivings do you have to offer to God today?**

### 1 Peter 3:13-22

"The letter makes clear that this community, as it seeks to remain faithful and to live lives that befit a good conscience, is constantly beset by the antagonism and outright persecution of those among whom they live. The double whammy of a fading sense of the resurrection and the very real experience of daily suffering are almost more than they can bear. To such a setting and people, the writer addresses a word of encouragement through the restatement and assurances of the promissory implications of Easter."

**How do you defend the hope you have because of the faith we share in the saving power of Jesus Christ? How do you reengage in faith during 'normal' times of the year when the great celebrations are long past, and the daily routine of life becomes a distraction from the wonderful mysteries of faith?**

### John 14:15-21

One theologian has pointed out that, "At the last supper Jesus has been telling the disciples about his coming departure, which raises the disturbing prospect of separation (John 13:33, 36; 14:2, 5). In years to come he knows that the disciples will feel like "orphans." Easter will be a joyous reunion, but the resurrection appearances will not continue indefinitely. As the years pass, people will be called to believe in a Jesus they have never seen or heard. Jesus' words and actions will be conveyed to them through the tradition of the church in a world that may seem indifferent at best and hostile at worst to the message about a crucified Messiah.

In this passage Jesus anticipates the Easter moment when he says, "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you" and "because I live, you also will live" (14:18-19). The Easter message is that life rather than death has the final word, and this is crucial for faith. In John's gospel, faith is a relationship with a living being. For there to be authentic faith in Jesus, people must be able to relate to the living Jesus—a Jesus who is not absent but present. Otherwise faith is reduced to the memory of a Jesus who died long ago."

**Intimate communion with the living God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is the primary purpose of Christ's mission in the gospel of John. In what ways do you nurture this intimate relationship with God? How have you experienced this intimacy of faith?**

### Musical Reflection: Hallelujah Even Here - Lydia Laird

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jc-WPCQs6RI>

**How can the group pray for you this week?**

