

Small Group Ministry

Spring 2023 – Week 9

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. Do you have a nickname? Did you have a nickname as a child? Do you have a nickname for a loved one?

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 4:12-14; 5:6-11

Suffering as a Christian

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you.

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. ⁸ Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. ¹⁰ And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹ To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.

John 17:1-11

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

¹⁷ After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ⁴ I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. ⁶ "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me is from you, ⁸ for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹ I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹ And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

Psalm 68

Praise and Thanksgiving

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm. A Song.

¹ Let God rise up; let his enemies be scattered;
let those who hate him flee before him.

² As smoke is driven away, so drive them
away;

as wax melts before the fire,
let the wicked perish before God.

³ But let the righteous be joyful;
let them exult before God;
let them be jubilant with joy.

⁴ Sing to God; sing praises to his name;
lift up a song to him who rides upon the
clouds—
his name is the Lord—
be exultant before him.

⁵ Father of orphans and protector of widows
is God in his holy habitation.

⁶ God gives the desolate a home to live in;
he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
but the rebellious live in a parched land.

⁷ O God, when you went out before your
people,
when you marched through the
wilderness, *Selah*

⁸ the earth quaked, the heavens poured down
rain

at the presence of God, the God of Sinai,
at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

⁹ Rain in abundance, O God, you showered
abroad;

you restored your heritage when it
languished;

¹⁰ your flock found a dwelling in it;
in your goodness, O God, you provided for
the needy.

³² Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth;
sing praises to the Lord, *Selah*

³³ O rider in the heavens, the ancient heavens;
listen, he sends out his voice, his mighty
voice.

³⁴ Ascribe power to God,
whose majesty is over Israel
and whose power is in the skies.

³⁵ Awesome is God in his sanctuary,
the God of Israel;
he gives power and strength to his people.
Blessed be God!

Discussion Questions:

Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35

The Psalm remembers God's faithfulness and power in the past (i.e. vs 7-8) in order to encourage celebration, praise, and worship in the present moment. As one author points out, "In spite of its militant character and victorious confidence, such is not its spirit. There is a self-understanding and self-description in the psalm's measures that belies such a reading. The uses assigned to the power of the LORD as divine warrior are crucial. The God who dwells in his holy habitation as victor is father of orphans and protector of widows, who gives the desolate a home and liberates prisoners (verses 5-6) ... The song belongs to the lowly, who in the midst of the powers of this world remember and hope for the victory of God." **How has God acted in your life that helps you find strength for today and enables you to lift up your praise to God?**

1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11

"As we see in earlier parts of 1 Peter, some of the most vulnerable persons in these house churches of Asia Minor are being pressed to give up their newfound faith and return to their former gods (4:3-4), the gods of their masters (2:18), and husbands (3:1). If they do so, according to those who pressure them, all will be right with the world and they will be living in line with society's expectations. In this difficult situation, Peter calls them to remain steadfast to Christ and to persist in doing what is right, trusting in the faithful God who has created them (4:19). By doing so, they will be sharing in Christ's sufferings, with the promise of sharing in his glory at his future revelation (4:13)." **In what ways are individuals in the modern church facing pressures to give up the faith? How can we work together at remaining firm in the faith?**

John 17:1-11

We have entered a season of prayer for our local church (Trinity) during the 50 days of Easter. We have named this focus on prayer "50 Days of Faith". Guiding prayers have been produced for each Sunday to draw us together as a community of faith through shared prayer in the hopes that unity of spirit and clarity of call will grow within our church. We know very well that prayer was an essential part of Jesus' ministry (it helped to set direction in his ministry, find renewal for himself, pour out grief, bring healing to others, etc.). About the overall prayer life of Jesus and this particular prayer in the Gospel according to John, one theologian says this, "Jesus was a man of prayer. He taught his disciples to pray. That teaching resulted in a model of prayer—the Lord's Prayer—that has become an integral part of the Christian witness. In this text, we find Jesus once again at prayer. Jesus is in conversation with his disciples, and he ends his conversation with a prayer, spoken in their presence, perhaps with the hope of having them listen in to the hopes and dreams he has for them. As he taught his disciples, once again, Jesus begins the prayer by calling on his father, as the source of his being and his power, the one to whom he addresses his requests." **What is your prayer life like? How have you experienced the 'source of life' through prayer? How/when do you engage in prayer?**

Musical Reflection: Matt Redman – Gracefully Broken

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJNR0IxbIP4>

How can the group pray for you this week?

