

COMMUNITIES/SMALL GROUPS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

MISSIONS/LORD'S PRAYER

DECEMBER 1, 2019

Welcome to the final Sunday in 2019 set aside to allow Communities and or small groups to meet. A number of Communities will not be taking the time today or in the week to come for Bible discussions since a number of gatherings have been planned involving fellowship and food. While there are no other dates set aside for Communities to meet until January, please be sure to keep in touch over Christmas and find ways to stay connected.

However, if you are looking for something to talk about you can always go back to the questions raised over the last couple of months concerning the Lord's Prayer (see # III below). If you have covered the Lord's Prayer, consider a discussion about the upcoming Advent Series entitled "Light Bearers, the Foremothers of Christ" (see #IV below).

While the sermons provide some back ground information and help to inform the conversation, one does not necessarily have to listen to the sermons in order to participate in the small groups. Leading a group may take some work and creativity on the part of the group leaders...

(Note: sermons can be accessed online at ccrc.on.ca/sermons)

- I. **Beginning Your Time Together** (If needed, please refer to the material prepared for September 22, 2019 for suggestions as to how you might want to begin your time together.)
- II. **Some questions/matters to think about and discuss together as you meet as a Community.**
(Please refer to the material prepared for September 22, 2019 for the kinds of questions that you perhaps ought to be asking as you involve yourself in your Community. Why not lay a question or two on a table when you gather for a potluck or social event? People always like something to talk about.)
- III. **Discussion Guide: The Lord's Prayer** – Our study of the prayer was based on the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Days 45-52). If you wish to go back to some of the questions dealing with the Lord's Prayer you will find those at #V on the November 17, 2019 Communities/Small Groups Discussion Questions. (ccrc.on.ca/communities)
- IV. **Discussion Guide: Advent Series** - This year, we will be taking some time during the four weeks of Advent to prepare ourselves for the future coming of Christ by reflecting on the ways God used specific people in specific times to preserve the covenant between God and his people. To do this, we will be exploring the stories of the five women mentioned in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary. All five of these women found themselves in unique and difficult situations at times when God's covenant was under threat. All five of them were used by God to secure the covenant.

As a result, all five of them are honoured as ancestors of the Messiah, mothers of the church, and models of discipleship.

For many, the holiday season is a time that highlights their loneliness, anxiety, family strife, broken relationships, unemployment, failed goals, and depression. Allowing Advent to speak to the ways in which the Kingdom of God, while begun in Jesus, is not yet fully realized until Christ comes again can bring comfort to people who are suffering. Even for those who are not suffering, it is still a good reminder that Christmas and Advent are about waiting for the coming of our Lord, not about the economic pursuits that our culture attaches to the holiday season. In that sense, the stories of these five women mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew are especially appropriate for the season of Advent. All five of these stories—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary—are stories of women in difficult situations, on the margins of society: widows, prostitutes, gentiles, abandoned, childless, poor. But God ends up using their stories of darkness to preserve the covenant when it is under threat. In that way, the Gospel of Matthew uses the stories of these five women to lay a groundwork for us as to what it means to be a disciple of Jesus—allowing God to use our stories for the preservation of his covenant, being faithful even in seasons of darkness, bearing the light of the New Creation.

1. Read: Matthew 1: 1-17
2. What is striking about the genealogy of Jesus?
3. Why did it include the women it did?
4. What do you know about Tamar (Genesis 38)? What do you know about Rahab (Joshua 2)? What do you know about Ruth (book of Ruth)? What do you know about Bathsheba (II Samuel 11)? What do you know about Mary (Matthew 1)?
5. Now that you have read some of the stories, does it surprise you that these women are included in Jesus' genealogy?
6. Thinking about the women in Jesus' genealogy, how might they change your view of Christmas and the coming of Jesus? For that matter, what do these women have to do with Advent and Christmas?
7. Commit to taking some time to read the stories mentioned in #4 above, in preparation for Christmas.

V. Prayer: As you close out your time together, talk about how you plan to celebrate Christmas this year. Is there anyone you can include? Take some time to pray together for the Lord's presence and peace throughout this Advent Season.