

# COMMUNITIES/SMALL GROUPS

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

FEBRUARY 23, 2020

**Welcome** to another Sunday set aside to allow Communities and or small groups to meet. The remaining dates, in this season, set aside for Communities or small groups to meet are: today; March 8, 22; April 5, 19 and May 3.

There are a number of different approaches that you can take whether you meet in a small group or as a Community joining together for a meal or some other event. Below you will find some suggestions as to what to talk about or what sorts of exercises you can do. If needed, please refer to the material prepared for September 22, 2019 for other suggestions as to how you might want to begin your time together. ([ccrc.on.ca/communities](http://ccrc.on.ca/communities)) If you are a leader take the time to go through the options and pick which ones you deem appropriate for the setting you find yourself in.

- I. **Beginning Your Time Together:** Do a circle check-in. What has been happening in the lives of those in the room? What news items struck them these past couple of weeks? What are people busy with? What are people worried about?
- II. **A question or matter to think about when you meet as a Community or Small Group.** Is your elder or deacon one of those office bearers – “responsibility bearers”- who is coming to the end of his or her term? Talk about that together and begin to think about who could become the new elder or deacon in your Community. Who has the gifts of leadership? Who would you (as a group) nominate for office? Spend some time in prayer over this matter. Please submit any names to the Nominations Committee (Henry VanderHoef, chair).
- III. **Are there some things you can do when you gather for a meal together besides just eating? Maybe an exercise between the main course and the dessert?**
  - a. Are there some fast moving board games that can include people of all ages?
  - b. Are there families or teachers affected by the **rotating strikes in the public and separate school boards**? How are they affected? What are the issues? Are there ways you can help the families or teachers affected? Please remember this in your prayers asking for good resolutions to the matter.
  - c. Right now the country is affected by **demonstrations** blocking rail lines and roads in support of the **hereditary chiefs** in northern BC and their stand against the presence of the RCMP and the gas pipeline. The federal government finds itself in a tenuous position. How do you make sense of what is going on? What advice would you give the government in this situation? Spend some time in prayer for the government and for a peaceful resolution to the matters at hand.
  - d. Pastor Amanda has a pile of **photographs** available for use by a Community. Place the pictures face up on a table and throw out a challenge, like: “find a picture that expresses where you are at in your faith journey right now” or “find a picture of something that gives you joy” or “find a picture that best describes what you like to do for fun” ...well, you will have to be creative. Once every one has picked a picture, either in small groups or in the larger circle get them to share with everyone what picture they picked and why. This is a great exercise for all ages.

#### IV. Discussion Guide (for those desiring to talk about the sermon series)

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.

*(Note: sermons can be accessed online at [ccrc.on.ca/sermons](http://ccrc.on.ca/sermons))*

1. **Scripture Reading:** Matthew 7 or selected portions of it as appropriate to the questions being asked.
2. Pastor John began his sermon on Matt. 7:1-14 talking about “syncretism”. Syncretism is the idolatrous practice of blending together the religious beliefs of multiple religions. He said, “In our own culture, and our own practices of Christianity, we have strange and unique practices that we’ve picked up from various forms of other religions. For example, our Christmas trees and Advent wreaths come from pagan fertility festivals associated with the winter solstice.” **What other examples of syncretism can you name? What is the issue with syncretism?**
3. “What is our rubric for who is in and who is out (of the Kingdom, that is)? What are the shibboleths, the inside knowledge, the rules, the rituals that we use to judge whether a person is in God’s favour or not? Do we hold people to a strict code of conduct, like the Pharisees? Do we judge people for failing to live in the ways we expect followers of Jesus to live? Or do we use wealth and power as a measure of God’s blessing, like the Sadducees? Do we take our own growing wealth and influence as a divine mandate to live our lives however we want? Do we judge the poor in their poverty as irrelevant in the company of God’s people? Denying them the opportunity to serve as leaders in the body of Christ? Or do we live in a separate Christian society, like the Essenes? Do we judge people for not listening to Christian music or reading Christian books or sending their kids to Christian school? Or do we live in a constant state of war with the empire, like the Zealots? Do we judge people for not taking up arms against the secular agenda, fighting to keep Christianity in a place of power and influence? How do we determine who is in, and who is out? Who is a true believer, and who is an imposter? Who is authentic, and who is a hypocrite?
4. Pastor John mentioned that Jesus tells us ... this is the wrong question (i.e. the question asked in #3). Why is this the wrong question? (See 7:1) If it is the wrong question, what is Jesus’ approach?
5. Pastor John then introduced us to Pancho Argüelles, a Mexican-American activist and community organizer. Argüelles writes about the Latino concept of *acompañamiento*, which means that we travel together as sisters and brothers in Christ, as equals—no one higher, no one lower; no one leading, no one following—all of us, together, following Christ: journeying together, learning together, serving together, worshipping together. How might such an approach to life change the way in which we function as a church or as individuals? What does such an approach have to do with the “golden rule” or the two paths (v.13,14)? What role does ‘trust’ play in *acompañamiento*?
6. Explain the illustration of the plank and the speck (7:3,4). How does this help explain the meaning of hypocrisy? (Think: In what sense is it true that we will be judged according to the judgment we give –7:2?)
7. What does Jesus teach about the character and fruit of false teachers? How can we determine whether or not a person is a false teacher? How does the discussion of false teachers relate to the teaching about “judging” (verses 1-5) and about the narrow and broad ways (verses 13,14)?
8. What must we do to enter the kingdom of heaven –7:21? Is this works-righteousness? How does this relate to 7:13,14?
9. In the illustration of the two builders (7:24-27), how were the two men alike? How were they different? How is the parable to be applied?
10. As you look back through the Sermon on the Mount, what struck you the most?
11. As you look back through the Sermon on the Mount, do you think Christianity is simple or complex? Why?

V. **Prayer:** As you close out your time together, thank the Lord for teaching us what it means to be one of His children and offer a prayer for further understanding and transformation.