

COMMUNITIES/SMALL GROUPS

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

JANUARY 26, 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; February 9, 23; 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. Below you will find some suggestions as to what to talk about or what sorts of exercises you can do. 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? There has been a lot in the news – fires in Australia, climate change, court cases (Weinstein, Huawei, impeachment...). What are people busy with? 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)
- II. Some questions/matters to think about and discuss together as you meet as a Community – you can easily take a few minutes to answer some of these questions when you meet together for a meal.**
 - a)** Take some time to think about the CCRC Community you are in. Who is in that Community? Can you name everyone? Who are you missing? Who will follow-up to make contact? Orally going through the list reminds people of who is all in their Community.
 - b)** Take some time to list some of the needs in your CCRC Community, if known. What are some of the concerns that live among the members of the Community? Write them on a large sheet on the wall so that all can see them and are aware of the concerns throughout your gathering. They can later be shared with the whole Community. How can you address the needs? Work out some action plan. If not known, what can you do to become more informed about the needs in your CCRC Community? What are some creative ways in which to minister to the needs of those in your CCRC Community? Pray about the things mentioned.
 - c)** 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. Spend some time in prayer over this matter.
- 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.** There is now a foosball table in the multipurpose room. Perhaps a tournament of sorts? (That table is only available for those using the multipurpose room, of course.)
 - c.** 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 that best describes your hopes for the new year” or “find a picture that speaks to your mood right now” or “find a picture that best describes what you like to do for fun”

or “just pick a picture that speaks to you or that you like” ...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): In the worship services we will be walking through Jesus’ teaching on discipleship in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. The Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as the new Moses, giving God’s people the law and making known God’s will. The Sermon on the Mount in many ways parallels Exodus 20ff, where God gives the law to Moses on Mount Sinai. In his first teaching in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus lays out the radical principles of the Kingdom of Heaven in contrast to the values of the Empire, reframes the law, reinterprets spirituality, and roots everything in the Truth.

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)

Exercise: How well do you know the 10 Commandments? Since the Sermon on the Mount parallels Exodus 20ff, for the fun of it, start somewhere along the line in your circle and have people begin to recite the commandments by heart, one commandment at a time. If someone gets stuck move on to the next person – make a game of it – and see if you can get around the circle reciting all the commandments in order.

Discussion:

1. Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:17-48 or portions thereof.
2. Pastor John mentioned that he found a church with the tagline: “*No Perfect People Allowed*”. What do you think? Is this what Jesus is teaching in the Sermon on the Mount?
3. Jesus said, “be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect? (v. 48).” Actually, Jesus changed the original word from “holiness” to “perfect” (used by the NIV) or “teleios” which means “a sense of wholeness, of completion, of fulfillment, of consummation.” “Be teleios, as God is teleios”, said Jesus. How do you understand this? What does it mean for your life?
4. Pastor John said: “Holiness has always been a heart issue. It’s not just about what you *do* on the *outside*, Jesus says. It never has been. Holiness has always been on who you *are* in the *inside*.” How do you respond? What does this mean practically speaking?
5. If we want to understand the Sermon on the Mount, we need to understand the difference between “doing” and “being”. How would you explain that? What do you think?
6. The Pharisees were about “doing”. In what ways are we like the Pharisees?
7. What does it mean to “love our neighbour”? What does it mean to “love our enemies”?
8. Can you tell some stories of those who “loved their enemies”?
9. Do you have any enemies? What kind of people might it be difficult for us to show love to? What specific ways can you show love to people who don’t love you?
10. Why are we to love our enemies and pray for them? How can this love be described or defined?
11. As Jesus reframes our understanding of the law and what it looks like to be a child in his family, what areas of this passage (5:17-48) sound most challenging to you?

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