



COMMUNITY GROUPS

SANTA CRUZ BIBLE CHURCH

Going Further: Learning to Walk In the Way of Jesus **God is Our Fortress in Anxious Times** **March 15, 2020**

Passages

- Primary passage: Psalm 46 & 56

Questions

- Opener:
 - How are you feeling about the COVID-19 virus and all of the social distancing measures?
 - What do you need right now? (Emotionally, Spiritually, Physically, Relationally, etc.)
- Share Experience:
 - What has been easy to trust God for the past few days since the pandemic was declared? What's been difficult for you to trust God for?
 - How do you experience God with you daily? What are some ways you notice his presence, care, and provision for you?
 - How does God being infinite and having unlimited power make you feel?
 - Have you been able to discern any gifts that God has offered you in the midst of the uncertainty of these weeks?
 - What opportunities to show God's love do we have right now that we wouldn't otherwise have?
- Dig Into:
 - In Psalm 46, the Psalmist describes God as the God of Jacob. What kind of relationship does God have with Jacob? Why is that special? Why is it significant?
 - In the midst of the chaos of Psalm 46, why does God say to "Be still!"? What is stillness? How is it that God is able to be known in stillness in a way He isn't in the midst of activity?
 - How is it you think God is a very present help in trouble in the midst of today's world?

Creative Ideas

- *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* is a classic hymn of the church that has brought comfort to millions of people in times of uncertainty and crisis. Listen to this song and the words. What thoughts and emotions does it stir in you? How is God calling you to take refuge in Him right now?

Practices

- This week, choose to memorize Psalm 46. If you're not good at memorizing or you've never done it before, that's ok. Memorize one verse per day and then add another verse each day until you've memorized the whole Psalm. Practice saying "*The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress*" whenever you begin feeling anxious.
- Check in with people from your *Go Love Cards* and your neighbors (especially those who are elderly or prone to illness). Let them know you're thinking of them/praying for them. See if there's any tangible needs that you can safely meet for them.
- As many of us have some extra time as we're quarantined or isolated at home, take this as an opportunity to begin practicing silence and solitude. A great practice for this is Silent Prayer (see Additional Resources belows)

Additional Resources

- The questions at the end are fantastic! <https://timchester.wordpress.com/2016/03/21/following-up-the-sermon-in-small-groups/>
- Song: *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* Arranged and Sung by Matt Boswell - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TBUfe8AzRao>
- Silent Prayer Guidelines - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vKQ0EMX_6rtUnrk5dP83hUSJR4S-3lf9/view?usp=sharing

How to use this Walking in the Way Guide

1. It's important to know that there's more material here than any one group can cover in one night. Please DO NOT try to get through every scripture passage, question, and creative idea. That is a recipe for discouragement and burnout!
2. Do use this guide as a way to spark some discussion following from last Sunday's message. As the Community Group Leader, you know your group the best. Select which elements from this guide would be most helpful and relevant to your group!
3. **Scripture:** We will always give two or more passages of scripture that are relevant to the topic from Sunday's sermon. Ideally select one passage and stay there. Use only two at the most. You may want to have someone read the passage out loud and then work through the questions from the *5 Questions to Ask When Reading Your Bible* guide below. This is a great resource to print out and give to every member of your Community Group to help guide their own Bible reading at home!
4. **Questions:** There are more questions here than you'll likely be able to get through in one night. Select some questions you think might resonate with your group and throw questions to the group for discussion until one really takes off! You know a good discussion is happening when group members are interacting with and responding to what each other is saying and not just what is coming from you as the group leader!
5. **Creative Ideas:** If you feel it will help your group, select one of these creative ideas to help your group process and interact with the theme for this week. Feel free to add in your own creative ideas as well!!
6. **Practices:** This is how we grow in grace! Practices are what move a good discussion from merely interesting to life transforming. These sample practices are given to help you and the group live into the reality that was talked about on Sunday and that you interacted with in Scripture this week. **Choose one or (at most) two practices that you as a group will commit to doing this next week to live into God's truth.** As you come back next week, debrief how those practices went the previous week!
7. **Sample Schedule:** Here's a sample timeline for how to budget your time for a Community Group meeting. Keep in mind, this is a suggestion, not a rule to follow. **Do what works best for your community!**
 - **Arrival:** Catching up and Snacks - 15 min
 - **Intro:** See how everyone's doing. Maybe throw out an icebreaker question. As the group gets more comfortable, you can use this time to debrief the previous week's practice. - 10 min
 - **Scripture:** Dig into one passage from scripture using the 5 Questions (See Below) - 25 min
 - **Discussion** - 20 min
 - **Closing:** Decide on which practice(s) you'll commit to this week. Spend time praying for each other and those you sense God is sending you to - 10 min

5 Questions To Ask When Reading Your Bible - Worksheet

Whether you're a seminary professor or you've just recently picked up a Bible for the first time, these five questions can help you engage with Scripture. Try using it by yourself or with a group of people to read, understand and live out the Bible.

Question 1: What is going on in the passage?

- What's happening here?
- Who are the main characters?
- Very simply, *what is*?

Question 2: What do I like about the passage?

- What parts of this passage/story encourage me?
- What inspires, pleases or excites me based on what I've read?
- Why?

Question 3: What disturbs or startles me about the passage?

- What is it about this passage that reveals truth that may be hard to accept?
- What disturbs me or jolts, confronts or even offends me in my understanding of God, His Son, the world or my life?
- Why don't I like that?

Question 4: What does this say about the nature of God and/or the character of Jesus?

- What does this passage say about who God actually is?
- What does this say about the essence of his nature?
- What can I see about the character of Jesus (his patience, holiness, compassion, righteousness, etc)?

Question 5: What will I do with what I just learned in the next seven days?

- How will we respond to what we've just read?
- What will I do with what I just learned?
- How do I make sure that this wasn't just intellectual ascent? How do I put this into practice?