



COMMUNITY GROUPS

SANTA CRUZ BIBLE CHURCH

Going Further: Learning to Walk In the Way of Jesus

What I Hope You Remember - Acts 20:32

June 7, 2020

Passages

- Primary passage: Acts 20:18-35
- Jeremiah 29:7
- Philippians 1:9-11
- Matthew 22:36-39

Questions

- Opener:
 - Has a wise, older person ever given you advice or encouragement that you still remember to this day? What was it? How has that shaped you?
 - How are you doing this week with Richard leaving? What do you need right now? (Continue to refer to the Needs Inventory, see Additional Resources below)
- Share Experience:
 - How do you tend to respond in times of uncertainty or confusion?
 - Richard shared three key encouragements as he leaves us: 1) Ask God to help you love Santa Cruz more and more- BOTH as it is now, and as God would want it to be. 2) Instead of focusing on the size of our church, focus on the size of our hearts. 3) You cannot become spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature. Does one stick out at you? Do you agree or disagree with it? Why?
 - How have you seen God grow you love for the community He's placed us in here in Santa Cruz county?
 - How have you seen your emotional maturity grow along with your spiritual maturity? On the other side, have you ever seen an area of emotional immaturity hold you back from spiritual maturity?
 - What are ways you've experienced God grow the size of your heart? What role did you play in that process?
- Dig Into:
 - Which is easier to do, grow the size of our church or grow the size of our hearts? Why?
 - Why do people tend to gravitate towards quantity rather than quality? What does this say about the spiritual condition of our culture? (Note: Quantity vs. Quality is not an either/or necessarily. It's more a question of what needs to come first.)
 - In Jeremiah 29, Jeremiah encourages the Israelites in exile to seek the flourishing of the cities where God has scattered them. Why does he say it's important to seek the flourishing of these cities?
 - Why is it important to recognize that spiritual and emotional maturity are inseparable and you can't have one without the other?

Creative Ideas

- **Exercise:** Brainstorm as a group. If church were consistently to be marked by 1) Loving and Seeking the Flourishing of Santa Cruz 2) Growing in Emotional Maturity and 3) Growing first and foremost in spiritual depth marked by love, what would that church look like? Ask someone to be a recorder and write down as people respond to this question: “what are descriptive words that would characterize this kind of church”. As a group, stop and pray asking God to make this a reality in our church and in all the churches of Santa Cruz County.

Practices

- This week designate 5 minutes per day and sit down with a journal. Note 3 things you’re grateful for about Santa Cruz County. Then note 3 things you’re dissatisfied with about living here. Pray and ask God what it would look like to love Santa Cruz in these areas of dissatisfaction.
- At least 5 days this week read Psalm 73 and note in your journal: 1) What did you notice about God in this Psalm? 2) What emotions stirred in me as I read this Psalm?
- At least 5 days this week, sit and ask the Spirit to guide your Holy Imagination as you sit with the exercise called Imagining the Love of the Trinity (See Additional Resources Below).

Additional Resources

- The questions at the end are fantastic! <https://timchester.wordpress.com/2016/03/21/following-up-the-sermon-in-small-groups/>
- Needs Inventory - <https://www.cnvc.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/CNVC-needs-inventory.pdf>
- Imagining the Love of the Trinity - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Uhb68zMIJPahbTDWmrL3yHYfmd5b2zO3mXAaK74ODw0/edit?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?