

You Are What You Love

March 5, 2017

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Prayer of Examen

(Here is a passage to help your group as you worship. You can go through it together or in groups in meditation and/or in prayer)

The Prayer of Examen is a reflective prayer exercise that invites individuals to examine specific moments in their lives of the past day or week. As you begin to facilitate this exercise, invite each participant to settle into a comfortable position. Find some nice ambient music to have in the background. This will help those whom are easily distracted during complete silence. Set your timer to the desired length, 10-15 minutes, then begin the first time of reflection.

While the music begins to play invite each participant to close their eyes and reflect on the past 7 days. What were some of your high points from the last week? Where did you feel the happiest? Where did you experience the most joy? Think about all of the big things, but don't forget the small things that also brought you happiness during the week. Lastly, reflect on where you felt you experienced God's presence with you the most during the past week? Reflect on each of those times with gratitude. Allow 1-3 minutes for reflection.

After 1-3 minutes have past, invite each participant to again go over the past 7 days in their mind. What were the low points of your week? Did anything disappointing happen? Were there any moments in your week that you felt distant from God? Present all of these moments to God during this time of reflection. Those moments are gone and it will serve us best to leave them in the past. Place all of the unwanted items in front of God and leave them in his presence. Try and imagine God healing you during this time of reflection. Allow 1-3 minutes for reflection.

After 1-3 minutes have past, invite the group into one last time of reflection. In this final time of reflection, invite each participant to ask God for a specific word, phrase or image. This is a gift from God to the individual. Invite each person to include all of their senses; smell, touch/feeling, or possibly a vision. If a word or image comes to mind, ask God to affirm that in the next few moments as you continue to reflect on what you are experiencing. If you don't feel you are able to feel any changes during this time of reflection, that is does not mean you are doing something wrong, or that God does not desire to give you a gift. Simply ease your mind and think about the best gift you have ever been given. Thank God for that gift, and tell Him how much that gift meant to you. Reflect on the joy that gift brought you and the joy you feel thanking God for His many gifts from abundance. Continue to reflect for 1-3 minutes.

Icebreaker

What is something that you do as a daily routine?

Text for Discussion: Romans 12:1-3

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

It is human to base our identity on what we do, what we have, and what others think of us; it's the logic of the Old Self. But the Gospel tells us something very different: It is not our actions that prove our worth in God's sight, but His own. And God has declared us His beautiful, beloved children. Every command He gives us flows out of this grace; every call to discipleship begins and ends in the Father's embrace. Our identity and growth are therefore rooted in what God has already done on our behalf. Yet we constantly forget this, believing instead our ongoing performance determines our standing before God. By asking what fruit our lives are producing, we can see whether our Old Self or New Self is driving us. An Old Self mindset ultimately leads to exhaustion, anxiety, envy and anger, while the fruit of the New Self is joy, peace and kindness.

The Bible says our spiritual worship is to present our bodies as a sacrifice to God. As we place all that we are and all that we have at God's disposal, we become as we were created to be. But, that can sound unappealing to many of us. It sounds like it may cost us the life we really want. And that's the vital question: What do we want for our lives? We each have some vision of the good life that inspires and motivates us. Whatever we dedicate and sacrifice our

lives for, this is ultimately what we love and what we are worshipping. We are already giving our heart to something; the question is whether we know what that is.

Jesus doesn't shy away from assuming we desire greatness; He just cares how we define it. The Old and the New Self measure greatness in their own ways, pulling us in competing directions. So we must honestly ask which voice has more influence over our lives – the world or the Gospel? Our world constantly tries to squeeze us into its own mold, a mold that deforms our soul. We are bombarded by its messages so constantly that we've become habituated to it, comfortably conforming to the life it beckons us toward.

The goal of the Gospel is transformation through the renewal of our minds. By taking hold of what God has already done for us, we are engaging in this process of transformation. We no longer have to keep making the same mistakes; we can be made new. It is a process of re-forming our loves through new habits of grace. Renewing our mind requires some habit of mindfulness and takes practice. We need a Gospel centered exercise to keep the world from squeezing us into its mold.

One such discipline is the 3 R's (recognize, remember, refute) Rankin mentioned a few weeks ago. Another practice, the Examen, calls us to give thanks, review our day, repent, and ask for God's forgiveness at the end of each day. Other habits include regular public worship, worshipping through song, and engaging with the Word of the Gospel. Through these, we begin to re-form our hearts. We no longer serve through our own efforts but out of the overflow of Jesus' love for us. We begin to bring to Jesus the very things we used to hide from Him, knowing He can renew and heal us. Because with Him we are safe, we are made new, and we are completely loved.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

What do you really want in your life?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- 1) Read Rom 12:1-3. What initially stands out to you?
- 2) How do we see ourselves worshipping things in our life? (money, work, relationships, health/fitness, intelligence etc.)
- 3) **Guiding Question: What do you really want in your life?**
 - In Romans 12: 1 God calls us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice to Him because this is what we are made for. Do you want that?
- 4) Looking at your life, what fruit are you producing (See Gal 5:22-23)?
 - Based on the fruit your life is producing, are you living out of your old self or your new self?
- 5) How can we help one another not be conformed to the world but transformed by the renewal of our mind (Rom 12:2)?
 - What has been your experience with spiritual practices? How was going through the Prayer of Examen?
 - Are there spiritual practices we want to commit to as a community to help renew our minds?
- 6) As the "New" sermon series comes to an end, how have your views changed on how you views changed on this subject over the course of the series?

Praying for One Another

(Here are some ideas from the study to help focus your time in prayer as a group. Use by themselves or along with other prayer requests.)

- Thank God that His mercies are new every morning (Rom 12:1).
- Pray that we would not be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewal of our minds (Rom 12:2).