

To Crave and to Love

April 2, 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: Psalm 63:1-11

(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)

Read Psalm 63:1-11 using the prayer practice of Lectio Divina. Read the passage aloud 3 times. After each reading, spend a few minutes reflecting. After the first reading, open yourself to the presence of God. On the second reading, listen for a certain word or phrase that stands out to you. On the third reading, listen to what God's invitation might be for you.

Icebreaker

What is the best meal you have ever had? What made it so good?

Text for Discussion: I Peter 1:25-2:3

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

How do we become the people of God who can be a faithful presence in our society, known for hope, joy, and love? In this passage of his letter, Peter offers two commands to point us in the right direction:

Crave – We must crave God's Word, with such intensity that nothing else will appease or distract us. We long for it because we crave God Himself (Ps 63:1). This isn't a question of whether we feel this way; it is a command: *Crave God!* But what if we don't? Before we can desire God, we must first have experienced the Lord's goodness (1 Pete 2:3). And as we taste it, the more we will desire it. So we ask ourselves, "Have I encountered God and experienced His divine love? Has it captured my heart?" This isn't an intellectual exercise; it's experiential. We can't simply choose to desire God or force our hearts to feel this way. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. But this doesn't mean we are passive. There is a mysterious interplay between the work of God and our obedience and pursuit of Him:

Experience God through reading the Bible. Nothing inspires, encourages and equips God's people better than reading the Bible. And we can learn how to read it with greater skill – to see how the Gospel applies to our lives with greater clarity and insight. Because this isn't necessarily about reading the Bible *more*. It's an opportunity to spend time with God, to see and experience His goodness, love, grace, power and presence, that we might crave Him more.

Our Future Hope gives us joy, and this joy is a taste of God's goodness (1 Pete 1:6). One aspect of this hope is the inheritance we share because we've been reborn in Christ (Rom 8:17). This reward is perfect love and intimacy with our glorious Father. God Himself will be our eternal treasure and delight. We can be sure of this inheritance because we have already received the Holy Spirit who empowers us, teaches us, comforts us, and reveals God's grace to us.

Love – We are to put away all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander (1 Pete 2:10), so that we might love one another earnestly and from a pure heart (1:22). We love because we are becoming more holy, and we become more holy by obedience to God's truth. Our desires become purified, which leads to pure desires for others. Seeing our future hope also frees us to love one another. As we more fully recognize the eternal, soul-filling joy that lies ahead, our grip loosens on the things of this world. We have been born again through the imperishable Word of God, which means we too are immortal. Though we now may endure seasons of grief and trial, our inheritance is eternal and imperishable.

The beauty and hope of the Gospel is not just that we will enjoy being with God. God desires to be with us. He paid a dear price to reconcile and adopt us into His Holy Family, and He longs to bring us home. And we will find joy in His delight at having us home with Him. Our Father is all-powerful and self-sufficient, and yet He longs for us, His beloved children.

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.)

Have you tasted the goodness of God?

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 I Peter 1:22-2:3. What stands out to you?
- 2) Have different people read these passages on God's goodness (Psalm 107:1, James 1:17, Psalm 34:8, Rom 8:28, Gen 1:31).
 - What jumps out to you from these verses on God's goodness?
- 3) **Guiding Question: Have you tasted the goodness of God?**
- 4) When is a time that "tasting God" has led to a deeper desire for God in you? When is a time that has not? What is the difference?
- 5) What's the most effective way for you personally to "taste God" (i.e., study, prayer, a walk in the woods, serving others etc.)?
 - How can we as a community remind one another of our future hope?
 - How can we stand out to the world with our love? (what can we do for our neighborhood, treat our neighbors, co-workers?)

Experiment

Each time you experience (or "taste") God this week, send yourself a one sentence text describing how you tasted God.

- The night before your next CG meeting, review your texts and write out a prayer based on them (it could be a prayer of thanksgiving, praise or supplication). Bring the prayer to the group next week, and read them aloud for each other in a special prayer time.

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 for His goodness and for His love.
- Pray that we would "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8).
- Pray that we would show the world that we are Christians by our love.