

Unified Purpose: Our Mission

Feb. 25, 2018

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: Lectio Divina

(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 Colossians 3:12-14 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's the first thing that comes to mind when you think about friendship?

Text for Discussion: John 15:9-17

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Jesus calls His disciples friends and then told them to love one another the same way. By doing this, they would bear fruit and fulfill their mission. We too can more fully understand our calling to be and make disciples through Jesus' view of friendship... for we can have friendship without discipleship, but we cannot have discipleship without friendship.

Biblical friendship is a sacrificial, committed relationship dedicated to the spiritual flourishing of the other. Jesus chose friendship as the greatest love one can have, elevating it to a height no one had ever taken it before. We too must raise the value we place on the bonds of friendship if we hope to be and to make disciples. A true spiritual friend is someone that we should be willing to go to the cross for.

Our vision and mission as a church – *Lives transformed by God's grace, renewing Los Angeles for Christ...* and *Gathering, growing and sending out disciples* – are linked to Jesus' singular commandment to love one another. He began His ministry by selecting twelve people whom He would call His friends and by loving them. Neither can we love the world until we first love our friends. Friendships have the potential for grace and blessing beyond themselves. They are the launching pad and best preparation for the mission of Pacific Crossroads.

True biblical friendship is costly in several ways:

Friendship is sacrificial. Jesus said true friendship is laying down our lives for our friends. And yes, most will never physically die for another. But if friendship is not regularly cutting into our schedule, disrupting our lives and our productivity, then Jesus' command to love hasn't sunk in yet. Friendship will be – and should be – radically sacrificial for all of us.

Friendship is sanctifying because at its core, it is a desire for transformation and holiness. The greatest thing a friend can do for another is to take the time and have the discernment to see who that person truly is (and is going to be) and then encouraging and affirming it. But a sanctifying friendship will also say the hard thing; true friends are willing to challenge us when necessary.

Friendship is steadfast, committed and built to weather hardship. We cannot live the Christian life on our own. These friendships are what carry us through difficult times – because of their presence, prayers, worship and reminding us of the Gospel.

Jesus doesn't call us to do something He hasn't already done. He is the friend who sacrificed everything to save us. He is the One who challenges and convicts us but forgives and loves us into whom He is making us to be. He is always loyal, always faithful. His love will not run out. And as we seek to walk in faithful, sacrificial love, pouring out our love upon others, we will learn to rest and abide in Jesus' love. This is the sacrificial, loving community that our city desperately needs.

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.)

How does friendship help us on our mission of making disciples?

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.)

Opening questions...

- How do you define friendship? What are some characteristics of a good friend?
 - Tell a story about a time when a friend has sacrificed for you.
- How does Jesus define love? How is that different than how our culture defines love?
- How does Jesus demonstrate His love?
- What does it mean to you, to have Jesus call you "friend"?

Digging Deeper/Application...

- How is love and remaining in Christ and obedience connected to each other?
- How do you remain in God's love?
- How can we love one another like Jesus has loved us?
- How can we practically "lay down our lives" for one another?
- What does it look like for you to be sacrificial for your friends?
- Who has the Lord put on your heart? Who are you called to befriend?
- How can we as a community group love one another? How can we help each other love others outside of the group?

Experiment of the Week

Think about a friend in your life this week who you need to reconnect with. What ways can you be sacrificial with your time with them this week? How might you encourage and affirm them in who they are or are going to be? How can you help carry a burden for them? Keep a journal of your experiences this week and share it with the group next week.

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 He calls us friends and not servants.
- Ask God to help you remain in His love.
- Pray that God would help us love one another as Jesus loves us.
- Thank Jesus that He teaches us everything the Father has taught Him.