Week 1 Small Group: Be Kind

**Opening Prayer:**

God of all people, times, and places, thank you for your unending love. Thank you for your active movement and participation in our lives and world. As we journey together, help us to be more like you. Help us to brush off the influences and behaviors of conformity to others and transform us into a people who reflect Your Son and Your image. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

**Breaking the Ice:**

* Share a time when a parent, guardian or teacher made you be nice to someone else. What did that mean for you?
* How would you define nice?
* How would you define kind?

**Wrestling with the Word:**

Read Ephesians 4

* What strikes you about this passage?
* Why do you think Paul is writing these words to the Ephesians?
* What was different in your life when you began to follow Christ?
* Reading Paul’s words, what is the difference between being nice and being kind?
* Recall a moment when Jesus was kind. What did he do, and what was its impact?

**Next Steps:**

* How will your life be different based upon what you have learned in this week’s scripture, lesson and/or sermon?
* What is one human reaction which you will put away this week?
* Who is one person that you’re usually nice to; how will you be kind to them?

**Prayer for the Week:**

Lord, we have so often been told that we need to be nice to be followers of Christ and yet we discover that what your word asks is for us to be kind. Teach us the difference between the two and what it means to be kind. Help us to go deeper and embrace a desire to be kind as you have shown kindness to us. We ask in the name of our Lord and Savior. Amen

Week 2 Small Group Lesson: Be Joyful

**Opening Prayer:**

God of all people, times, and places, thank you for your unending love. Thank you for your active movement and participation in our lives and world. As we journey together, help us to be more like you. Help us to brush off the influences and behaviors of conformity to others and transform us into a people who reflect Your Son and Your image. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

**Breaking the Ice:**

* Name a person who you would describe as joyful.
* For you, what is the difference between happiness and joy?
* Share a recent experience when you found real joy.

**Wrestling with the Word:**

Read John 15:1-11

* What strikes you about this passage?
* What does it mean to abide in Christ?
* How does Christ abide in you? (verse 4)
* How is God pruning you in this season?
* Where have you found joy in your walk with God? Even in difficult times?

**Next Steps:**

* How will your life be different based upon what you have learned in this week’s scripture, lesson and/or sermon?
* What one practice will you do to abide in Christ this week?
* Keep a journal this week of where you found joy each day.

**Prayer for the Week:**

Gracious God, so often we are consumed by the ideas that being nice will also somehow bring happiness to our lives. Yet, we find ourselves missing the greater opportunity of discovering your true joy. Bring us to a place of understanding real joy that comes when we abide in you even in the most difficult of times. May you enable us to go beyond being nice to demonstrating real joy in our daily living, for us as this in Jesus the Christ, Amen.

Week 3 Small Group Lesson: Be Peaceful

**Opening Prayer:**

God of all people, times, and places, thank you for your unending love. Thank you for your active movement and participation in our lives and world. As we journey together, help us to be more like you. Help us to brush off the influences and behaviors of conformity to others and transform us into a people who reflect Your Son and Your image. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

**Breaking the Ice:**

* When you see a peace sign, what comes to your mind?
* Share a time when you felt truly at peace.
* What do you think Martin Luther King Jr. meant by peace?

**Wrestling with the Word:**

Read Philippians 4:4-9

* What strikes you about this passage?
* Philippians is believed to have been written while Paul was in prison. What does it mean to show or have peace in the midst of turmoil?
* What does “the peace that passes all understanding” mean for you?
* What is your mind full of? How do you get the mind of Christ?
* Look at each “whatever…” (v. 8). What does each (true, noble, right, etc.) mean in your life?
* What have you seen in others that demonstrates the peace of God?

**Next Steps:**

* How will your life be different based upon what you have learned in this week’s scripture, lesson and/or sermon?
* Name one area of your life where you do not have peace. What can you do this week to find peace in that area?
* What can you do each day to begin by focusing on the mind of Christ?

**Prayer for The Week:**

Eternal God, your word says that you would keep in perfect peace those whose mind stays on you. How our minds wander is so many directions that at times is seems impossible to stay focused on you. Grant us the understanding of shalom that we might experience what you mean by peace. Help us to be the peacemakers who pursue more than being nice but work diligently to bring your peace to our church, communities, and world. This we ask in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

Week 4 Small Group Lesson: Be Loving

**Opening Prayer:**

God of all people, times, and places, thank you for your unending love. Thank you for your active movement and participation in our lives and world. As we journey together, help us to be more like you. Help us to brush off the influences and behaviors of conformity to others and transform us into a people who reflect Your Son and Your image. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

**Breaking the Ice:**

* What is your favorite romantic comedy? Love scene in a movie?
* Who was the first person you ever told, “I love you?”

**Wrestling with the Word:**

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

* What strikes you about this passage?
* This passage describes agape love. What is agape love?
* What do you think Paul is trying to communicate in verses 9-12?
* Another famous love passage is John 3:16 (For God so loved the world…). How are 1 Corinthians 13 and John 3:16 related?
* Why is the “greatest of these” love?

**Next Steps:**

* How will your life be different based upon what you have learned in this week’s scripture, lesson and/or sermon?
* What are 3 ways you could love people in your neighborhood or community this week?
* Who else in your life needs you to share the love of God with them?

**Prayer for The Week:**

Gracious and Loving God, we love because you first loved us. Such love goes beyond our understanding and yet through Christ we experience this amazing unconditional love. Teach us how to move beyond sentimental feelings that are nothing more than niceness. Strengthen us to find the more excellent way of agape that will show our families and others what real love looks like. We ask in the name of the one who demonstrated such love for us, Jesus the Christ. Amen.