



Week 1 Small Group: From Marginalization to Mutuality

Opening Prayer:

Holy God, we thank you for the gift of coming together to share in your word, in ministry and in life. We invite you into our conversations and direct our ways. Illuminate for us the message that will lead to faith and hope. Amen.

"In a real sense all life is inter-related. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be." Martin Luther King, Jr.

Breaking the Ice:

Icebreaker: Share something about your neighbors. How are they similar and different from you?

Wrestling with the Word:

Read Luke 10:25-37

- Why do you think Christ answered the lawyer's question with a parable?
- How is asking "who is my neighbor" different than asking "how can I be a good neighbor"?
- Mutuality expects that every person I encounter has the capacity to become an agent of God's mercy and grace. How was this evidenced in this parable?
- How does this relate to the lawyer's initial question, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Next Steps:

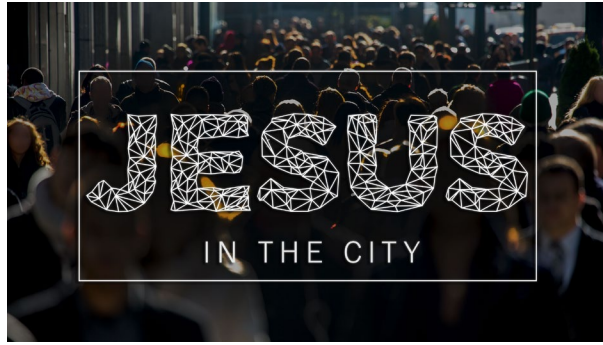
- Which one of the people in this passage do you relate to the most?
- When have you encountered mercy and blessing through a social "outsider"?
- If the idea of mutuality is that every person I meet is a neighbor, who are the people I have been dismissing as strangers? How might my interactions change if I see them as a neighbor?
- Where have you seen Christ in your interactions with those who are different from you?

Prayer for the Week:

Jesus, help us to make choices in this week that make us a good neighbor. Open our eyes to those who are suffering, open our hearts to those who are hurting. Help us to be gracious and generous not for our own recognition, but that people may be led to you. Amen.



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Week 2 Small Group: From Invisible to Affirmed

Opening Prayer:

Jesus, we come together today to listen, to learn, to grow in our life of faith. Holy Spirit, guide our conversation. Holy God, hear our prayers. May all we do in this time bring hope and new life. Amen.

"Dear Friend, You are not, and never will be invisible. You are seen, heard and are worthy. Love, A Friend."

Breaking the Ice:

Describe someone who had a great impact on your life. How have you used what you learned from them?

Wrestling with the Word:

Read Luke 13:10-17

- This woman's condition is that she is bent over and cannot raise herself up. How might this be both metaphorical and an actual condition?
- What was Jesus' first act of justice for this woman?
- Why do you think the religious leaders were not celebrating this woman's healing?
- How does Jesus point to their doing the same?

Next Steps:

- Who are those in the margins that we might have become blinded to their plight?
- Where in our community have invisible people been forgotten by the church?
- How have we sometimes placed the importance of ritual in front of human need?
- Where might we need to show compassion and love over religious practices?

Prayer for the Week:

God, help us to lift up those who have become invisible in our communities. May we seek out ways to offer justice and hope to all those who have been forgotten. Allow us to affirm their sacred worth and celebrate their place in our communities. Amen.



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Week 3 Small Group: From Possession to Liberation

Opening Prayer:

God, as we read the scriptures, may the words come alive to us, may they teach, guide and inspire us to live in new ways that lead to transformation for ourselves, for each other and for the world. Amen.

"For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others." Nelson Mandela

Breaking the Ice:

Do you like scary books, tv shows or movies and why or why not?

Wrestling with the Word:

Read Luke 8:26-39

- Describe all the hostile or adverse aspects of this scene.
- Discuss how this man's condition points to his isolation from others.
- Describe the response of the man who had been healed.
- Describe the response of the people when they saw the man healed and then heard how he was healed.

Next Steps:

- Where are inhospitable places where you have experienced God's redemptive acts?
- Are people today – who suffer in different ways – excluded from society? How about the church? How about *our* church?
- How can we be agents of hope to those who are suffering from isolation and despair?
- Jesus invited the man who was healed to join him in mission. How do we invite those who are in the margins to have a place to serve Jesus alongside us?

Prayer for the Week:

Jesus, we thank you for all the ways you enter our brokenness and pain and offer healing. We lift up to you those who are suffering, especially those who have been pushed aside and left alone. Give us the vision to see that all are welcomed into your loving embrace. Give us the conviction to do the same. Amen.



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Week 4 Small Group: From Scarcity to Abundance

Opening Prayer:

Gracious God, thank you for the goodness you offer us. Precious Jesus, inspire us to be a part of your plan. Holy Spirit, fill us with the confidence to move from an attitude of scarcity to abundance. Amen.

"It is the heart that makes a man rich. He is rich according to what he is, not according to what he has." Henry Ward Beecher

Breaking the Ice:

What's something in your house you want to get rid of but can't? Why are you holding onto it?

Wrestling with the Word:

Read Luke 9:10-17

- What do you think the apostles were thinking when Jesus directed them to feed the crowd?
- Why didn't Jesus create bread and fish to feed the crowd from nothing?
- How does the community take part in this blessing?
- What was the significance of picking up broken pieces?

Next Steps:

- How might God be calling you to let go of your fear of scarcity? How might this change the way you serve?
- Where have you seen God provide abundantly when the need was great?
- Since there are so many needs in the world, how do you choose where to devote your time, effort and money? How do we allow great need to affect our engaging?
- What struggles have you had in surrendering yourself to be part of Jesus' plan to serve those in great need? How can you place the situation in Jesus' hands, and then receive the power to meet needs beyond yourself?

Prayer for the Week:

Jesus, we thank you for this time of being in your word. Thank you for the connections we have made as we have gathered together. Point us to the ways that we can live more fully like you. May we go forth and live in ways that bring hope to all people. Amen.



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