



Week 1 Small Group: Hearing Other Voices

Opening Prayer:

Lord, you have made us one with you and have taught us to be one with one another. Be with us in this time of learning, guide us to see each other through your eyes of your love. Allow this time together to challenge us, refine us and be filled with your grace. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Quote – Deep listening is miraculous for both the listener and speaker. When someone receives us with open-hearted, non-judgmental, intensely interested listening, our spirits expand. Sue Patton Soele

Breaking The Ice:

Have you ever been labeled or misjudged in a room or crowd? Perhaps with a group of new people, or on an interview, or any other interaction?

Wrestling With The Word:

Read Mark 10:46-52

- The scripture describes Bartimaeus as a “blind beggar.” What does that say to you?
- When Bartimaeus gets loud the crowd rebukes him. How does this devalue Bartimaeus? In what ways has our community been the crowd in today's story?
- How would you have responded to Bartimaeus if you were the disciples? If you were part of the crowd?
- Who are the Bartimaeus' you might engage in your own life? Do you notice them? Silence them? Ignore them?

Next Steps:

- What ways can we reach out to hear other voices and stories from other people, cultures, faiths in your community (remembering to be careful not to tokenize or patronize)? Share ideas and let's pick one or two to start working on right away.
- Write down the names of two people, whether in your inner circle (family, church) or community that you can reach out to and spend time just listening to their story this week.

Closing Prayer:

Holy Spirit allow us to see people with new eyes of faith and justice. Help us to listen with care to the stories of those around us. We open ourselves to your work and will. In the name of Jesus', we pray. Amen.



Week 2 Small Group: Sisters Are Doing It for Themselves

Opening Prayer:

Lord, you have made us one with you and have taught us to be one with one another. Be with us in this time of learning, guide us to see each other through your eyes of your love. Allow this time together to challenge us, refine us and be filled with your grace. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Quote – The beauty of the world lies in the diversity of its people. Unknown

Breaking The Ice:

Whose voice has made an impact on your life and how?

Wrestling With The Word:

Read Numbers 27:1-11

- What did these sisters' risk when they decided to speak up?
- How did the pleas of these sisters change history for all the women of Israel? How do we feel this change today?
- What role did Moses play in this story?
- How did God affirm the worth, role and authority of women in this passage?

Next Steps:

- Who have been female spiritual leaders in your life?
- Can you name places in the church, the community and globally that the role of women is still oppressed?
- What does it look like to have "no inheritance" today? Who in our community has no inheritance that leads to a place to live or work? How can we support these persons to rectify these inequities?

Closing Prayer:

Gracious God help us to know when things need to be changed, and to look to you to guide us. Help us to speak up, or listen, or change when we need to. Let us believe that through your spirit we are empowered and capable to impact change for the better. May we move out boldly with open hearts, minds and moving feet. Amen.



Week 3 Small Group: R.E.S.P.E.C.T. the Stranger

Opening Prayer:

Lord, you have made us one with you and have taught us to be one with one another. Be with us in this time of learning, guide us to see each other through your eyes of your love. Allow this time together to challenge us, refine us and be filled with your grace. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Quote - Differences simply act as a yarn of curiosity unraveling until we get to the other side. Ciore Taylor

Breaking The Ice: Invite each person to talk about a time when they went to a new place or community and were a stranger, and to reflect on how that felt.

Wrestling With The Word:

Read Deuteronomy 10:14-22

- What does the word stranger mean to you?
- When you read this passage where do you see yourself, as Israel or the stranger?
- Where is the conflict in the passage? Is there a tension between what God is asking of Israel as a nation and their acceptance of the stranger?

Next Steps:

- Thinking about the community you live in, and the neighborhood your church is in, how will you actively play a part in building relationships with the people you don't know? What steps will you commit to taking in the next month?
- What ideas can you share and help implement to make outsiders feel more genuinely welcomed when they come to your church?

Closing Prayer:

Gracious God help us to push past discomfort, procrastination, and all excuses. Give us strength and boldness. We long for a heart like yours. May we seek to reach people in new ways, and through us, may they know your love and their worth in you.



Week 4 Small Group Diverse People, One Vision

Opening Prayer:

God of all creation, we celebrate today that we are all made in your image, and yet you have created each of us to be uniquely different. Through your Word and our conversations today, open our eyes Lord. Help us see you in others, to love in the ways you have called us to, and to see the places in our lives in which you are calling us to grow.

Quote – To love someone, is to know them. - Unknown

Breaking The Ice:

Invite people to share a time when they felt the power of unity.

Wrestling With The Word:

Read Revelation 7:9-17

- What type of diversity is represented here?
- What do you see that is bringing them together in unity?
- How does how unity and diversity as a church here on earth influence this picture?

Next Steps:

- Where do you see room for growth in welcoming and celebrating diversity and unity? How can you help in that growth?
- In what ways do we need to repent so that we can welcome and celebrate diversity and unity with truth and a right spirit?

Closing Prayer:

Gracious God, thank you for chances to hear and understand, and to work on getting it right. Lead us now, oh God, that we might love with open arms, minister with open eyes, and invite with unbiased open doors. Help us to celebrate all of humanity, to seek to understand and learn. And God, we confess that we have not always done this right. So, thank you now for another chance. In Christ, amen.



Iceberg Exercise

When you see an iceberg, whether massive or small, each unique in its shape, we only see about 10% of the actual iceberg. The other 90% is beneath the surface. Using this image below, make a list describing your small group and what people might see above the surface and what they don't see beneath the surface.

Examples of what they might see above the surface (everyone is in the same age category or gender, all go to the same church). Examples of what they might see below the surface (military veterans, serves the community in ways people don't know, wrestles through tough times together).

