

Week 1 Small Group: Are You Sure You're Up for This?

OPENING PRAYER:

God of new possibilities, awaken our spirits and bodies to sharing more deeply Christ's self-giving love for the world. Give us courage daily to lose our lives by relinquishing everything that harms life – human and non-human – for Christ's sake. Make us passionate for mercy, justice, and peace that we might serve the common good and support the flourishing of life. Amen.

Quote: "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." Dietrich Bonhoeffer

BREAKING THE ICE:

What is your least favorite chore that you have to do?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read Mark 8:27-38:

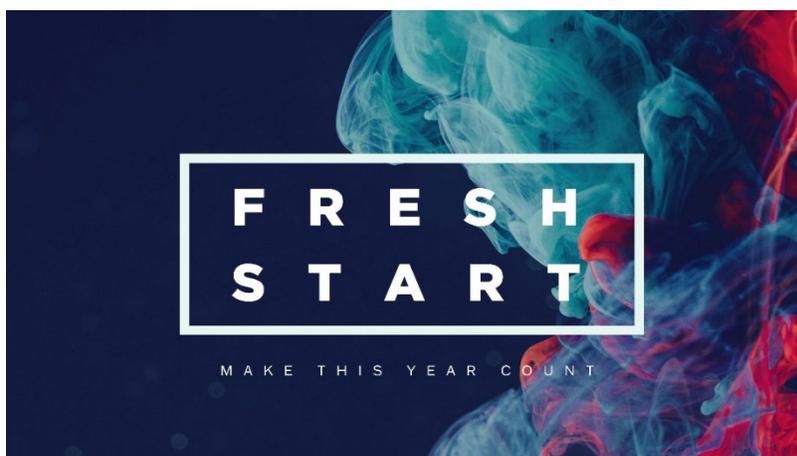
1. Why do you think Jesus wanted the fact that he was the Messiah to be kept secret?
2. Why does Jesus say to Peter "Get behind me Satan?" How do you think it relates to Jesus' temptation? (See Luke 4:1-13 or Matthew 4:1-11)
3. Why does Jesus ask his disciples who they say he is? Who is Jesus to you?
4. Can you name some of the different names or beliefs the world has about who Jesus is (even if they are mistaken)?

NEXT STEPS:

1. How do we live out Christ's call to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him?
2. In the world we live in, what does it mean to "lose our lives" for the sake of Jesus Christ?
3. What does it look like to lose your life this week? What adjustments do you need to make?
4. Where has Jesus been leading you that you are unwilling or resistant to go? Are you up for the challenge, the fresh start?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Holy God, let today be a fresh start with you. Draw me closer to you; draw me closer to my neighbor; draw me closer to my enemy. Help me to so love the world in the way that you do. May my life bring glory to your name. Amen.



Week 2 Small Group: Hens and Chicks

OPENING PRAYER:

Self-sacrificing God, you show us the pain and sorrow you feel for the world. Forgive us for taking you for granted, for letting our fears and distractions prevent us from doing your will, and for resisting your vision of shalom on earth. May we feel your agony over the suffering of your children and of creation. May this suffering move us to live according to your Spirit and proclaim the life-giving gospel of the risen Christ. Amen.

Quote:

"There will come a time when you believe everything is finished; that will be the beginning." - Louis L'Amour

BREAKING THE ICE:

What distracts you from the things you should be focusing on?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read Luke 13:31-35

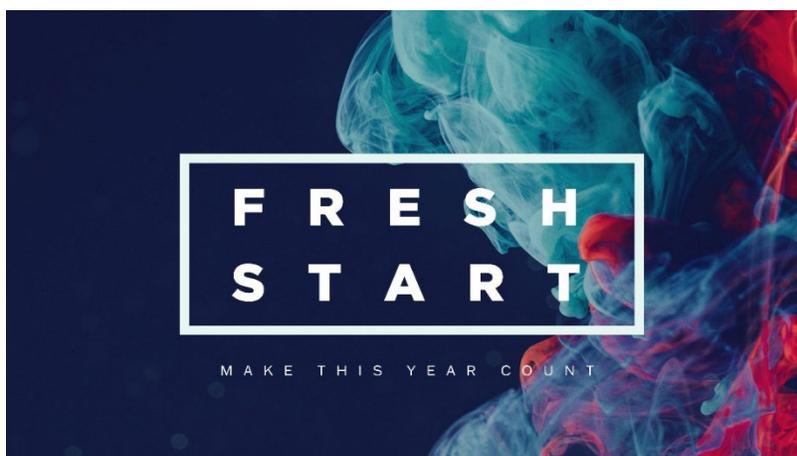
1. What distractions is Jesus facing in this passage?
2. What do you think Jesus understands his purpose to be? What is he focused on?
3. Re-read verse 34. What do you hear Jesus saying in this particular verse? What images or feelings does it evoke?
4. What does the image of Jesus as the mother hen teach us about how Jesus saw the people of Jerusalem? How does it shape the way we see Jesus? How might it inform us of how Jesus sees us?

NEXT STEPS:

1. What keeps us resistant to the vision God has for our lives?
2. How can we stay focused on what is most important in our lives, especially in a world that is filled with distractions and frustrations?
3. What do you need to clear away this week to get and maintain a focused fresh start?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Holy God, let today be a fresh start with you. Draw me closer to you; draw me closer to my neighbor; draw me closer to my enemy. Help me to so love the world in the way that you do. May my life bring glory to your name. Amen.



Week 3 Small Group: Ten Lepers. How Many Miracles?

OPENING PRAYER:

Grateful, we are humbled! Grateful, we are transformed! Grateful, we are empowered! O, Giver of all good gifts, thank you for the example of the healed Samaritan leper. His response of profound gratitude to Jesus helps us to see that being grateful is both an act of faith and a way of life. Thank you for reminding us that the practice of genuine gratitude gives us power to shape our lives and communities according to the grace and love of Christ. Amen.

Quote:

"In normal life one is not at all aware that we always receive infinitely more than we give, and that gratitude is what enriches life." - Diana Butler Bass

BREAKING THE ICE:

What are three things that you are grateful for in the last hour?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read Luke 17:11-19

1. Why do you think this one person with leprosy returns to give praise to God while the others did not?
2. Why do you think the other nine did not come back?
3. How do you think Jesus really feels about one of ten returning, especially given that the one is an "outsider," a Samaritan?
4. Does Jesus' response to the one who returned negate the healing done for the other nine?

NEXT STEPS:

1. How is your faith making you whole today?
2. How do you show and practice gratitude in your life?
3. How does living a life of awe and gratitude transform our lives and our faith journeys both personally and communally?

CLOSING PRAYER:

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Week 4 Small Group: Salvation in the House

OPENING PRAYER:

Oh, Jesus, I am awestruck by you! Amid the crowd, you looked up and saw me and invited me. Here I am, persistent God! I am coming to you. I am happy to welcome you. I am all yours! You have touched and softened my heart that I may receive your gift of salvation. As I enter into the joy of your saving presence, I am freed from my guilt and shame. Forgiven, I repent and right my wrongs! Loved, I will follow and serve you! Amen.

Quote:

"Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it." - Rumi

BREAKING THE ICE:

How do you prepare for guests to come over? Share a story about a time when you were either very prepared to have people over, or a time you weren't so prepared.

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read Luke 19:1-10

1. Who is seeking whom in this story? Who finds whom? (Is Zaccheus looking for Jesus, or is Jesus looking for Zaccheus)?
2. Discuss verse 8: What concrete things does Zaccheus offer to give up? How does this lead him to a fresh start?
3. Imagine what it would be like if Jesus invited himself to your home like he did to Zaccheus. What would your initial reaction be? What fears or worries would you have? How might you respond? Would it give you a fresh start like it does for Zaccheus?
4. Why do you think it's important and notable that Jesus calls Zaccheus by his name and not by his position or status in the community?

NEXT STEPS:

1. What have you learned through this study and how has it given you a fresh start to see Jesus and your relationship with him?
2. How can you develop and claim a "life mission" as Jesus does in verse 10? What would yours be? How might it change the way you interact in the world? How might your life mission include those on the margins?

3. Where in our communities do we need to “look up” or around, like Jesus does to find Zaccheus, in order to find those who are on the margins and need to be included in the kingdom of God?
4. In finding Jesus daily, what things are we willing to give up for the sake of others as Zaccheus did?

CLOSING PRAYER:

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