

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

JANUARY 13, 2019

Welcome to a new year and to yet another Sunday set aside to allow Communities and/or small groups to meet! The theme for the first two months of 2019 is “God’s love, our love”. The services will focus on how we live out God’s love for us in a world that belongs to God. Over the next number of Sundays we will be covering our responsibilities for missions, creation care, stewardship, diakonia, compassion/empathy, vocation and being a blessing (Cadet and GEMS theme). Even though that theme may cover only the first four Community/small group Sundays, it is a theme that perhaps you wish to expand on and carry out for quite a number of Sundays and thereby really dig into it in some way.

2018 discussions and approaches to small groups can be found under the “Communities” tab on the church website. (*Note: Sermons can also be accessed online at ccrc.on.ca/sermons.)*

An introduction to the 2019 theme as well as numerous resources for discussion can be found at the “Communities” tab on the church website under “January – February, 2019 Introductory Material”.

I. Discussion Guide – based on Pastor Carel’s sermon – January 6.

1. **Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 62:11-12. This was the Scripture Reading for the Christmas Day worship service which leads us to the theme for January and February.
 1. List the “names” given to God’s people.
 2. What is striking about those names?
 3. Pastor Carel was struck by and emphasized the name “Sought Out” or “Sought After” especially in the light of the Christmas story – God sought us out by sending Jesus. What is so unusual about this fact?
 4. Think of the Christmas story as recorded in Matthew 1:18ff or in Luke 2ff. Take note of the different reactions to the birth of Jesus by the different characters in the story. What was the recorded reaction of Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, Herod, the public, the magi?
 5. Pastor Carel echoed a number of questions in both the Christmas Day sermon and the January 6 sermon. When reflecting on the Christmas story, one writer asked, “How can we conceivably continue on as if nothing has happened? Will we allow the events of these last days to fall again to the backdrop of our lives?” The famous preacher Charles Spurgeon, reflecting on the truth that God sought us out, asked, “If it be really so that you are such debtors to Divine seeking, ought you not to spend your whole lifetime in seeking others out?” What is your response to the gospel of Christmas? Does Jesus’ birth make any difference to you? If so, what difference?

2. **Scripture Reading: 1 John 4:7-21**
 1. Based on this passage, what is the Biblical meaning of love?
 2. How does the Biblical meaning of love differ from the ways in which we often use the word “love”?
 3. How ought God’s love for us, transform the way we see other people? Does it transform the way we see other people?
 4. Is it easy to show to love to others? Why do we sometimes find it difficult to show love?

5. Recognizing that love is not based on feelings, what are some practical ways you can show love to others?

II. Discussion Guide – Based on Pastor Andrew Zantingh’s sermon – “God’s Call – Our Call” – Jan. 13.

1. Scripture Reading: Luke 14:15-24

1. Pastor Andrew said: **“God is a missionary God. We are his missionary people—in our very identity. We, as the church, exist as servants of his mission—called by God into relationship with him and sent with his mission to compel others to enter into the life of his kingdom.”** In what ways are we “*compelling others to enter into the life of his kingdom*”? Be specific. If you are struggling with how to answer the question, what does that say about our identity as “*missionary people*”?
2. Today we learned that *meals have meaning. Intrinsic meaning. Multi-faceted meaning.*
 - **Meals are about celebrating life: even every day meals that just sustain life.**
 - **Meals are about forming community: even family meals are critical for family formation.**
 - **Meals are about extending hospitality: meals are more than just family affairs.**
 - **Meals are about friendship: Inviting others to share a meal includes them in your circle.**
 - **Meals are about social status: meals re-inforce who you are by who you eat with.***Ultimately—meals are a matter of grace. A way of sharing life/love or withholding it. So if you want to understand Jesus and his mission/our mission we have to understand the meaning of his meal. Evaluate your own meal times or opportunities. How are they fulfilling the described multifaceted meaning? What can be done to enhance our meal times?*
3. Now think about the parable in Luke 14. What’s your reaction to the parable’s narrative on first hearing it? Does it make sense to you? Does it draw you? Are there parts which surprise you?
4. In what ways did the banquet, in the parable in Luke 14, live up to the meaning of the described multi-faceted meaning of a meal? What message did it send to the Pharisees? In other words, why did Jesus tell this parable?
5. What do the excuses of the guests reveal about them and their hearts?
6. What was shocking about the actions of the host?
7. What is the message of the parable?
8. Pastor Andrew said, *“You are someone: made to enjoy the loving grace of your maker.”* What does such a statement mean to you?
9. How does the celebration of the Lord’s Supper fit in with this discussion about meals?
10. Pastor Andrew said, *“You are someone: made to extend loving grace to others – even and especially strangers.”* How could you “*extend loving grace to others*”? Be specific.
11. What cultural practices may have to change if we were to extend grace to others? What obstacles may stand in the way of changing such practices? Be vulnerable and honest.

V. Closing time: Take some time to pray together.

Note: The next Community/Small Group Sundays are: January 27; February 10 and 24; March 10 and 24; April 7 and 28; May 12.