

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

OCTOBER 14, 2018

Welcome to another Sunday set aside to allow Communities and/or small groups to meet (**Note:** Last year we called the small groups “Community Care Groups”, but that created some confusion and so therefore this year we simply will use the term “small groups” in place of CCGs.).

Material for the small groups is based on the general themes addressed in the sermons: the sacraments (a series that ends next weekend) and “surprising” or “odd” Bible stories (November 4-25). The latter theme is one that the youth at “Impact” are studying as well. While the sermons provide some background information and help to inform the conversation, one does not necessarily have to listen to the sermons in order to participate in the small groups. Leading a small group will take some work and creativity on the part of the group leaders...

For different study material suggestions or for different approaches to small groups please refer to the September 16, 2018 material as found under the “Communities” tab on the church website.

(Note: sermons can be accessed online at ccrc.on.ca/sermons)

I. Some ideas for beginning your time together:

1. Maybe you have been together for a long time or maybe you are just new to each other. Spend some time with some connecting exercises (good for all ages). Here are some suggestions:
 - Put coins on a table and have each one pick up a coin and look at the date. Ask them to tell you where they were in that year and what was going on. Put coins back on table and repeat.
 - Perhaps someone in your group is aware of some sort of game you can play that is fun and helpful for introductions.
 - What book did you read and would you or would you not recommend it?
 - What movie did you see and what do you remember?
 - Our God displays time and again, in scripture and in our lives, His awesome power; greater power than any other god we could follow. Why not take some time to go around your group and share a moment, whether a grand event or a quiet moment, in which you were very aware of the presence of the Lord.
2. Take the opportunity to spend some time in prayer thanking the Lord for the past week and for the things experienced. People of all ages can be involved in circle prayer.

II. Discussion Theme Introduction: What does it mean to be the church? The Sacraments

Each fall, as we begin a new season of church activities, we like to ask the question, “What does it mean to be the church?” This year (2018), we are looking at our identity as God’s covenant people, proclaimed in the gospel and sealed by the sacraments of Baptism and Lord’s Supper. For 7 Sundays (September 9-October 21) the messages are focused on the sacraments of Baptism and Lord’s Supper based on the teachings of the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Days 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.

It is helpful to have a hardcopy of the Catechism at hand or online you can go to <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/heidelberg-catechism>.

Two weeks ago (September 30, 2018) discussion materials were presented that covered both the sacrament of baptism and the Lord's Supper. If you missed that material, by all means have a look at it and use it for you discussion time. You can find it at our website www.ccrcc.on.ca and follow the links to the "Communities" page.

Discussion Guide: The Sacrament of Lord's Supper – (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 28, 29, 30)

What you will find below, are questions based on the Scripture and Lord's Days from both October 7 and 14. Obviously you cannot walk through each question or reflection piece below so feel free to be creative and pick from any of the following storytelling pieces or Scripture questions or reflection pieces for your discussion time. What you find below are discussion starters...

1. Storytelling:

Go around the circle and have people tell the story of what it means for them to partake of Lord's Supper. How does the holy supper *remind* and *assure* them that *they share* in Christ's one sacrifice on the cross and in all his benefits, as the Catechism puts it?

If you have an elder or deacon or perchance a pastor in your group, ask them to reflect on what it means for them to serve communion. If you have children in the group or people who do not participate ask them to tell you what it feels like for them to be present at the service but not partake.

2. Scripture Reading: John 6:25-59

(The following questions (a-f) by Jo Anne Taylor, pastor of First United Methodist Church in New Ulm, MN are about John 6.)

- a. *How is Jesus the bread from heaven? What does Jesus mean when he says "I am the bread of life"?*
- b. *What does it mean to ingest the bread of heaven into ourselves?*
- c. *Why would we want to?*
- d. *How does eating this bread give us eternal life?*
- e. *How do we live into eternity in the here and now?*
- f. *If "you are what you eat," does feeding on Christ turn us into what C. S. Lewis called "little Christs?"*
- g. In verses 53ff Jesus talks about people actually eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Really? What are we to make of these statements? Do we take them literally? If not, what does it say about the way in which we read the Bible?

3. Reflect: "The more we celebrate the Lord's Supper, the more our faith will grow, and the more our Christ-like living will grow."

4. The language of Q&A 81 is reflected in the traditional CRC form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. In the invitation to the table, the minister is supposed to say: "All who are truly sorry for their sins, who sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus as their saviour, and who earnestly desire to lead a godly life, ought to accept the invitation now given and come with gladness to the table of their Lord" (1964, based on a Dutch liturgy from 1566). This is a very broad invitation! And in recent years the CRC has been trying to figure out the place of baptized children in this invitation, a question which has divided the Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Roman & Protestant) branches of the church for a thousand years. After considerable study and decades of dialogue, Synod 2011 made the decision to open the table to "all baptized members," recognizing that God's grace offered in the sacraments does not discriminate based on age or ability. Like baptism, the Lord's Supper is a celebration of God's faithfulness, not ours. It's important that in our celebration of the sacraments we recognize the gift of God's grace to all his children. (Agenda for Synod 2011 – Faith Formation Report)

- a. What sorts of thoughts come to mind as you read the paragraph above?
- b. If it is important that "in our celebration of the sacraments we recognize the gift of God's grace to all his children", how do we do that, i.e. recognize the gift to *all* his children?
- c. **Read: I Corinthians 11:17-32; Psalm 50:14-16; Isaiah 1:11-17**
- d. The invitation for Lord's Supper is to "all who..." Who ought to be excluded? Anyone?
- e. **Comment. Reflect.** The Heidelberg Catechism teaches that those who are unbelieving and ungodly ought not to be admitted to the Lord's Supper, in fact, "the Christian church is duty-bound to exclude such people...until they reform their lives (Lord's Day 30, A. 82)." This is a direct reference to church discipline and the authority given to the church. Does this language surprise you? Is it appropriate to remove people from partaking of "spiritual food" when they perhaps need to be reminded of God's grace in their lives?
- f. **Share stories.** Are there times when you have not partaken of Lord's Supper? Why did you not partake?
- g. What does it mean to "eat and drink judgment on oneself" (I Corinthians 11:29)?
- h. Teri is 7 years old. She says she loves the Lord and wants to partake of the Lord's Supper. What do you think? In the light of the above material from both the Scriptures and the Catechism, should young believers like Teri be allowed to take communion? Why or why not? Do you know the Community CRC position on children at the Lord's Table? If a pastoral elder is in your group, perhaps you can ask them to explain it. For further answers to questions about children at the Lord's Table go to:
<https://www.crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits/welcoming-children-lords-supper-toolkit/frequently-asked-questions>

III. **Closing time:** Take some time to pray together. Sing a Lord's Supper song or the doxology.