

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

OCTOBER 28, 2018

Welcome to yet 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. This week there is a short break to focus on the 400th anniversary of the Canons of Dort in connection with the Reformation. While the sermons provide some back-ground 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:

Please be sure that you begin your time together well. It is important that people know one another and are comfortable being together. Some ice-breaker, or reflection on the weeks gone by may help to set the stage for a time together. Be vulnerable. For ideas you can look back at the other guides that precede this one on the Communities page on the website www.crc.on.ca.

As you begin you may want to 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 have been looking at our identity as God’s covenant people as 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. If you are focusing on the keys of the kingdom as outlined in Lord’s Day 31 it may be 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>.

Four and two weeks ago respectively (September 30, October 14, 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.crc.on.ca and follow the links to the “Communities” page.

Discussion Guide: The Keys of the Kingdom – (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 31)

1. **Storytelling:**

Go around the circle and have people tell the story about sermon they heard that really stuck with them. What about the sermon was so memorable?

If you have a pastor in your group, ask them to reflect on what it means for them to preach.

2. **Reflect:** Suppose someone came to our church for the first time. Would they get the impression that preaching is important or unimportant? Why?

3. **Scripture Reading: Matthew 16: 13-20**

- a. *What strikes you about these verses?*
- b. *If Jesus were to ask you the question as to who he is, what would you say? What is your testimony concerning Jesus?*
- c. *In what ways does Matt 16:13-20 refute the popular notion that Jesus was just a good teacher, prophet or good example?*
- d. *How do you understand the giving of the “keys” to Peter?*
- e. *How does the preaching of the Word open the Kingdom of Heaven? How is our preaching the gospel a key to the kingdom? Read Romans 10:8-17 and explain.*

4. **Storytelling**

Go around the circle and have people share discipline stories. Either they experienced discipline of some sort themselves or they have experienced church discipline or parental or school discipline. What did they experience? What was it like?

5. **Reflect:** The form for Public Profession of Faith asks those who are making profession of faith if they “promise to do all you can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to strengthen your love and commitment to Christ by sharing faithfully in the life of the church, honoring and submitting to its authority; and do you join with the people of God in doing the work of the Lord everywhere?” What “authority” does the church have that you are honoring and submitting to? How do you understand that statement?

6. **Reflect:** Discipline and discipleship are closely connected. How? What is the difference? What do they have to do one with the other?

7. How is discipline a key of the Kingdom? What is the purpose of discipline?

8. What does discipline have to do with the Lord’s Supper? What is the connection?

9. Despite the Form for Excommunication, as found in the back of the Psalter Hymnal, why is formal church discipline so difficult to carry out?

Discussion Guide: Reformation Day Focus – October 28

1. **Storytelling:** Go around the circle and tell stories about how you may have experienced “Reformation Day”. What unique things did you experience or do?
2. The Canons of Dort, whose 400th birthday is being celebrated this year (2018), is one of the forms of unity of the Christian Reformed Church. The Canons contain 5 points of doctrine:
 Point 1: God *elects* people to salvation;
 Point 2: Christ *atones* for people on the cross;
 Point 3-4: *Sinful* people are transformed by God’s *grace*;
 Point 5: the Holy Spirit helps the saints to *persevere*.

Reflect. How do you respond to the following quote: *“The “five points of Calvinism” are not just dry doctrines for theological ivory towers. These points capture the truths of Scripture. They offer incredible peace and joy. They describe God’s amazing love. They make me whole-heartedly willing and ready to live for him.”* These are the closing words of an article written by Rev.

Aaron Vriesman. The article can be found here:

<https://www.thebanner.org/columns/2018/10/why-i-m-a-five-point-calvinist>

3. **Share:** How familiar are you with the Canons of Dort?
4. Why does doctrine matter today? Is it not sufficient to say that you believe in Jesus or God?
5. **Reflect:** *“Every day, we get a lot of conflicting messages coming into our lives through all sorts of different media. TV, advertising, movies, blogs, social media, school, work, or church – all of these can offer different perspectives on what is important in life. What are some of the messages that you hear from different parts of your life?”*

The Word of God offers us a different message, a message of grace. This message is very different from the messages that we get from the rest of culture. Covergirl might claim to make life “Easy, Breezy,” but you need to buy their makeup to find out. [Sports brand] can tell us [be yourself or something], but you have to use their equipment to really be yourself.

Scripture tells us that God loves us and choose us even before we were born, that there is nothing that we can do that will make him turn his back on us. It all depends on God. This is a story that is very important for our culture to hear.” (Canons of Dort, Dive into Doctrine material, year 1) What do you think? How radical is the Christian message?

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