



New Community Group Launch Material - Part 3: Faith

Welcome:

Greet one another by giving everyone a warm hug.

Opening Prayer:

Have someone open your time by slowly reading Psalm 27.

Read:

Value - Faith

The vision of Reality SF is that we would be a community following Jesus, seeking renewal in our city. Our values are ***faith, humility, hospitality, and rootedness***. These values are our attempt to answer the question, “How do we follow Jesus together as a community in San Francisco?” By practicing faith, humility, hospitality, and rootedness. We believe our values are what living out our vision will look and feel like in everyday life. Over the next four weeks, we want to take a closer look at each of these values and actually *practice* living our our values together.

Our first value is faith. Simply put, faith is trust in Jesus. It is not simply believing true doctrine *about* Jesus (indeed, as James 2:19 says “even demons believe true things about God — and shudder”). Faith is first and foremost putting our trust *in* the person of Jesus, like the woman with the discharge of blood in Mark 6. It is saying “I trust that in Jesus, I will find true fullness of life.” This does not mean we don’t have questions or doubts or that we intellectually believe all the right things. It simply means we wake up daily and trust that, in Jesus, we will experience true life.

Faith reaches beyond just individual heart postures. It is a way of being a community. We trust that Jesus is at work in the individual lives in our community group and in the life of the community group itself. 1 Corinthians opens with Paul thanking God for the Christian community in Corinth. “I always thank my God for you and for the gracious gifts he has given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus,” he declares adding, “[God] is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” As you continue reading 1 Corinthians, the realities of the church Paul is thanking God for begin to emerge. They believe all sorts of wacky things; they are actively championing a man who is committing adultery with his stepmom (gross); they are disunified, arrogant, and disobedient. And yet, before Paul writes some very strong words of rebuke and correction, he thanks God for them and declares that Jesus is at work in their midst and calls them partners with Christ.

Our value of faith does not mean that we don’t give and receive correction or that, because no one is a final authority on truth but God, that there is no truth to be found in community. Our value of faith means that our starting point in relating to one another is that the Spirit of God is actively at work in each individual life and the community as a whole. Like Paul in 1 Corinthians

1, we are able to have faith and trust that, despite everything, God knows what He is doing and what He is about.

Ask:

Have you ever experienced a community that was founded on this understanding of faith? What was that experience like?

Group Exercise: Practicing Faith

*This week, we will be engaging in a large-group prayer exercise surrounding our value of **faith**.*

One of the keys to our value of faith is trust. Trusting Jesus does not simply mean believing the right things about Him. Trusting Jesus means living our day-to-day life believing and acting as if Jesus is truly in control. Trust allows us to be fully present to God and others. This exercise is meant to help us discern the places in our lives where we are trusting Jesus and the places where we are finding trust in Jesus difficult. The hope is that by discerning these places and bringing them before Christ, we would experience a rich interaction with God's love and find invitations to practice a deep, trusting faith.

Silence (5 minutes):

Begin by sitting in silence together. Put anything that would be a distraction (especially phones and/or other media) in the center of the room. For 5 minutes, allow the silence to wash over you. Notice what it brings up in your mind and how it makes you feel.

Reflect/Journal (15 minutes):

Have someone read the following prompts aloud. Then silently journal your response.

(5 minutes):

Think about the major events happening in your life right now. Think about the people, places, work, conversations, responsibilities, conflicts, fears, joys, and senses (sights, smells, sounds, and touches) that have made up your last week or so. Write out a list of all the things that come to mind in the next 5 minutes.

(5 minutes):

After you have performed this internal inventory, ask the Holy Spirit to highlight 3 of the things you wrote down that you feel particularly thankful for. Why do you feel grateful for these 3 things? Journal your response.

(5 minutes):

Finally, ask the Holy Spirit to highlight 3 things you wrote down that you feel the most anxiety and fear around. What is it in particular you are fearful or anxious about? Journal your responses.

Sharing (30 minutes):

Using *Mutual Invitation* (explained below), invite each person to share one thing they wrote down that they are thankful for and one thing they are anxious or fearful about. Each person should share why they are thankful and why they are fearful.

Mutual Invitation Guidelines:

- The leader begins the sharing time by sharing his or her response to the question(s). Then the leader selects another person to share his or her response.
- After that person shares, they then invite another person in the group by name to share. When invited to share, a person may respond by sharing or passing if they are not ready to share. Regardless, they then invite the next person to share.
- Unless you have been invited to share, you should refrain from speaking — unless you need to ask for more clarity because you don't understand what has been said by the person sharing.
- The exercise continues until everyone in the group has been invited to share. We will use this discussion technique often during our time together both to retrain us in our discussion techniques as well as to make us increasingly conscious of the various social and power dynamics involved in group conversation.

Stillness (10 minutes):

We live in a world that seems to tell us that we are little autonomous gods in control of our own lives and destiny. But the story which the Bible tells is different: we are not God. The world does not depend on us. One of the simplest, yet often most difficult, ways to practice faith is to sit still. The physical act of stillness can be an act of faith. We are going to practice this together.

Find a comfortable position you can sit still in for the next 10 minutes. Take the paper/journal you have written your responses on and place it in front of you where it is visible. As you sit, slowly read through all that you wrote down. For each item, visualize it in your mind. Imagine yourself bringing it before Jesus and laying it at His feet saying "I trust you, Jesus." Pay special attention to anything you find particularly hard to bring before Jesus.

Pray:

After 10 minutes of stillness, have someone slowly read the Newman Prayer below to close your time.

Newman Prayer:

God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it if I do but keep His commandments. Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him. If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers. He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me. Still, He knows what He is about.

Amen.