

1. Week 44: Community Values Part 1 - Faith

2. Recap & Preparing for CG:

Daily Reading for Week:

- Romans 15-16, Psalm 140
- 1 Corinthians 1-2, Psalm 141
- 1 Corinthians 3-4, Psalm 142
- 1 Corinthians 5-6, Psalm 143
- 1 Corinthians 7-8, Psalm 144
- 1 Corinthians 9-10, Psalm 145
- 1 Corinthians 11-12, Psalm 146

Resources for Week:

- Read Scripture Video: 1 Corinthians
- Read: 1 Corinthians 1

3. Focus of our time together:

Looking at 1 Corinthians and Acts, we will examine how the value of faith informed and shaped the early Christian community, and we will also explore what faith as a value means for our church community today.

4. Weekly ground rule / goal / value:

Value: Our value this week is, appropriately, faith. Faith is one of our foundational values at Reality SF. In the context of community group, practicing faith as a value means acting toward one another with an acute recognition that none of us have all the answers, and we all have to rely on and trust in Jesus in the midst of incomplete knowledge. In your time together, remember that you do not have all the answers and that nobody but God is a perfectly correct authority on any matter. Give freedom for others to say and express things that you deem incorrect without racing to judgment or correction. Trust that no matter what, Jesus is at work in each person and your CG.

5. Connection and Unity Exercise:

The Connection and Unity Exercise will be later on in the material this week.

6. Opening Prayer:

Have someone read the following prayer, called the Newman Prayer, aloud to open your time together.

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.

7. Intro to Discussion:

Last week, we looked at Romans and explored the idea that the Epistles as a whole are not primarily a set of doctrines about what to believe but instructions for the early Christian community about how to live in light of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. While they do indeed contain rich and wonderful theology, the bulk of the Epistles are concerned with the day-to-day tensions and practical questions about how communities of Jesus are to live with one another within the world.

The vision of Reality SF is that we would be a community following Jesus, seeking renewal in our city. Our values (faith, humility, hospitality, rootedness) are what living out our vision will look and feel like in everyday life. Over the next four weeks, we want to revisit the values we have been learning about from the pulpit on Sundays. Our

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.

For this reason, most of our time together exploring the Epistles will actually not be devoted to exploring each letter, but rather working through our four community values. We will attempt to move beyond merely intellectualizing and actually begin *doing* these things 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 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 read 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 committing adultery with his step-mom (Ew.); 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 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.

8. Questions for Large Group Discussion (60 minutes):

Group Exercise:

*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 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 invitation 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 out loud 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, 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 what they are fearful of.

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 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 again 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.

9. Questions for Small Group Discussion (15 minutes):

Break into small groups of 2-3 and share what that exercise was like for you.

1. How did you find it helpful? How did you find it frustrating?
2. Were there any invitations you felt like Jesus extended to you?
3. If you would like share more of the things you wrote down that you felt thankful for or anxious about, do so.

10. Closing (5 minutes):

Close your time by praying for one another and trusting that Jesus knows what He is about.