



VINTAGE**CHURCH**

# Jesus and Community Discussion Guides

JUNE 11 - AUGUST 6, 2017

## SERIES INTRO

We long to be connected, to be known and loved. It's in all of us. We're made for community. We were made that by God who exists himself in community through the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God made us for relationship, both with himself and with one another.

But sin breaks those relationships, both with God and with each other. Jesus came to break the power of sin and to restore our relationships with God and one another. In his classic book on community, Dietrich Bonhoeffer says:

*“Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; rather it is a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.”*

When Jesus died on the cross and rose again he created a new community. A perfect community. Community is not something we have to make, it's something that has been given to us that we have been adopted into. Jesus created it and we get to be part of it.

Jesus is also the center of this community. This summer we get to see the community that he creates in the gospels. Throughout this series we'll see the type of community that he has made and that we get to be part of. We'll see that Jesus is at the center of his community and that he has made us to flourish and thrive in relationship with him and with one another.

## READING GUIDE

We're thrilled to offer a nine-week study in conjunction with our summer sermon series. We hope this resource challenges us as a church to grow deeper in our faith and in our relationships, that we may "stir one another up" in our love for Jesus and one another. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

As you work through this study you'll notice each day has a response component. We encourage you to dive deep into what you're learning through your scriptural study and to share what you're learning with your community group.

You'll also notice that each week has a specific quote from an author named Dietrich Bonhoeffer like the one above, intended as commentary on each week's topic and scriptural passages. Bonhoeffer's contributions to Christian community are monumental and incredibly relevant while discussing what it means to live the Christian life. We'd encourage you to pick up a copy of his short book on community, *Life Together*, and give it a read while your group goes through the study this summer. If you've already read it, read it again. It's better the second time.



# 1. Jesus and the Community of Joy

**June 11, 2017 - John 2:1-12**

In John 2 Jesus miraculously provides wine for a wedding that had run dry. But why? Why did Jesus care about their wine supply?

Wine was present at every Jewish celebration. It was a symbol of joy; Psalm 104 thanks God for giving wine to "gladden the heart of man." A wedding running out of wine was a serious misfortune, which is why Mary was concerned enough to ask Jesus to save the party. But Jesus took the opportunity to do something more than refill everyone's glass. Jesus asked for the jars of water at the door. These jars were there so that party guests could perform ritualistic washing as they entered. It was often used as an ostentatious way to say, "Look how holy I am." It was also required. To be a part of the festivities, you had to wash.

But Jesus asked for the water so that it could serve a different purpose. He turned the water of ritual into the wine of joy. He offered the partygoers something better than religious observance, he offered them delight and affirmation. Jesus offers the same thing to us through his life, death, and resurrection: freedom from dead religious duty and freedom to joy and life in him..

## Discussion

- **Read John 2:1-12**
- What does the water and the wine symbolize in this passage?
- What was Jesus trying to teach through this miracle?
- How did Jesus turn ritual obedience into joy?
- Why is Jesus concerned with where we find our joy?
- How does this passage move your heart to respond to Jesus?
- How does this passage display Jesus' heart for others?



## 2. Jesus and the Community of Life

**June 18, 2017 - Luke 7:11-17**

In Luke 7:11-17 Jesus stepped into a hopeless situation, the death of a widow's only son, and brought hope. Imagine the immense pain at losing your only child. On top of that, without a husband or a son this first-century woman would have had very few options for making a living. She likely would have been economically shackled and impoverished for the rest of her life. Yet Jesus walked up to her and said, "Do not weep." He was the only one who could give her a reason to dry her tears.

This story highlights two aspects of Jesus: his divinity and his empathy. It shows his power over death and his understanding of human suffering. He had compassion on this woman and did what only God can do: turn death into life and weeping into rejoicing.

### Discussion

- **Read Luke 7:11-17**
- How did Jesus enter into this moment of grief with the widow?
- No one asked Jesus to resurrect this widow's son. Why do you think he did?
- How does this passage help you appreciate Jesus more?
- How has Jesus specifically comforted you in times of grief?
- How is the weeping and rejoicing in this crowd a picture of Christian community?
- How does this passage display Jesus' heart for others?



# 3. Jesus and the Community of the Word

**June 25, 2017 - Mark 4:1-9**

This is a familiar passage for many, in which Jesus explains the gospel rooting or not rooting in our hearts with a metaphor about four different types of soil. Jesus explains what those four soils are in Mark 4:10-20.

While this passage prompts us for helpful introspection, we can tend towards navel gazing when we start rooting out "rocks" or "thorns" in our hearts. As we think about the things that choke out our love for the gospel, it's helpful to remember that God provides the growth, not us, and that he is the perfect vinedresser of John 15, who grafts and prunes and causes us to yield fruit.

## Discussion

- **Read Mark 4:1-9**
- What does it mean to yield "thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold"?
- How does the good news yield a harvest in someone's life?
- You don't have the power to yield fruit on your own. How does this passage help you rely on God more?
- What "thorns" are you prone to that choke out a love for the gospel in your life?
- Again, you don't have the power to yield fruit on your own. How does this passage help you understand your need for other believers in your life?
- How can you help others as they yield fruit and avoid thorns in their lives?



# 4. Jesus and the Community of the Spirit

**July 2, 2017 - John 3:1-15**

When Jesus says that we must be born again, and adds that that birth is of the Spirit, it verges on ridiculous. It makes no sense to the earthly mind; Nicodemus' response in John 3:9 is, "How can these things be?"

Yet this truth is a pillar both for what it means to be a Christian and what it means to have Christian community. The second birth, brought about by the movement of the Spirit of God in us, is the reversal of the death initiated in Eden. It's the transformation of the spiritually dead into the spiritually alive. And when we're made alive to God in Christ, it changes the way we relate to each other as fellow children of God. This passage shouldn't lead us into debating the mechanics of spiritual resuscitation; it should lead us to worship God who, through Jesus, mysteriously turned our death into life.

## Discussion

- **Read John 3:1-15**
- According to this passage, what does the Holy Spirit do?
- How was Jesus calling Nicodemus to rethink what it means to be faithful to God?
- How is the Holy Spirit essential to following Jesus?
- How does this passage help you see your need for the Spirit?
- How is Christian community born of the Spirit?
- How does being born of the Spirit change the way we relate to one another?



# 5. Jesus and the Community of Prayer

**July 9, 2017 - Luke 18:1-17**

Men and women throughout scripture prayed crazy prayers. James 5 talks specifically about Elijah, who prayed for a drought to punish Israel and King Ahab for their idolatry (1 Kings 17-18). Yet James says Elijah “was a man with a nature like ours.” He didn’t have weather-controlling super powers. He was a normal mortal guy.

So why does James make this specific point after telling us to pray for one another? Because we need to know that prayer works, but not because of us. Prayer works because God is mighty. Prayer is in no way dependent on you and your nature because it, in its essence, is an appeal to God’s nature as all-powerful, all-knowing, loving, and kind. To think that prayer is dependent on you is to forget to whom you pray.

Jesus, in Luke 18:1-8, hits the one aspect of prayer that is within our power: persistence. What this doesn’t mean is that God will eventually give in, no matter your prayer. Just because you pray to win the lottery every day doesn’t mean it will eventually happen. Look at verses 6-8 in Luke 18. They describe a people who are in desperate need of God himself, not a bunch of nagging lottery players. Jesus is telling his followers to pray diligently, pray fervently, and pray often. Doing so aligns us with God’s will for us and may very well move the heart of God himself.

## Discussion

- **Read Luke 18:1-17**
- Look at verse 1. How does this passage teach you to always pray and “not lose heart”?
- When you pray, what do you typically pray about?
- When you pray, how do you typically feel about God?
- How does God compare with the judge in this story?
- How would you like to grow when it comes to prayer?
- How does praying for others help you love others better?



# 6. Jesus and the Community of Freedom

**July 16, 2017 - Luke 13:10-17**

For the Pharisees, keeping the Sabbath was a way to demand exacting religious obedience out of others. They took God's commandment to not do any work on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11) to an extreme level, adding tons of extra nuances. They went so far as to specify which kinds of knots you could or could not tie on the Sabbath. If your shoe came untied, you were out of luck.

Included in the Pharisees' prohibitions was healing on the Sabbath. We see Jesus challenge this specific bit of legalism multiple times in the gospels, including in Matthew 12:9-14, in which he healed another person on the Sabbath. After this the Pharisees were so mad they conspired to kill Jesus.

In these situations Jesus points out to the Pharisees that mercy is better than rule-keeping. The Pharisees say that healing should be done in the way they deem appropriate. In Luke 13 Jesus defiantly responds, "This woman has faith. If she can be freed, shouldn't she be?"

## Discussion

- **Read Luke 13:10-17**
- Why do you think Jesus was so adamant about healing this woman?
- How does Jesus bring us freedom from the captivity of our sin?
- How does Jesus' mercy go against the grain of legalism?
- How do we obey Jesus in faith without resorting to legalism like the Pharisees here?
- How is the church a community of freedom?
- How does Jesus' mercy affect the way we treat others?





# 7. Jesus and the Community of Confession

**July 23, 2017 - John 4:1-26**

The animosity between Samaritans and Jews is incredibly important to understanding this text. When Jews were allowed to return to their homeland after Babylonian captivity they found a group of people there who had blended Judaism with local religions. They would later start calling these people Samaritans. At first relations between the two groups were functional, but the situation quickly devolved.

By the time Jesus was sitting at Jacob's well this bitterness had steeped for almost 600 years, with fighting on and off over the centuries. It was common for traveling Jews to take the longer route around Samaria rather than the short cut through it. Yet here Jesus was, walking through the wrong side of town to bring good news to the marginalized. More specifically, he brought good news to a Samaritan woman by a well. While she tried to bring up the Jewish-Samaritan feud (the location of worship), he ignored her question and directed her to an eternal hope: himself. When Jesus accepted her, despite her record of sin and her lineage of disobedience, she immediately returned to her village and said, "Come, see."

## Discussion

- **Read John 4:1-26**
- The woman didn't start a conversation about her sin. Why do you think Jesus brought it up?
- How was Jesus compassionate towards the woman at the well?
- **Read John 4:39-42**
- What was this woman's response to Jesus' compassion towards her?
- How does this passage make you reflect on Jesus' compassion towards you?
- How did this woman find freedom in Jesus knowing her sin?
- How do you want to grow in confessing your sin, both to God and to others?



## 8. Jesus and the Community of Thanks

**July 30, 2017 - Luke 17:11-19**

This story in Luke's gospel is an easy one to miss. It's quick, and it blends in a little with the other stories of Jesus healing lepers. But this one is unique in its structure; Jesus heals ten lepers from a distance, but only one comes to thank him. That one was a Samaritan, to which Jesus exclaims, "Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and praise God except this foreigner?" As a Samaritan and a leper this man would've been treated poorly twice over, since Jews despised Samaritans and ostracized those with leprosy according to Mosaic law. Yet Jesus gave him his life back when he healed him, and treated him kinder than other other Jew would've treated him.

We see in this echoes of the woman who poured perfume on Jesus' feet while he was at dinner in Luke 7. Jesus said of her, "her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much." (Luke 7:47) This man responds to Jesus with thanksgiving because he had much to be thankful for. As we read this, it should lead us to respond to Jesus with thanksgiving, because we have all been forgiven for more than we could possibly imagine. And, because thankfulness is a hallmark of believers, that thanksgiving should spill over into our relationships and surrounding community.

### Discussion

- **Read Luke 17:11-19**
- Why do you think this leper was the only one to turn around and thank Jesus?
- What did you learn from this leper's response to Jesus?
- **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**
- Why is thankfulness something that characterizes believers?
- What reasons has Jesus given you to be thankful to him?
- Look back at Luke 17:11-19. How does this passage demonstrate Jesus' care for others?
- How does Jesus's compassion towards you affect the way you care for others?



# 9. Jesus and the Community for Others

**August 6, 2017 - Luke 9:23-27**

Jesus' summary in Luke 9:23-27 of what it means to follow him goes against every earthly bone in our bodies. Self-preservation is baked into being human, but here Jesus says, "whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Luke 9:24)

Twice in this passage Jesus describes following him in terms of death. He explains that giving your life over to him is so complete that it feels like you've lost it entirely. He compares it to taking up a cross and heading towards your crucifixion daily. Why does following Jesus require death to yourself? Because Jesus is worth it. In his grace and majesty and love Jesus is worth every square inch of your life. In fact, he's already Lord of every fiber of your being; he just presents us with the opportunity to recognize it.

## Discussion

- **Read Luke 9:23-27**
- What does Jesus mean by "come after me"?
- Why does Jesus say that following him requires taking up a cross?
- How does this help us understand what it means to follow Jesus?
- Why do you think we struggle with giving over our entire lives to Jesus?
- What areas of your life do you tend to hold back from Jesus?
- Why is Jesus worth your entire life?

