

3 WEEKS



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GOD AS FATHER

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Growing up, how did you view your father? If you didn't grow up with a dad, how did you imagine him to be?

Big Idea:

God is our loving Father.

Key Scriptures:

Matthew 6:9-13

"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Luke 15:11-32

"Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his

property between them. "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father." But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' "'My son,' the father said, 'you are

always with me, and everything I have I is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

Psalm 86:15

"But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness."

Discussion:

1. Read Matthew 6:9-13. When Jesus was teaching the disciples to pray, why do you think he chose to teach them to address God as Father?
2. What do you learn about God's nature and character as Father from Jesus' prayer?
3. How do these characteristics of God compare with your earthly father?
4. Read Luke 15:11-32. What do you learn about the character of the father in this story?
5. If you were the son in this story, how do think your father would have responded to you?
6. Read Psalm 86:15. Some of you have experienced

a loving, gracious and generous father. Other's of you have not. Discuss how each experience has impacted or shaped your view of God as father.

7. In this week's message we focused on seven characteristics of God our Father:

He is:

- Big
- Gracious
- Waiting expectantly
- Sacrificial
- Affectionate
- Affirming

Which of these characteristics do you most need from God your Father and why?

Wrapping It Up:

Share together what steps can you take to receive what you need most from God your Father? Pray for one another to be able to experience the full love of God as Father.

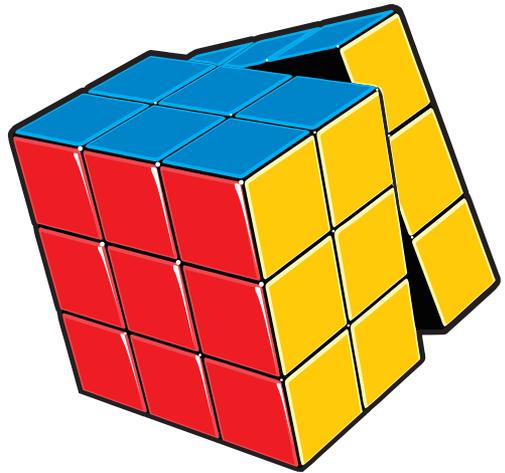
Prayer Focus:

Pray for the Hope Center as we are opening back up for in person shopping. Pray for the heart of our Father to be extended to our guests.

Memory Verse:

"But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness."

Psalms 86:15





GOD AS FORGIVER

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

When you were growing up, for what thing did you repeatedly get in trouble?

Big Idea:

God's forgiveness is available to you.

Key Scriptures:

Luke 7:36-50

"When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who

is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner." Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little

loves little. "Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Discussion:

Read the story in Luke 7 of the sinful woman who anointed Jesus and was forgiven by Him, and discuss the following:

1. What is the greatest act of forgiveness that you've either extended or been a recipient of?
2. In this week's message, two things were mentioned that keep us from giving and receiving love: our secrets and our shame. How did the sinful woman in Luke 7 demonstrate the ability to allow neither of these keep her from Jesus?
3. Although her secrets were known and her shame great, she freely poured out her pain and her heart at Jesus' feet. What do you think enabled her to do that?
4. What was Jesus' response?

5. Reflect upon your past and share how you've seen secrets and shame keep you from giving or receiving love.
6. The sinful woman seemed to understand who Jesus was and what He was able to do. He had the power to forgive her and set her free from her past. And that was worth everything to her. How do you see Jesus in relationship to your secrets and shame?
7. What would you most like to see erased from your past?
8. Read 1 John 1:9. Have you confessed your sin and fully experienced Him as forgiver?

Wrapping It Up:

Take some time to pray for one another, that you would not allow any secret or shame keep you from receiving or giving love.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for our Celebrate Recovery ministry, as many come seeking to live a new life but are sometimes hindered by the shame and secrets of their past.

Memory Verse:

"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." **1 John 1:9**



GOD AS FRIEND

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Who was your best friend growing up? Is that person still part of your life?

Big Idea:

God has called you friend.

Key Scriptures:

James 2:23

"And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend."

John 15:9-17

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has

no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other."

Proverbs 17:17

"A friend loves at all times..."

Discussion:

1. Describe the characteristics of someone you consider a close or best friend?
2. How would you describe your friendship with this person?
3. Read James 2:23. The first person we ever see called a friend of God in the Bible

is Abraham. Based on this Scripture, what's one reason God may have referred to Abraham as his friend?

4. Read John 15:9-17. Discuss the characteristics and actions of Jesus that makes Him a friend.
5. Have you ever considered the lengths that Jesus has gone to, not just to be your Savior, but to be your friend? What is the difference between the two?
6. Based on John 15, what does Jesus say makes a person His friend?
7. In Abraham's friendship with God, he was asked to do some pretty ridiculous things: including leave his country and family, be circumcised, and sacrifice his only son. In all of these he cooperated with God and was rewarded as a result. Jesus' says "you are my friends if you do what I ask". What ridiculous things have you been asked to do by God, and how did you respond?
8. What kind of friend have you been to Jesus? How would you characterize your friendship?

Wrapping It Up:

Identify one action that you can implement this week to grow your friendship with Jesus. Commit to this and pray for one another to hold to it.

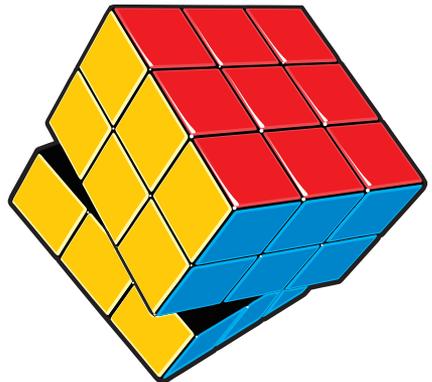
Prayer Focus:

Pray for our 4 Bases Membership class and those that will join our Sunnybrook family this month.

Memory Verse:

"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

John 15:15



Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group

1. Establish a welcoming, accepting, and safe environment.
 - Take time to prepare.
 - Make sure to give a warm enthusiastic greeting to each person.
 - Verbally communicate the environment that you hope to create.
 - Ephesians 4:1-3
2. On the opening night of your group you need to have some intentional discussions centered around these questions:
 - What is the purpose of our group?
 - What is the vision for our group?
 - What are your expectations?
 - What do you hope to gain from this group experience?
 - What are some things we value as a group?
 - What are some healthy guidelines we need to have in place?Review and sign a group agreement.
3. Be authentic. Spend time sharing your life stories in order to get to know each other on a deeper level.
4. Find a good balance between:
 - Truth and grace/Bible study and life
 - Encouraging and challenging one another
 - Giving and receiving feedback from each other
5. Ask good questions to stimulate good discussion. Use open ended questions and follow up questions.
6. Hang out together, do things socially, eat together and have fun together!
7. Develop a missional lifestyle, find a service project to do together in the community.
8. Raise up new leadership by rotating facilitation of the group.
9. Share the responsibilities in order to increase individual commitment and ownership of the group.
10. Pray for your group and for each other!

Find ways to celebrate what God is doing in your group! Who else could you invite to join you in order that their life may be impacted by what God is doing in your group?

Group Agreement

OUR PURPOSE

To transform our spiritual lives by cultivating our spiritual health in a healthy small group community. In addition, we: _____

OUR VALUES

Group Attendance: To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent.

Safe Environment: To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)

Respect Differences: To be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or imperfections. We are all works in progress.

Confidentiality: To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.

Encouragement for Growth: To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our life by serving others with our God-given gifts.

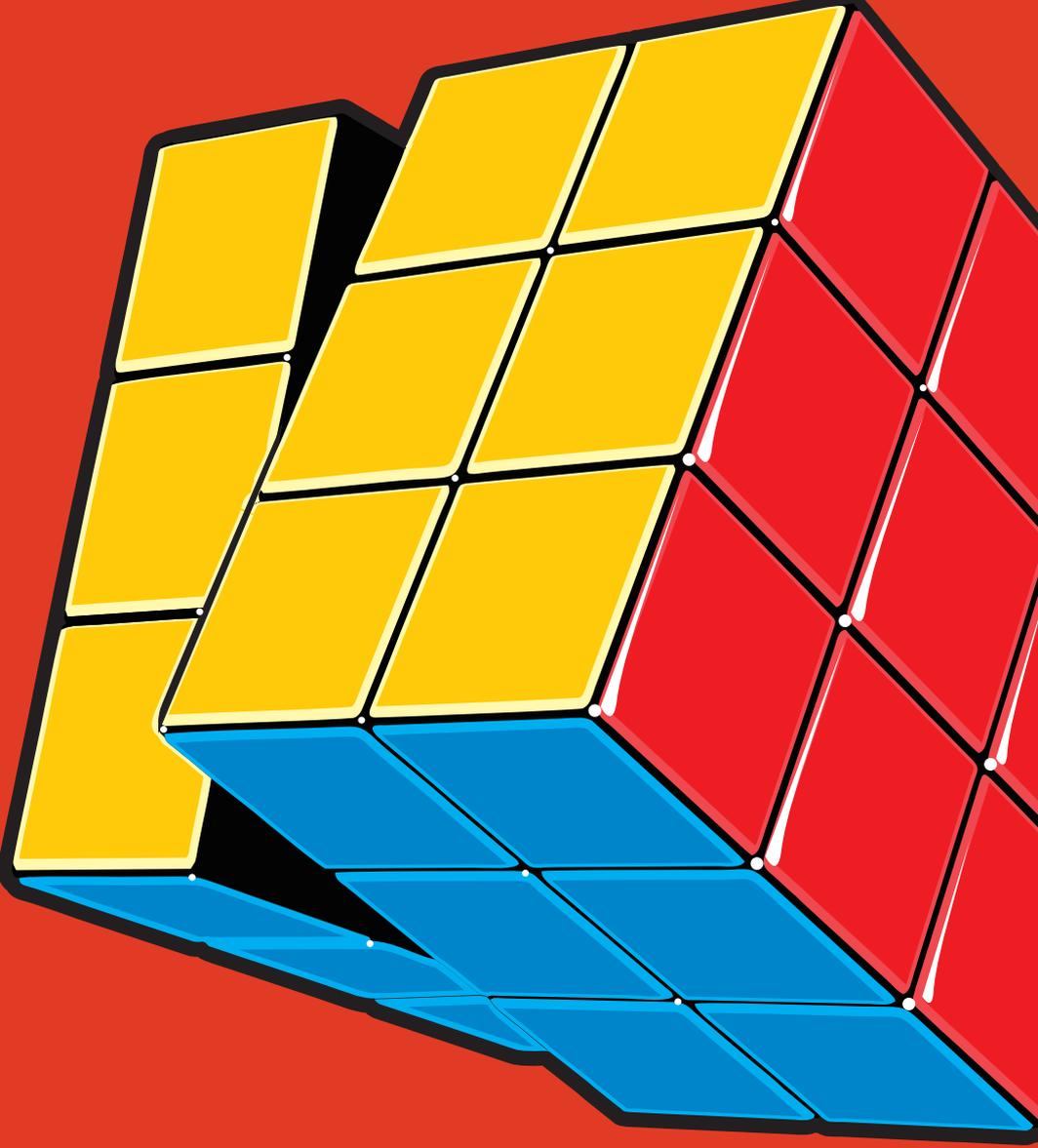
Welcome for Newcomers: To keep an open chair and share Jesus' dream of finding a shepherd for every sheep.

Shared Ownership: To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.

Rotating Hosts/Leaders and Homes: To encourage different people to host the group in their homes, and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

- Refreshments/mealtimes _____
- Childcare _____
- When we will meet (day of week) _____
- Where we will meet (place) _____
- We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____
- We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together.
- Our primary worship service time will be _____
- Date of this agreement _____
- Date we will review this agreement again _____
- Who (other than the leader) will review this agreement at the end of this study _____



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