

Small Group Sermon Study
March 29, 2020

Begin with a Check-in:

During the pastoral prayer on Sunday, you were invited to identify the emotions you were feeling or had been feeling this past week. Let's start with a check-in, using the same list of emotions:

Looking at the list below, give time for each person to examine and identify what emotion he or she is experiencing right now, or have brought to the group. Take turns stating, "*Right now I'm feeling . . .*" (No explanation is needed but if people want to describe their feelings further, give time to do so.)

Right now, I'm feeling . . .

- SAD** (grief, a sense of loss; sorrowful, depressed)

- ANGRY** (mad; blocked from something I want; irritated, frustrated)

- AFRAID** (scared; fear of danger or loss; threatened, dread)

- CONTENTED** (peaceful, at ease, comfort, resting)

- JOYFUL** (glad, pleased, sense of well-being, delighted)

- EXCITED** (eager, hopeful; positive anticipation or expectation)

- TENDER** (caring, sense of connectedness, contemplative)

- OVERWHELMED** (exhausted, beleaguered, overcome)

- WORRIED** (anxious, nervous, troubled, apprehensive bothered)

- GRATEFUL** (appreciative, thankful, gratified)

Use discernment, based upon the emotions expressed, about what to do next.

Given present circumstances, what is most needful right now may be to devote your entire time together to encouraging and praying for one another.

If so, we suggest you read and pray through Psalm 91.

If you have time for study, the following page provides a brief guide for conversation:

Brief conversation guide for John 17:20-26

We recommend that you start with the Scripture meditation practice commonly called *Lectio Divina*. *Lectio Divina* (literally “divine reading”) is a way of immersing oneself in the Scriptures, guided by the Holy Spirit, for meditation, discernment and prayer.

Lectio Divina: Please use the following steps to begin your reflection:

1. Pray: Invite God to speak through His Word and give us “ears to hear and hearts to receive.”
2. One person read John 17:20-26 out loud clearly and slowly while all others listen, perhaps with eyes closed to receive the word without distraction.
3. Ask each person to listen for a word or phrase that seems to stand out among others.

²⁰ “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—²³ I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

²⁴ “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

²⁵ “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I have made you^[a] known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”
4. Pause a moment to let the words sink in.
5. Ask people simply to say the word that stood out to them, without explanation. Simply state the word.
6. Another person read John 17:20-26 out loud clearly and slowly again, while all others listen.
7. As people listen, choose another word that stands out to you among others.
8. Pause a moment to let the words sink in.
9. Again, ask people to state the word that stood out to them.
10. Open group for conversation, asking, “Based upon the words that have stood out to us, what could we begin to hear God saying through this text?”

Three Conversation Questions:

Context: The events leading up to Jesus’ crucifixion have been set in motion. The clock is ticking. John 17:20-26 records Jesus’ last words in the Upper Room before going to Gethsemane where he will be betrayed and arrested . . .

Think for a moment about the weight of emotions Jesus was feeling, knowing what was about to happen.

1. What could have Jesus’ prayed in this circumstance *that he did not pray?* (What would you have prayed?)
2. Instead, what *does* Jesus pray for “those who believe”? How do we understand what Jesus means when he prays for us to “be one”?
3. How does Jesus describe this oneness? And what might oneness look like during a pandemic?

Discipleship is moving from information to transformation; from head to soul; from affirming truth to embodying truth in tangible life practices. Before closing your meeting, brainstorm and agree together about three things your small group can do this next week to practice oneness.

Close in prayer asking for God for personal courage, communal faith and missional love to receive and give the love of Christ.