

Love & Light: Cultivating a Conversation (AG)

September 17th, 2023

2 Corinthians 5:16-20

1 Corinthians 3:6-9



Begin with Prayer

In silence, invite the Holy Spirit to guide you. Then pray: *Empowering God, we pray that you will send your Holy Spirit to move us to understanding; to help us to believe the gospel; to give us strength and wisdom to live by it. Amen. (Worship Sourcebook Q.3.5.8)*

Reconnecting and Debriefing

Take a moment to check in with one another (2 minutes each).

1. *Who made your week better, and how did they do it?*
2. *What is the most meaningful conversation you've had recently?*

Introduction

Whether we gather in person or online, our goal remains the same: to be a people apprenticed to the life of Jesus. His life and teaching is our example and our source of truth. Remember the commitments we make to each other to foster safety and freedom as we pursue spiritual growth together:

- Whenever possible, please listen to the sermon prior to gathering (Sunday or online).
- While we are meeting (even online), commit to focussing rather than multitasking. Be all here.
- Give every person an equal opportunity to share, even if it takes time to form or finish their thoughts.
- Be respectful and non-judgmental.
- Honour sharing boundaries z Honour sharing boundaries (only what you have permission to share, no gossip) and guard confidentiality (what we share here stays here).
- Don't try to fix, problem-solve or rescue; keep pointing one another to the truths of the gospel for our lives.

Listening to God's Word

Have you ever wanted to ask God a question? When Jesus, who was fully God and fully human, was walking on the earth, people loved to ask him questions. What was very interesting is how often Jesus would reply to a question with a question of his own. For Jesus, giving the answer right didn't seem to be the most important thing, and yet his message of the Kingdom of God was very clear. What would it look like for us to have conversations where we don't only focus on the 'right answer,' and yet the Gospel shines clearly?

Small Group Discussion

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-20. Then discuss together:

- The goal of an ambassador is to represent a country, a brand, an idea, or a person as fully and accurately as possible. *How do you feel when you read that we are ambassadors of Christ, representing Jesus as fully and accurately as possible? Does it feel attainable to speak and act on Christ's behalf?*
- **Read 1 Corinthians 3:6-9 and John 4:36-37.** In these two passages, Paul uses a farming image to describe how someone hears the Gospel (planting), sees someone living a life consistent with the Gospel (watering), and is invited to respond to the Gospel (harvesting). *Who did the planting, watering, and harvesting in your life? Where have you done this in the lives of others?*
- Jesus was known for his questions – in fact, he asked 307 questions in the Gospels. This is rather peculiar: he knew a great deal, but asked questions regardless. *Why do you think Jesus asked so many*

questions? When might a question be more effective or more powerful than a statement? If we adopt Jesus' love of questions, how might it change our conversations?

- Despite Jesus' love of questions and desire to listen, he also knew how to turn a conversation toward the Kingdom of God. *Can any conversation become spiritually significant, or only certain ones? How can a transition to discussing spiritual things be done well?*
- **Read Ephesians 4:15-16 and 1 John 4:16-18.** *How might fear keep you from pursuing spiritual conversations with others? How would Jesus speak to those fears?*
- ***How do you sense the Holy Spirit calling you to respond to or act on what we have read and discussed?***

Practice Listening

"Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable."

-David Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Hear and Be Heard*

"There is a difference between listening and waiting your turn to speak."

-Simon Sinek

Divide into groups of 2-3 people and invite one person to share. This can be something on their heart, a question they have been struggling with, or a situation in their life. If you would like, you can use one or more of these questions to ask each other:

What makes you feel heard, seen, or significant?

Is there something significant you have been thinking a lot about lately?

Is there a specific conversation you'd like to cultivate with someone? What might that look like?

What is one need you have in your life that you fear might not be met?

As someone is sharing, simply pay attention to what they are saying. You can also respond with phrases like, "Can you tell me more about ____" or "how was that for you?" If your group is still developing trust, you could have one person share with the group and have the group practice listening. Then, that person can share their experience of being listened to: how did it make them feel? What was particularly meaningful for them?

Once each person has shared, take a moment of silence (at least 30 seconds – feel free to use a timer!) to allow space for God to speak as well. Then, take time to pray for each other *without asking each other what you can pray for*. Instead, pray for what you heard while you were listening.

Caring for One Another

- *Pray for the names you shared earlier.*
- ***Do you or your family have a need that the Life Group can help meet?***

Using **the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)** as a guide, based on what you've shared together, spend time listening to God and praying for one another.