

Connecting Group Study Guide

Knowing, Growing, Going

Week of June 5-11, 2016

Follow-up

1. Start by sharing with each other about your previous week.
2. Take some time for each person to share with one another regarding your practice of a spiritual discipline. What discipline did you use? How did it go? What did you learn from this experience?

Knowing God (Encounter)

Read Matthew 6:9-13.

In this week's sermon we focused on self-desire and its effects and our need for God and his power for living a kingdom focused life. In the message Pastor Chris quoted Bill Hull, who said, "We live in a culture that encourages us to develop our lives around selfish desires." (*Conversion and Discipleship*, pg. 61).

1. What is the "fruit" of a culture that lives to feed the selfish desire of everyone? How have you experienced this fruit, either from your own selfish desire or from another?
2. In the prayer Jesus taught his disciples in Matthew 6:9-13, who is the focus of the prayer? Why do you think this is important to notice? What areas of life are referenced in this prayer?
3. When looking at this week's message along with this passage of Scripture, what insights about God can we glean?

Growing in Christ-likeness (Sanctification)

This passage on prayer lies at the center of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Just before this teaching Jesus instructs his disciples on the proper attitude and means of giving to the poor and needy. Also, just after this passage he instructs his followers on the proper attitude and way to go about fasting. It would appear that Jesus is emphasizing a focus on God and others rather than a focus on self.

1. Discuss as a group stories and events from the four Gospels that depict Jesus himself living out these same principles. How would you, as a group, summarize the importance of this teaching for the life of discipleship?
2. If we truly live in a culture that encourages the feeding of our own self-desire, how does Jesus' teaching and his example encourage us to counter this cultural mindset?

Going to Our Neighbors and the World (Obedience)

1. If we are self-focused around feeding our own desires, what are the possible implications of this for others who are around us (family, friends, neighbors, etc.)?

Action Step: A major part of following Jesus is focusing our attention on others around us. Jesus regularly called his disciples to have eyes to see others in need all around them. However,

if we are honest, we most likely make our decisions in life based upon what we want rather than discerning what others may need or want. This week pray Matthew 6:9-13 and Matthew 22:37-40 back to God. Practice this three times a day: in the morning, at lunchtime, and at bedtime. Keep a journal or notepad with you to write down anything God may be saying to you as you do this.

Examples of “seeing” others:

- When walking through your neighborhood or some other area, wave at others, speak to them, say hello, etc. Acknowledge them in some manner.
- If you’re in line at a fast food place or coffee shop, pay for the person behind you.
- Visit with a neighbor you haven’t connected with in a long time.
- If you’re in line at a grocery store, let the person behind you go ahead of you.

Close in prayer together.