



Connect (5 to 10 minutes)

Come together to build relationships through fellowship and sharing about this week's worship.

- Take a few minutes to share your thoughts about worship this week.
 - What aspects of worship did or did not connect with you?
 - What story or illustration made an impact on you?
- What is a movie that you can sit and watch multiple times, and never get bored of it?

Context (30 to 40 minutes)

Dig deeper into the videos and scripture for this week through questions and discussion.

Watch the Connection Group video.

- Lael described how oftentimes, she will encounter something in life that plays itself out differently for her and her family than it might for another family. Have you ever thought about how someone of color, gender, or ethnicity might experience the same situation in a different way?
 - Thinking back to the conversation between Scott and Carolyn, they talked about the importance of understanding someone else's story. What sort of questions can we ask someone else as we hear their story to better understand them and their personal experience?
 - Is it okay to not understand someone, or struggle to relate to someone as they recount their story and experience? How can we love them like Christ loves them even if we aren't able to relate to them?
- In so many ways, Kim and Lael are wildly different, and yet in so many ways they are remarkably the same. Recount some of the ways they are different and some of the ways they are the same with your group.
 - As you recount those ways, is there someone in your group you feel similar to despite the fact that you might have relatively or substantially different backgrounds?
 - In thinking about these different backgrounds that somehow also unite us, why is it important to acknowledge both our similarities and our differences? How can doing so allow us to grow in our faith?
- Lael has had to teach her sons things that differ from the lessons that Kim has had to teach her sons. How do our personal experiences alter the ways we experience the world? How do these experiences impact what we teach our children/people in our lives?

- What was your emotional takeaway from hearing the difference between Kim and Lael's memory of that moment in their histories?
- How can learning the lessons that others teach their children give us greater insight into their stories and experiences?

In some faith backgrounds, they believe that the best way to be baptized is to do so by immersion (as this is the way that Jesus was baptized). In the Methodist faith, we affirm baptism by immersion, but also affirm baptism by both sprinkling and pouring of water as ways for us to receive the Holy Spirit. During Kim and Lael's full conversation, Lael discusses how an important part of baptism is the coming up out of the water when one is immersed because you can come up as a different person. Have you ever considered how you are different after baptism than you were before?

- Read Acts 2:32-39. In this passage, Peter is giving the first sermon in the history of the Christian Church. A great mass of people is hearing the story of Jesus and the gift of salvation that is being offered for the first time. When asked about how they can receive this gift, Peter answers the listeners by saying to be baptized. When you think about being baptized, what does this kind of commitment entail for you?
 - In this scripture, Peter talks about how this same gift of baptism and salvation is offered to all people. How do you understand this text in modern society?
- Kim and Lael spoke heavily about baptism in their conversation. What does baptism mean for you personally?
 - What do you think baptism means for our daily lives?
 - In our baptismal vows, we reject the forces of wickedness in this world and resist evil and oppression in whatever forms they take. Oftentimes, we don't spend time diving into the meaning of different liturgical moments. How do these vows strike you as you hear them outside of the context of worship?
- In our baptismal vows, we agree to uphold those being newly baptized into the church; to welcome them into the family, and walk alongside them as they grow in their faith. Why is it important to affirm this vow with each new baptism?
 - What does this look like on a practical level? How are you currently doing this?
 - What are some ways that you can begin to do this, or do this at a greater level?
- Lael talked about how we have to learn to live like Christ. After Christ's baptism, we see example after example of Christ's love. Do you think that love is greater because of Christ being baptized?
 - How can we continue to live out this love today in each action and decision?
 - How can we treat someone who might be considered an outsider in such a way that they feel as loved and accepted in the way that Jesus did?

Call (10 minutes)

We believe that God not only shows us who God is but invites us to participate in God's ministry by answering unique calls in our own lives. Join together in discovering how we can actively respond to scripture and God's presence.

- Who is someone in your life that you can ask to know more about their story this week?
- Take some time this week to reflect on our baptismal vows and how you can live them out in a real way.

Closing (5 minutes)

God calls us into community by sharing our joys and concerns together in prayer and supporting one another in our walks with Christ. As we share testimony and stories of our lives, let us listen to where God is working within our community and how we can build each other up in Christian love.

- Share joys and concerns with one another.
- Close in prayer, either by inviting a group member to pray or by using the prayer provided below.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, in you we saw the hope that comes in baptism. As we remember our own baptisms, renew us with the Holy Spirit, and reinvigorate our desire to go out and live like you in the world. Allow us to recognize how our stories are different, and as a result, the way we interact with the world may be different. However, let us keep our eyes focused on the world that you have hope to build for us: a world that allows us to come together and see the ways in which we are united and to celebrate them; that encourages us to see the ways in which we are unique and to celebrate those differences; and that invites us to learn to love each other more deeply in those unique qualities and stories. Amen.