



ALREADY ONE | Connection Group Discussion Guide | Week 1

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 the fondest memory you have from your grade school years?

Context (30 to 40 minutes)

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

Watch the Connection Group video.

- Are there any friends you have in your life that, in retrospect, it seems quite miraculous that you have a relationship with? Perhaps for the same reasons of race that Scott and Carolyn described, or for some other reason.
 - What makes these friendships so special?
 - Have you ever taken time to reflect on how you are changed or positively impacted because of this friendship?
- With Carolyn and Scott, one of the things we see is an earnest friendship that spans many years and life moments. With respect to the fact that these sorts of relationships are not built overnight, what are the benefits of these deeper friendships?
 - Typically, we don't have a great number of friends with whom we might say we are close enough to have deep conversations. If you have a lot of relationships that are deep like this, why do you think that is the case?
 - If you don't, what do you think is a major barrier to these kinds of relationships?
- In a conversation on race, Scott and Carolyn highlighted how we have come so far and yet still have so far to go.
 - What are some ways that you believe we have made strides forward in racial reconciliation (and other areas of oneness in Christ) that ought to be celebrated?

- What are some areas that still require us to reflect on how we can love one another the way Christ called us to love one another?
 - What does empathy truly look like?
 - What is the relationship between empathy and hearing others' stories?
 - What are important things to remember when we hear the stories of others? A better way to ask this question: How do we hope others will react when they hear our stories?
 - Read Galatians 3:26-29. In this passage, Paul is articulating how the world has changed with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Where previously, there was a division between groups — notably Jews and Gentiles with the Jews having come to understand that the Gentiles were not privy to the salvific work of Christ — Paul explains that now there are no divisions and that all have the ability to inherit a place in the Kingdom of Heaven.
 - What sort of emotions do you feel when you read this passage? How is it encouraging, and how is it challenging?
 - Do you know of any other ways that Jesus broke down the social barriers that exist between different groups and people in the way Paul describes here?
 - Scott talks about the phrase Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Is this a phrase you have heard often? Have you ever given thought to what it means or where it came from?
 - What does it mean to be a part of a family?
 - What are the best parts and the hardest parts about being a family?
 - What is the hardest part about engaging in conversations on societal division?
 - How do you feel when topics like these are introduced?
 - Is there a way to approach these conversations and topics with a lens that focuses on Christ first? If so, what can be our foundation or primary goal when we discuss these issues with others?
 - How would you describe a “new reality; one that is based in the oneness in Christ”?
 - What are things that you would see in a reality such as this?
 - What are things that you would hope you would no longer see in a reality such as this?
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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.

- Are there ways that you can develop relationships with people from different walks of life?
 - Are there current relationships that you have that you can intentionally deepen to begin to have the same kinds of conversations as Scott and Carolyn?
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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

Merciful God, as we begin this connection group series, inspire us and be with us. We acknowledge that this might be the first time for several of us to dive into conversations about our division. We ask that you start not from a place of division, but instead start from a place of Christ; to start from a place of oneness. Let us live lives that embody the words of Galatians, so that we might begin to see a future that God has for us. One where we love unconditionally, where we hear each other's stories, and where we continue to move towards the Kingdom of Heaven here on Earth. Amen.