

TEMPERANCE

Heavenly Virtues: **Temperance** | Connection Group Discussion Guide | Week 4

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?
- Share about one food item you always have trouble resisting. Why is it so tempting for you?

Context (30 to 40 minutes)

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

- Before watching this week's video, go around the group and ask members to answer this question: What do you think is the purpose of Christian fasting?

Watch the first half of the video for this session on your DVD or online.

- How do you respond to the idea that temperance is a virtue needed in good times instead of difficult times?
 - Do you agree that other virtues are mostly needed in difficult times? Why or why not?
 - What would be the period of your life, up to this point, that you needed temperance the most? Why?

Read Matthew 4:1-11

- Where do you see Jesus practicing temperance in this passage?
- Share about a food, drink, activity, etc., that brings you comfort during difficulty.
 - Why and how is this comforting to you?
 - How do you practice temperance or fail to practice it with this source of comfort?
 - What can we learn from Jesus' example about how we should find comfort in challenging circumstances?

Read Matthew 6:16-18

- Think back to your understanding of the purpose of fasting. How does this scripture align or contrast with what you shared?
 - Share about a time when you chose to fast. What did you give up? Why?
 - How did the Holy Spirit impact you through this practice of temperance?
 - As we get closer to Lent, a traditional time of fasting before Easter, what is something you might be called to fast from right now?

NOTES

Watch the second half of the video for this session on your DVD or online.

“One attains the virtue of temperance when one’s appetites have been shaped such that one’s very desires are in proper order and proportion.” – Karen Swallow Prior

- How do you respond to the idea of insensibility, or over-fasting as a vice?
 - Describe someone you know of who might be guilty of this. Where do you see problems arise from over-denying oneself?
 - Share about the times when you tend to over-deny or over-fast. What outside influences push you to do this? What are you ultimately trying to accomplish?

NOTES

Read Matthew 9:14-15

The life lived most closely to Jesus looks like this: feasting and celebrating that life itself, Christ the Lord, has come into our midst. Consider how this passage connects with Jesus’ earlier instructions for fasting.

- List the desires that a typical human being has. How do these desires actually help to preserve human life?
 - When has one of these desires benefited you in your own life?
- What does it mean to you to hear that Jesus wants us to enjoy things in life? How does your relationship with God change because of this instruction?
 - Share about the most recent moment of joy you’ve had. What made it joyful? How do you see God acting through this moment of joy?

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.

- Which of these two vices do you currently struggle with the most? Why?
 - How are you experiencing God’s forgiveness for this sin?
 - What is one thing you can do to avoid this temptation this week?
- We believe in our ability to live as virtuous people when we do the simple work of practicing virtues in our everyday lives. If you are participating in the “call to action” shared in our weekly worship services for this series, share with the group which action(s) you chose and why. (Please refer to the Call to Action handout for weekly calls to action.)

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

Loving God, we thank You that You have filled our world with so many wonderful things that You hope we will enjoy. We confess that we fall for the lie that we are called to stoic lives full of nothing but self-denial, ignoring that Jesus loved to spend time with his disciples by feasting and enjoying life. We confess too that we often seek comfort in worldly things instead of asking for Your grace in the midst of challenges. Help us to find balance between these two vices and walk the path of temperance and virtue. Amen.