

Sermon-Based Small Group Leader Guide

For the week of September 14, 2014

“In”

Sermon Series: *From Here to There* (week 2 of 3)

Genesis 2:18

Getting Started

10 minutes

- 1) When you were a child, you probably had to write at least one essay entitled, “What I did over my summer vacation.” What is one especially memorable thing you did over the past three months?

Leader: If your group met last spring, use this as an opportunity to enjoy catching up with each other.

Key Concept

God uses relationships to grow us, to move us beyond the person we are currently, to his version of the person he designed us to become.

Into the Bible

20 minutes

- 2) Thinking back to Sunday’s worship service, were there any elements that challenged you? Encouraged you? Puzzled you?
Leader Note: Please mention to your group that LIFE Groups at Northwest base small group discussions on weekly sermons. Please prepare for small group discussions by joining us on Sundays, 9:00 or 10:30 am, for worship. When unable to attend, sermons can be accessed online at northwestbaptist.com.

Read Genesis 2:18

The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” (NIV1984)

- 3) 🕒🕒 There are times that we all need to be alone. Reflecting on Pastor Harrington’s sermon, however, what benefits do we miss when we isolate ourselves from relationships?

Leader Note: We were made for, grow in, find acceptance in, serve in, heal in, die in, and will be resurrected into *community*.

- 4) 🕒🕒 Read the following statement and discuss the related questions:
“The Bible indicates that God is presented as ‘a Tri-unity of divine entities existing as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, *the eternal community of oneness, from whom all other communities derive life and meaning.*’”¹
 - a. What evidence have you found in the Bible and/or in your own experience that God created us *to live in a community of loving persons*?
 - b. What does the communal existence of a Triune God teach us about how we were designed to relate to others?
Follow up question: Are you encouraged or discouraged by the responses to this question? Please elaborate, if comfortable.

Read Romans 15:7

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (NIV1984)

- 5) How is the Christian community impacted when we live out this verse?
- 6) Why is it such a powerful witness to the non-believing world when members of Christian communities show this kind of acceptance to one another?
- 7) 🕒🕒 This verse is directed at Christians. What makes it possible to truly accept someone who holds some very different opinions than you?
Leader Note: “We can, and will, differ in how we think, which style of worship we prefer, which method of baptism we affirm, but these are not essential. The only thing that matters is that our hearts beat in love for Jesus. If we have that, we are united. Then we can say once again: Jesus is

Lord!” (Smith, James Bryan. *The Good and Beautiful Community*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010, p. 96)

- 12) ⌚⌚⌚ If the concept of growing in community is difficult for you, spend time this week asking the Lord to help you discern the underlying issue. Then, ask for the courage to open up to a trusted brother or sister in Christ.

Digging Deeper

40 minutes

- 8) This is the first week of our Fall 2014 LIFE Group cycle. If you have ever participated in a small group at Northwest, what benefits, if any, would you say that you received being a part of community, as discussed in the sermon? Please share.
Leader Note: See Question 3 Leader Note, if group needs prompting.
- 9) ⌚⌚⌚ What are you looking for in a small group? Or, what makes it hard for you to participate in a small group?
- 10) Pastor referred to the cross’s shape, *the vertical bar*, symbolizing our forgiveness and the restoration of our relationship with God through Christ’s death, and *the horizontal bar*, depicting the destruction of barriers and divisions among human beings also accomplished through Christ’s death. The cross represents these two dimensions of Christ’s work. Consider which of these two dimensions is more difficult for you to accept and why.

Read James 5:16a

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. (NIV1984)

- 11) God’s plan is that we heal in community. For this to happen, though, we can’t hide our struggles from other believers who love and care for us. Instead, we have to courageously share them. Have there been struggles that you have been hiding? Would you be willing to bring them to the light?

Group Prayer

20 minutes

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

— 1 John 4:11–12 (NIV1984)

⌚⌚⌚ = Key questions to ask (for groups with shorter time frames)

¹ Bilezikian, Gilbert. *Community 101: Reclaiming the Local Church as a Community of Oneness*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997, p. 17, emphasis by the author of this Bible study.