

CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Week #7 - Faithful When Faithful is Hard



GETTING STARTED

Spend some time checking in with each other. Any highs and lows since the last time you met?

What's something you know you should do for yourself—but often don't? (Ex: flossing, budgeting, going to bed on time, calling your mom.)

THIS WEEK'S THEME

Let's Get Real

- Why do you think we so often act against our own best advice?
- Can you think of a time when you knew better but still made a choice you regretted?

Faithfulness in a Faithless World

- What does faithfulness mean to you—beyond just “being reliable”?
- In the sermon, we heard that Christ-like faithfulness means staying faithful even when others are not. How does that challenge or encourage you?

Faithfulness When We've Been Unfaithful

- When you think about your own failures or past unfaithfulness, is your instinct to hide or to bring it into the light? Why?
- Zacchaeus responds to grace with radical change. What might “bringing something into the light” look like for you or someone you know?

The Source of Faithfulness

- The sermon emphasized that faithfulness is a fruit, not a to-do list. In what ways have you experienced God producing faithfulness in you?
- What might it look like in your daily life to “keep in step with the Spirit”? What changes when Jesus does the work by producing what we need, and we are just invited to stay in step?

DIGGING DEEPER

Read Luke 19:1-10

Although Zacchaeus appears only in Luke's Gospel, his brief story has attracted a lot of attention. Luke's powerful account connects to the context of the broader Gospel, drawing on many ideas that have already appeared throughout Jesus' ministry. For one thing, Zacchaeus's introduction ("he was a chief tax collector and was rich") leads readers to view him in light of other characters. Previous passages in Luke have lumped "tax collectors" together with "sinners." Jesus has been critical of the wealthy, and a rich ruler has balked at an invitation to follow Jesus (18:18-25). Just as people are wondering, "Who can be saved?" (18:26), Zacchaeus shows up as perhaps a very unlikely candidate.

An important question about this story is what Zacchaeus means by his words in 19:8. The verbs he uses when speaking to Jesus are in the present tense and can be understood as Zacchaeus claiming that he regularly gives to the poor and pays restitution. This would mean that Zacchaeus is defending himself against the accusations of others (19:7) and against a bad reputation that might have led the crowd to bar his view in 19:3. If this is the case, then Zacchaeus's "salvation" involves the restoration of his honor within the community, and that restoration then reminds readers not to look upon the wealthy and automatically assume that they are corrupt or sinful. If, however, Zacchaeus in 19:8 announces that he is at this point in time changing his behavior and moving from corruption to benevolence, then his "salvation" involves a new way of living. He no longer serves his wealth (see 16:13) but generously gives a portion of it away to those who are poor and those who have been victimized by an oppressive economic system. Even such an unlikely candidate for salvation is not beyond the reach of Jesus' efforts to reclaim the lost.

<https://enterthebible.org/passage/luke-191-10-jesus-seeks-zacchaeus>

PRAY

Ask how you can pray for each other this week. What prayer requests do you have?

Gracious God, Thank you for the gifts of the spirit. Teach us to live in a way the world needs. Amen.

TAKING IT HOME

If faithfulness in the face of unfaithfulness is the ultimate expression of the faithfulness of God, how does that affect your relationships with others?

What's one prayer you could pray this week when your own supply of faithfulness runs out?