

3 WEEKS

Revised





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Small Group Study

Kicking it off:

What is the furthest you ever remember feeling from God?

Big Idea:

Jesus came to proclaim that everyone is welcome, nobody is perfect, and anything is possible. And He reconciled us to God by giving His life as a payment for our sin.

Key Scriptures:

2 Corinthians 5:18-19

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."

Ephesians 2:11-13

"Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)— remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Matthew 1:1-3

"This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father

of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram...”

Discussion:

1. Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 and Ephesians 2:11-13. Why did/do we need reconciliation with God? How does Christ reconcile us with God?
2. Discuss what Paul means by the ministry of reconciliation.
3. Read Matthew 1:1-3. Tamar was a Canaanite woman who married into Judah's family and ends up as part of Jesus's family history. What is the significance of Matthew naming her in the genealogy that introduces Jesus?
4. Why do you suppose God use "outsiders" to be part of Jesus' story?
5. How does the story of Tamar and other people normally regarded as "other" in Biblical times (e.g. Ruth (non-Hebrew), Bathsheba (Israelite with whom King David did wrong) apply to you?
6. In which area(s) of your life do you need reconciliation with God?
7. How will you live out the message this week that we are reconciled with God through Christ?

Wrapping It Up:

Take some time to pray individually for help in the reconciliation process. Have the group leader close the prayer time by asking God for courage and openness for each person to be fully reconciled with God.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for the Operation Christmas Child boxes that were sent out this week to bring love, joy and reconciliation to God for the recipients and their families.

Memory Verse:

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ." **Ephesians 2:13**



Small Group Study

Kicking it off:

What's the best make-up story you've ever experienced?

Big Idea:

When we are willing to be reconciled to others, God can use it for His greater purpose.

Key Scriptures:

Pg. 8-13

Discussion:

1. Read Genesis 37:2-36; 41:33-43; 42:11-24, the background of Joseph's relationship with his brothers and how he came to be in Egypt. What kind of teenager was Joseph? How did his older brothers treat Joseph?
2. Read Genesis 44:14-34; 45:1-11,21-28. What clues are there of a change in the brothers by the time they come to Egypt? What does Judah, who was the one who originally suggested selling Joseph into slavery, do differently now?
3. How does Joseph show that he also has changed?
4. What role does God play in the reconciliation of Joseph with his family, and what was the grander purpose of their story?
5. Read Genesis 49:8-11. What is Jacob's prophecy regarding Judah's legacy?
6. Judah's line eventually leads to the birth of Jesus. What is the connection between Jesus' ministry and Judah's story?
7. Read Genesis 50:19-20. What do you learn about God's ultimate purpose in this story?

Wrapping It Up:

Reflect on relationships with your family, friends, co-workers, etc. Where is God calling you to be reconciled?

What steps do you need to take toward that reconciliation?

Prayer Focus:

Pray for these next 30 days of preparation for the opening of our Hope Center in January; that as we provide food to those in our community who are in great need, that we can also help reconcile them to God.

Memory Verse:



"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives"

-Genesis 50:20

KEY SCRIPTURES

Genesis 37:2-36

"This is the account of Jacob's family line. Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them. Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him. Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him

and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind. Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them." "Very well," he replied. So he said to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron. When Joseph arrived at Shechem, a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?" He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?" "They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams." When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said. "Don't shed any blood.

Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he wearing— and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it. As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt. Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed. So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt. When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes. He went back to his brothers and said, "The boy isn't there! Where can I turn now?" Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. They took the ornate robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe." He recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe!

Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces." Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave." So his father wept for him. Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard. As he served the captain of the guard, Joseph became known, as one who could interpret dreams by the hand of God. Years later, Pharaoh was being disturbed by a mysterious dream, and the only one who could tell and interpret the dream (which turned out to be a warning from God about a seven year famine) was Joseph...]"

Genesis 41:33-43

"And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that

will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine." The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you." So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.[Joseph's brothers travel to Egypt to get food to live on – not knowing that it is their brother Joseph who has come into power, and from whom they must request this food...]

Genesis 42:11-24

"We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies." "No!" he said to them. "You have come to see where our land is unprotected." But they replied, "Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who

lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more." Joseph said to them, "It is just as I told you: You are spies! And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!" And he put them all in custody for three days. On the third day, Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God: If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households. But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die." This they proceeded to do. They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us." Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood." They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter. He turned away from them and began to weep, but then came

back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes. Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey."

Genesis 44:14-34

"Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to the ground before him. Joseph said to them, "What is this you have done? Don't you know that a man like me can find things out by divination?" "What can we say to my lord?" Judah replied. "What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants' guilt. We are now my lord's slaves—we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup." But Joseph said, "Far be it from me to do such a thing! Only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you, go back to your father in peace." Then Judah went up to him and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord, let me speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself. My lord asked his servants, 'Do you have a father or a brother?' And we answered, 'We have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age. His brother is dead, and he is the only one of his mother's sons left, and his father loves him.'

"Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me so I can see him for myself.' And we said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die.' But you told your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.' When we went back to your servant my father, we told him what my lord had said. "Then our father said, 'Go back and buy a little more food.' But we said, 'We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother is with us will we go. We cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.' "Your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons. One of them went away from me, and I said, "He has surely been torn to pieces." And I have not seen him since. If you take this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in misery.' "So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father, and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father. I said, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!' "Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his

brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father."

Genesis 45:1-11

"Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it. Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. Now hurry

back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay. You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'"

Genesis 45: 21-28

"So the sons of Israel did this. Joseph gave them carts, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he also gave them provisions for their journey. To each of them he gave new clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five sets of clothes. And this is what he sent to his father: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other provisions for his journey. Then he sent his brothers away, and as they were leaving he said to them, "Don't quarrel on the way!" So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. They told him, "Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt." Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them. But when they told him everything Joseph had said to

them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. And Israel said, "I'm convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

Genesis 49:8-11

"Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. You are lion's cub Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him. The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his. He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes."

Genesis 50:19-20

"But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Small Group Study

Kicking it off:

What is the most unexpected and merciful act of which you've been a recipient?

Big Idea:

We are called to love & reconcile our neighbor with God.

Key Scriptures:

Luke 10:25-28

"On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life? What is written in the Law?" he replied.

"How do you read it?" He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, Love your neighbor as yourself. You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

Luke 10:29-35

"But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii[e] and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'"

Luke 10:36-37

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Discussion:

1. Read Luke 10:25-28. Jesus affirms the Hebrew law as written, but the expert is not satisfied. Why does the expert want "neighbor" defined by Jesus?
2. Read Luke 10:29-35. Jesus illustrates "neighbor" with a story, in a Rabbinical style, where his listeners would expect a hero to "come, do, go." What excuses might passers-by have for not helping the man who was robbed?
3. The first two, a Priest and a Levite, come and go but do nothing except avoid. What seven things does the third person do? (A list of seven things would indicate completeness in to Jesus' listeners.)
4. Why would Jesus' choice of hero be shocking?
5. Read Luke 10:36-37. Jesus asks the expert to choose the "hero." What definition of neighbor does the expert now understand?
6. How would you react if you were a passer-by on the Jericho road? Who do you consider to be your neighbor in the context of this story?

Wrapping It Up:

Discuss what you can do, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to help reconcile your neighbor to the God.

Prayer Focus:

Pray together and throughout this week for our Christmas services at the Orpheum on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. Pray for our neighbors to be reconciled to God.

Memory Verse:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, Love your neighbor as yourself." **Luke 10:28**





“...God was
the world
in Christ...”

*reconciling
to himself* ”

-2 Corinthians 5: 19a

Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group

1. Establish a welcoming, accepting, and safe environment.
 - Take time to prepare.
 - Make sure to give a warm enthusiastic greeting to each person.
 - Verbally communicate the environment that you hope to create.
 - Ephesians 4:1-3
2. On the opening night of your group you need to have some intentional discussions centered around these questions:
 - What is the purpose of our group?
 - What is the vision for our group?
 - What are your expectations?
 - What do you hope to gain from this group experience?
 - What are some things we value as a group?
 - What are some healthy guidelines we need to have in place?Review and sign a group agreement.
3. Be authentic. Spend time sharing your life stories in order to get to know each other on a deeper level.
4. Find a good balance between:
 - Truth and grace/Bible study and life
 - Encouraging and challenging one another
 - Giving and receiving feedback from each other
5. Ask good questions to stimulate good discussion. Use open ended questions and follow up questions.
6. Hang out together, do things socially, eat together and have fun together!
7. Develop a missional lifestyle, find a service project to do together in the community.
8. Raise up new leadership by rotating facilitation of the group.
9. Share the responsibilities in order to increase individual commitment and ownership of the group.
10. Pray for your group and for each other!

Find ways to celebrate what God is doing in your group! Who else could you invite to join you in order that their life may be impacted by what God is doing in your group?

Group Agreement

OUR PURPOSE

To transform our spiritual lives by cultivating our spiritual health in a healthy small group community. In addition, we: _____

OUR VALUES

Group Attendance: To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent.

Safe Environment: To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)

Respect Differences: To be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or imperfections. We are all works in progress.

Confidentiality: To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.

Encouragement for Growth: To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our life by serving others with our God-given gifts.

Welcome for Newcomers: To keep an open chair and share Jesus' dream of finding a shepherd for every sheep.

Shared Ownership: To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.

Rotating Hosts/Leaders and Homes: To encourage different people to host the group in their homes, and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

- Refreshments/mealtimes _____
- Childcare _____
- When we will meet (day of week) _____
- Where we will meet (place) _____
- We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____
- We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together.
- Our primary worship service time will be _____
- Date of this agreement _____
- Date we will review this agreement again _____
- Who (other than the leader) will review this agreement at the end of this study _____



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