

BEING IN AND WITH THE WORD



GRACE COMMUNION
INTERNATIONAL

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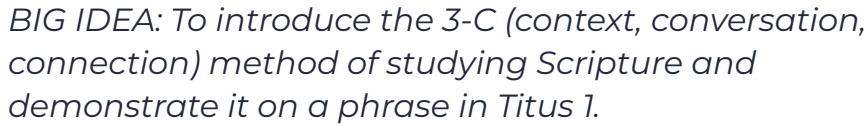
For additional support like the meaning of the icons and relationship building tips, please see the **Facilitator Best Practices** guide on [page 55](#).

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1

PUT ON YOUR 3-C GLASSES!

1: PUT ON YOUR 3-C GLASSES!



Opener: Do you remember a significant Bible in your life? Maybe a huge family Bible? Maybe a gift you received? If you grew up in a family without Bibles, was there one in a school or some other place? What do you remember about it? {exchange stories}

SUGGESTED OPENING PRAYER  **2 mins****SCRIPTURE READING** ⌚ 3 mins

Notes

[illegible]

DISCUSSION OF SCRIPTURE ⌚ 30 mins

Today we will talk about what the Bible is and look at an approach to studying it.

Discussion: Helpful and unhelpful metaphors for understanding the Bible...

 The Bible is a...

Love letter – God’s love letter to us. He’s not only telling us how he feels about us, but who he is. Maybe more like an eHarmony profile of someone you’re just meeting.

Library – The Bible is an introductory not a book, but a library of different kinds of literature. It includes history, poetry, personal letters, political satire, and several other forms of writing. It's vital to keep in mind that the authors wrote for a specific purpose to a particular group – a situation that formed the content of the letter.

{Resource: The Genres of Scripture}

Living literature – The Bible speaks in two moments: then and now. For example, 1 Corinthians is a letter written to the first-century church in Corinth (a city in Greece). The letters written to the Corinthians are also “living literature” of Scripture and express truth that has transformed the church through the centuries and can transform our individual lives today. The Word of God is “living and active” (Hebrews 4:12).

Notes

[illegible]



The Bible is not a...

Code book – The Bible is not a code book of riddles and ciphers that will help us unlock the future. This kind of approach to Scripture has caused several problems throughout history.

Chicken Soup for the Soul – The Bible is not a feel-good self-help book designed to enhance our lives. It is God’s revelation of himself, not for us to wrestle into our own situation or disregard if we don’t think it “applies.”

A la carte – The Bible is a coherent whole, compiled by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16). Taking verses out of context is dangerous and wrong-headed. Each verse is affected by its situation, author, and the other verses in the context.

Discussion: Can you think of any more helpful or unhelpful metaphors for Scripture?



Put on Your 3-C Glasses – A Bible Study Approach

The Bible is a complex library of literature and getting the most out of studying it involves the mind as well as the heart. There are several helpful approaches to studying it, but we will use one simple framework as a way to give shape to our study.

But first...


Our Subject – Titus, Paul’s “true child in the faith.” – We will use this approach in the book of Titus in the New Testament. This was a letter from Paul to Titus on how to care for the new Christian community in Crete (an island off the coast of Greece). It was probably written in AD 64, between Paul’s first and second imprisonment by Rome.

Notes


[illegible]

The Three Cs: Context, Conversation, Connection


Context

Scripture	Date
	

Conversation

Scripture	Date
	

Connection

Scripture	Date
	



Context – How did this sound to the first readers?

The “living literature” of Scripture was written in a particular context for a specific group. Paul wrote to Titus, a church leader on assignment in Crete. He addresses issues going on in the church at the time and uses thought forms, phrasing, and ideas that would be familiar to his audience. We have to respect that context to more accurately understand what the Spirit was saying through these words.

Conversation – How does this apply to God?

In this “love letter” of Scripture, God is telling us about himself, and his wild love story with humanity. Our temptation as modern people is to say right away: “How does this apply to me?” But our first question should be how this applies to God. What does it tell us about him and what he’s up to in the world?

Here is where we can distill theological and devotional principles about who God is, after we look at the writing in context and try to prayerfully understand the author's intention. A major theme in Titus is the connection between our beliefs and our life – that our daily lifestyle should reflect the transformation of the gospel. If your relationship with Christ doesn't affect your relationship with your spouse and children, then maybe you're missing the point! These are the universal, timeless principles of the conversation of God with his people through the centuries.



Connection – How do we apply ourselves to this?

Again, the temptation is to ask this question too quickly, but it's an important question at the right time. The "living literature" of Scripture is transformative at the moment it was written and every time we read it after that. How will we take what we've learned about God and connect our lives to it? How will the "living and active" Word of God change us in the 21st century – the digital, postmodern, addicted, traffic-jammed, high-speed world we inhabit?

Notes

[illegible]

One of Paul's themes in Titus is that we are transformative not by retreating from the world or hating it but by engaging with it. Christians should be known as hospitable, hard-working, gentle, and welcoming. Are we known this way as individuals? Or is our church known this way in the community?

Put on your 3-C glasses! We'll look at the book of Titus through context, conversation, and connection and meet with God as we study his Word. We will use the 3 Cs every time but will emphasize a different one every two weeks.

Notes

[illegible]

? APPLICATION **🕒 10 mins**

This will be a unique exercise in application, because we are applying the methods of reading Scripture. This will lead to personal application.

Read Titus 1:1-4



Context – How did this sound to the first readers?

In verse 4, Paul uses a very common letter greeting to greet Titus, which may look very run-of-the-mill to us. But he uses the term “Savior,” which brings up more controversy than you’d think. This is the term that Caesar used to claim that



he brought the world out of chaos: "Caesar, our savior."

This adds an extra dimension to how it would have been originally heard. For this exercise in thinking through the three Cs, today we are just going to focus on this one word: Savior.

Conversation – How does this apply to God?

The designation of Jesus as Savior, not just conquering Lord, is our great hope! It also tells us that God is our Savior, meaning that we can't earn or attain his salvation – his motivation is his love, not our merit.

Connection – How do we apply ourselves to this?

What does it mean that Paul used an ancient title for an emperor and transferred it to Jesus? (it was dangerous to do that!). Caesar used this title to mean that he brought his empire out of chaos – what does it mean that Jesus brought us out of chaos? Have you accepted the fact that Jesus is your Savior? Is accepting Jesus as your Savior a one-time thing or an ongoing process?

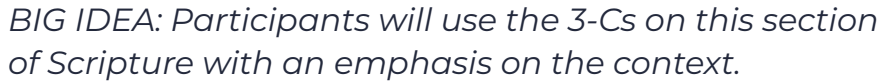
Notes

[illegible]

2

UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT

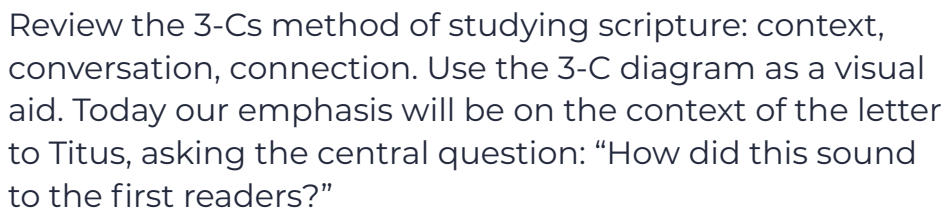
2: UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT



WELCOME/ICEBREAKER 15 mins


SUGGESTED OPENING PRAYER ⌚ 5 mins**SCRIPTURE READING** ⌚ 3 mins

DISCUSSION OF SCRIPTURE 30 mins


[illegible]

The Three Cs: Context, Conversation, Connection


Context

Scripture	Date
	

Conversation

Scripture	Date
	

Connection

Scripture	Date
	



Context – How did this sound to the first readers?

Titus is a letter from Paul to one of his followers who was in leadership in the new Christian community on Crete. Probably written in AD 64 or so. Titus was a Gentile (non-Jewish) believer. This is one of the many kinds of writing that are in the Bible; it is a personal business letter about administrative issues in the church.

Crete is an island off the coast of Greece that would be strategically important to the young church to connect with other countries. Crete's population included many mercenary soldiers and their families – these people had sold themselves as soldiers to the highest bidder. Consequently, Crete had a reputation for dishonesty, underhandedness, and excess.

Crete was part of the Roman Empire, under the Roman emperor, Caesar, who called himself “savior,” “lord,” and “son of god.”

The main Cretan deity was Zeus, who they claimed was from Crete. They often shared stories of this shiftless, con-artist god who seduced women and did anything to get his way. The ancient world was highly religious, with temples and shrines on every corner. But it's important to understand that their faith wasn't connected to their ethics. The "gods" didn't care about your ethical life. People connected to the divine through rites and rituals (sometimes involving drunkenness and sexually broken practices). Ethics and character were present, of course, but not considered part of your religious life.

Notes

[illegible]

It's unclear exactly what the Jewish influence was on Crete, except that there was one. There was also a contingent of Jewish Christians who were trying to keep to obsolete practices (1:10). Jewish letters would have started with the salutation: "Grace and peace to you in the name of God."



Question: How would our understanding of the context (the first C) help deepen our reading of these phrases in our section of Scripture?

Verse 2: “which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began”

Verse 3: “which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior” ... “Christ Jesus our Savior.”

Verse 3: "Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior."

See how just one small section of Scripture
can open up to us!

Note: Commentaries and Bible dictionaries, etc. are vital to a solid study of scripture. The Bible is a complex book and even advanced students need help to find insights like those above. Check out the resource commentaries we've attached to these lessons to help you get started.

Notes

[illegible]

Conversation – How does this apply to God?

Do we believe that God is reliable (“never lies”)?
Do our lives reflect that belief? How could we grow in this trust?

The Cretan community believed that the gods, especially Zeus, were shifty and underhanded. What does our culture at large believe about God? That he's indifferent, sentimental but powerless, or a nameless, uncaring force? Are the views of our culture and the Cretan culture different? How do we as Christians respond?

We often think of Jesus as our best friend, the lover of our soul, our great comfort – these are all true. But what does it mean to think of him as King, as emperor of the universe? How could that change our day-to-day lives as people and citizens of our countries?

APPLICATION  **10 mins**

★ **Connection** – How do we apply ourselves to this?

Do we believe that God is reliable (“never lies”)? Do our lives reflect that belief? How could we grow in this trust?

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Notes

[illegible]

★ DIVINE PARTICIPATION ⌚ 5 mins

There's a Greek word the ancient monks used to use: *antirrhetikos*. This roughly translates as "counter-statement" – a short prayer that breaks us out of the unspiritual flow of thoughts that our culture and surroundings feed us. Our counter-statement prayer brings us back to the reality of the gospel, such as these subversive counterstatements that Paul uses here: Christ is Savior, God does not lie, Grace and peace to you from Christ.

What will be your counterstatement this week?
What short prayer will you speak back when the world and the devil lie to you about who you are? Nothing fancy, just “I am God’s beloved” or “God can be trusted” (see verse 2). Choose something that will short-circuit any damaging thoughts that come your way.

CLOSING PRAYER 🕒 10 mins

Collect prayer requests from the group and assign prayer partners for the week or have one person send out the list to the group.

In closing, choose a volunteer to say this prayer from St. John of Chrysostom:

O Lord Jesus Christ, open the eyes of my heart
that I may hear your Word, and understand and do
your will, for I am a sojourner upon the Earth.
Hide not your commandments from me, but open my eyes,
that I may perceive the wonders of your Law. Speak unto
me the hidden and secret things of your wisdom.

On you do I set my hope, O my God, that you shall enlighten my mind and understanding with the light of your knowledge; not only to cherish those things which are written, but to do them; For you are the enlightenment of those who lie in darkness, and from you comes every good deed and every gift. Amen.

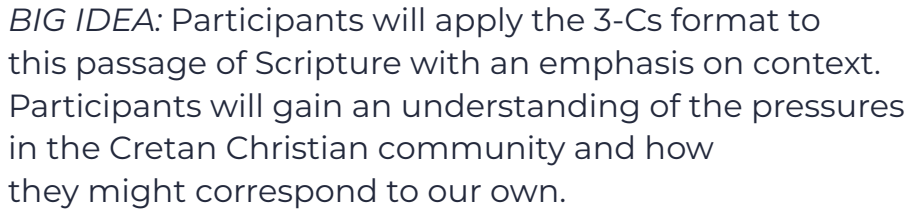
Notes

[illegible]

3

PREACHING AND PRACTICE

3: PREACHING AND PRACTICE

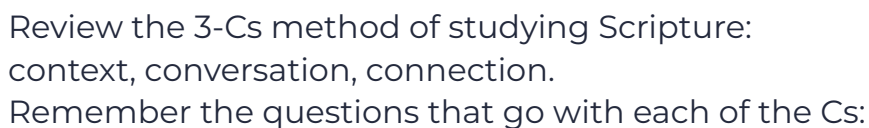


Ask members to reflect and respond:
What was the most life-giving part of my week?
What was the most life-reducing part of my week?

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit meet with us and bring your living truth through these ancient words. Meet with us and take great joy in the gathering of your people. Tell us more about yourself. Amen.



DISCUSSION OF SCRIPTURE 30 mins




Today our emphasis will be on the context of the letter to Titus, asking the central question: “How did this sound to the first readers?”


[illegible]

The Three Cs: Context, Conversation, Connection


Context

Scripture	Date
	

Conversation

Scripture	Date
	

Connection

Scripture	Date
	



Context – How did this sound to the first readers?

Two groups/cultures are putting pressure on the fledgling church in Crete.

Cretan culture—We talked last week about how Crete was a gathering spot for mercenaries and other not-so-great types. It was also culturally expected for people to be hard-drinking and hard-living.

The Circumcision Group (v. 10)—This is an ongoing discussion in Paul’s ministry that sounds completely foreign to us. Paul is constantly being opposed by people who want a theological hybrid between the gospel and the old Israelite practices, essentially “Jesus plus.” They argue that Jewish practices like circumcision and dietary laws have to be kept in addition to belief in Christ.

Paul's argument here and elsewhere is that they are adding their own regulations to what God presented as his full and complete revelation in Jesus.

Paul also points out they are adding their own spin on the gospel for their own gain (v. 11).

Notes

[illegible]



Question: How would our understanding of the context (the first C) help deepen our reading of this section of scripture?

These verses are about the importance of connecting your ethics and character to what you believe. The leaders of Christ's people should reflect Christ's character. Given what we know about the context, why is this an important discussion?

Look at verse 15. Think about that in the context of people who are declaring themselves “pure” by doing rituals (the Circumcision Group). Why would this be a problem in this community (a group that has disconnected their faith and their character)?

What do you make of verse 12? Do you find it interesting that Paul would quote a Cretan philosopher who asserted that “Cretans are always liars” (thus, contradicting himself!). Why would Paul quote such an awful statement?

Conversation – How does this apply to God?

In that society, there was no connection between your faith and your morality/ethics. Those came from other places (this is not to say the people weren't ethical, but their ethics and morals didn't come from the religious side of their lives). So for Paul to connect faith and lifestyle was a revolutionary concept. What does that connection tell us about who God is?

APPLICATION  10 mins

Connection – How do we apply ourselves to this?

Have you ever been hurt by a person or a congregation who didn't "practice what they preach"?
What causes that disconnection?

One of the first positive characteristics Paul mentions is “hospitality” in verse 8. Why would this be important? Are we as a church thought of as hospitable? You yourself? Why is that an important value for us to cultivate?

Notes

[illegible]

★ DIVINE PARTICIPATION ⌚ 5 mins

Spend 30 minutes with God three times this week with the intention to see him reveal his character. This can be in many forms, including silent meditation, a nature walk, serving someone in need, creating or building something in God's honor, or praying. The point here is to spend time that is not self-serving or convenient for us, but rather to serve God and seek him out for who he is. Take note of how you experience God, his attributes, or how he has revealed something new to you about himself. Come prepared to share at next week's gathering.

CLOSING PRAYER 🕒 10 mins

Collect prayer requests from the group and assign prayer partners for the week, or have one person send out the list to the group.

Close with an ancient prayer from Andrew of Crete (where Titus lived!), 8th century:

*Out of the night watching early for You,
enlighten me I pray, O Lover of man,
and guide me in Your commandments,
and teach me, O Savior, to do Your will.
Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me.
Amen.*

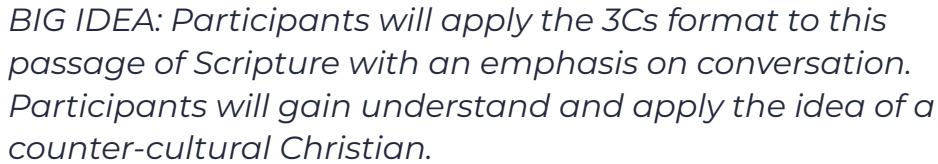
Notes

[illegible]

4

THE COUNTER-CULTURAL CHRISTIAN

4: THE COUNTER-CULTURAL CHRISTIAN



DISCUSSION OF SCRIPTURE 30 mins



Review the three Cs method—context, conversation, and connection. We focused on context for lessons two and three, and now we will focus on the conversation. This C asks the question: How does this apply to God?



In modern times, we often too quickly ask: How does this apply to me? We focus on our own lives as the chief end of Scripture when really the Bible is God's introductory love letter to us. He's revealing himself and we are to apply our lives and reflect on our lives through those realities.

So, this time we will focus on the theology and other timeless realities discussed in this section of Scripture. We will focus on the other two Cs as well, but we will focus on Conversation.


The main question of the Conversation approach is:
How does this apply to God?

Notes


[illegible]

The Three Cs: Context, Conversation, Connection


Context

Scripture	Date
	

Conversation

Scripture	Date
	

Connection

Scripture	Date
	



Context – How did this sound to the first readers?

Keep in mind that Cretan culture was rough – hard-living, hard-drinking, hard fighting. It was populated by retired mercenaries, who are known for being more than a little rowdy.

They also had an understanding of religion that involved ethics or lifestyle. Zeus was of a questionable character himself, so he didn't care about yours. It was a new thing for a religious leader like Paul or Titus to connect your faith with your lifestyle.

Verses 9-10 bring up a difficult point about slaves. Slavery was a daily reality in the ancient world and for most of the history of humanity. The slaves Paul addresses here had more freedom and better life than our modern view of slaves, but they were still slaves. This is a long discussion in itself but is part of the context here. The gospel sowed the seeds for slavery to end, but it took centuries. Keep in mind, then, that “slave” meant something different in that society than in the modern world. You can find more resources on this important discussion in the [appendix here](#).

Conversation – How does this apply to God?

This is our main emphasis for this week.

Read the passage again. Do you notice any repeated words or phrases? Paul mentions the word “self-controlled” several times throughout these passages and throughout his writing. Given what we know about Cretan culture, why is that a repeated phrase? Is it applicable in our day? Why is self-control important for God’s people?

Notes

[illegible]

Paul calls them to “stick out” in their culture, living a life that is above reproach and above standard.

Older men – be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled

Older women – reverent in their behavior,
not slanderers or slaves to wine

Younger women—Love their husbands and children,
self-controlled, pure

Younger men—self-controlled.

Paul encourages them to live by different coordinates than the culture, even though all these behaviors were acceptable in their society. Why is it important for God's people to live outside of "what everyone's doing"?

? What does that tell us about God?

It's also interesting that Paul starts this section off talking about "sound doctrine" in verse 1 and then goes on to talk about behavior. He also ends this section by telling Titus, after the section about "young men" that he himself needs to live in a way that will be a witness.

The upshot is that the “sound doctrine” is immediately and irrevocably connected to your life. Paul addresses doctrinal issues for sure but doesn’t train Titus to make arguments or participate in rhetoric, he says, “Your life will speak louder than your words.”

Again, how do we apply this God? Why is sound doctrine fundamental to affecting the way we live?

Notes

[illegible]

APPLICATION  **10 mins**

★ **Connection** – How do we apply ourselves to this?

Paul talks to people in all stages of life in verses 2-8. Do you think he touches on the real struggles for people in those age groups (e.g., gossip might be a struggle for older people, self-control might be a struggle for younger ones). In our society, which seems to have use only for the young, what does it tell us in the fact that Paul, and by extension God, has a place for everyone and a challenge for everyone? Is it easy to think, especially as we get older, that we've "arrived" and are done with growth? How can that mindset be unhealthy?

Paul makes a strong connection between sound doctrine and sound living. In a world that has a lot of confusion about who God is and what human life is for, do we see “unsound” living? How do we live within these times without judging and yet keeping our spirits and lifestyle healthy?

In your country and your culture, how are Christians perceived? Generate a few words (judgmental, argumentative, giving, welcoming, etc.). Now, some of these descriptions are no doubt unfair, but what can we learn from them? How can we live in a way so people will have “nothing evil to say about us” (v. 8)?

★ DIVINE PARTICIPATION ⌚ 5 mins

This week be intentional about helping someone where they are. Listen to a boring story, go to a movie you're not particularly interested in, or even keep company with a trying person. Whatever it is that gets you outside your comfort zone to meet with God and lets you share your life and joy with someone.

Notes

[illegible]

CLOSING PRAYER 🕒 10 mins

Collect prayer requests from group and assign prayer partners for the week or have one person send out the list to the group.

Have someone, maybe someone who doesn't usually speak up much, close with this blessing from the daily prayers of the Northumbria Community in Scotland:

*May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,
wherever He may send you.*

*May He guide you through the wilderness,
protect you through the storm.*

*May He bring you home rejoicing
at the wonders He has shown you.*

*May He bring you home rejoicing
once again into our doors.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.*

Amen.

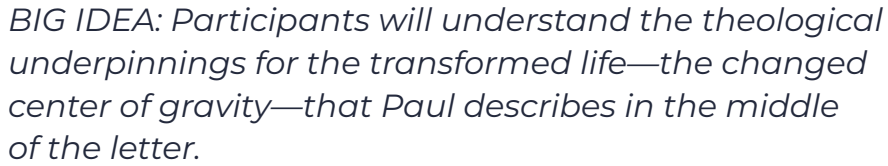
Notes

[illegible]

5

CHANGING GRAVITY

5: CHANGING GRAVITY



An opening question: Have you ever been in a situation where you felt like gravity was changed? Maybe deep underwater or skydiving or on a rollercoaster or a Ferris wheel? What was the experience like? Did you feel like all your coordinates had changed—you couldn't move the way you usually do, or even your voice sounded funny?

Keep silence for three minutes and become fully present in the room. Lay down your anxieties and distractions in the presence of Christ who is right here with us.



Titus 2:11-15, 3:4-6

[illegible]

DISCUSSION OF SCRIPTURE 30 mins



Review the three Cs method—context, conversation and connection. We focused on context for lesson two and three and now we will focus on conversation. This C asks the question: How does this apply to God?

We often too quickly ask: How does this apply to me?
We focus on our own lives as the chief purpose of Scripture,
when the Bible is a love letter introducing God to us.
He's revealing himself, and we are to apply our lives
and reflect on our lives through those realities.

This time we will focus on the theology and other timeless realities discussed in these sections of Scripture. We will look at the other two Cs as well, but we will focus on Conversation.


Again, the main question of the Conversation approach is:
How does this apply to God?

Notes


[illegible]

The Three Cs: Context, Conversation, Connection


Context

Scripture	Date
	

Conversation

Scripture	Date
	

Connection

Scripture	Date
	



Context – How did this sound to the first readers?

Keep in mind, the Cretan people were roughnecked and rugged. They believed the gods weren't to be trusted and the world was a dog-eat-dog place. To hear about a God who cared about their life choices and who sought a relationship with them would have been strange news to them.

“Present age” is a notable phrase in verse 12. Jewish people of the time, like Paul, believed the world was split into two ages. The present age is corrupt and broken, the imperfect world in which we all live. The “age to come” is the blessed time in which God is directly present with his people and they live a grace-filled existence. For Paul, the resurrection of Jesus was the entrance of the “age to come” into our day and age, even though the old age continues to exist as well. When Paul urges us to “live godly lives in this present age,” he’s talking about living the “age to come” life in the here and now. It’s much more dynamic than just “being good.”

Notes

[illegible]

Conversation – How does this apply to God?

This is our emphasis for this week. What does this passage tell us about the ongoing conversation of who God is and what he's revealing to us about himself?

Bring back the discussion to our opening question about gravity. When your center of gravity changes, every movement and sound seems different. What Paul is talking about here is a new center of gravity for these people—they are living life for completely different reasons. It's not simply a lifestyle change or a slight shift in perspective—the gravity is completely different.

Read verse 11 again. What words stick out to you? In our world, where “nothing’s free,” what does grace really mean? How does that change the gravity in our lives? What does that tell us about God?

One of the phrases that appear often in these passages makes many of us as modern Christians nervous: “good works.” We start wondering if there’s a “works-based” understanding of God’s love or favor in these passages. We start wondering if there’s a “works-based” understanding of God’s love or favor in these passages. Read verses 3:4-5 again. Why did God save us? According to what?

Notes

[illegible]

APPLICATION  **10 mins**

★ **Connection** – How do we apply ourselves to this?

God's grace bought us and brought us, and our eternal destiny with him is sealed. Good works, as described several times here in Titus, are part of joining the adventure of what God is doing in the world. How does this change the discussion from doing good to appeasing a distant God to join our Father in transforming the world?

? Do we live as completely loved, redeemed people, or do we live like we're not sure? Do we know that our longing for significance finds its home in God? Do we know that we don't feel fully at home in the world because we were never meant to?

Look at the verbs in 2:11-13—"has appeared" is in the past tense; "waiting" is in the present tense, looking forward to the future. This is the tension that theologians call the "already, but not yet" of the kingdom. Jesus entered our time and our lives through the Holy Spirit, and yet we wait for the completion of our connection with him in the second coming of Jesus and our resurrection.

What does it mean to live in that tension? The kingdom (the world the way God meant it to be) is here but is coming. How could this affect how we see the world?

★ DIVINE PARTICIPATION ⌚ 5 mins

Give grace this week. In an interaction online, at work, or at home, step away from a negative reaction you might have to an annoyance or offense. Intentionally react by stepping out of the immediate situation and giving a response of grace. This could be as every day as getting donuts for a difficult co-worker or complimenting your spouse on a busy morning.

Notes

[illegible]

CLOSING PRAYER 🕒 5 mins

Collect prayer requests from the group and assign prayer partners for the week or have one person send out the list to the group.

Before or after prayer, close with this reflection from C.S. Lewis as a benediction:

"If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or to be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death."

Notes

[illegible]

6

CITIZENS OF HEAVEN, RESIDENTS OF EARTH

6: CITIZENS OF HEAVEN, RESIDENTS OF EARTH



BIG IDEA: Participants will understand Paul's ending note of Titus, picturing the ideal citizen that will be a witness to the gospel by their character and actions.

WELCOME/ICEBREAKER 🕒 15 mins

Names of God: display or sort out on separate cards the [names of God](#). Ask group members to choose one that answers the question, “How is God revealing himself to you this week?”, and share why.

SUGGESTED OPENING PRAYER 5 mins

Allow a short open prayer time where members can pray spontaneously or keep silent. Close in a few minutes.



SCRIPTURE READING 5 mins

Titus 3:1-11 (THE MESSAGE)

Notes

[illegible]



EXEGETICAL FRAME ⌚ 30 mins

Review the 3-Cs method—context, conversation, and connection. We focused on context, then on conversation, and now we will focus on connection. This C asks the question: How do I apply myself to this?

Our focus should always be God-centered when we are studying Scripture, interpreting these truths as God revealing himself. So, our first question shouldn't be, "How does this apply to me?", but "How does it apply to him?" Then follow that with the final C – how do I connect myself to this? How do these verses "read" my life? Or, how do I read my life from the perspective of this passage? How do I live in the reality of what this reveals about God?


As we finish Titus by reading the last chapter, we'll look at Paul's glorious vision of God's people in real-time and in everyday life. How can we live as citizens of heaven while residents of the earth? Typical of Paul, he takes the larger, ground-breaking truths and brings them right to our front door.

Notes


[illegible]

The Three Cs: Context, Conversation, Connection


Context

Scripture	Date
	

Conversation

Scripture	Date
	

Connection

Scripture	Date
	



Let's do a bit of an opener exercise today. We'll read our passage, but we'll read it in The Message translation, which is a paraphrase of Scripture that can help us freshen our view of what's there:

1-2 Remind the people to respect the government and be law-abiding, always ready to lend a helping hand. No insults, no fights. God's people should be bighearted and courteous.

3-8 It wasn't so long ago that we ourselves were stupid and stubborn, dupes of sin, ordered every which way by our glands, going around with a chip on our shoulder, hated and hating back. But when God, our kind and loving Savior God, stepped in, he saved us from all that. It was all his doing; we had nothing to do with it. He gave us a good bath, and we came out of it new people, washed inside and out by the Holy Spirit. Our Savior Jesus poured out new life so generously. God's gift has restored our relationship with him and given us back our lives. And there's more life to come—an eternity of life! You can count on this.

8-11 I want you to put your foot down. Take a firm stand on these matters so that those who have put their trust in God will concentrate on the essentials that are good for everyone. Stay away from mindless, pointless quarreling over genealogies and fine print in the law code. That gets you nowhere. Warn a quarrelsome person once or twice, but then be done with him. It's obvious that such a person is out of line, rebellious against God. By persisting in divisiveness he cuts himself off.

Notes

[illegible]



Context – How did this sound to the first readers?

Again, the Cretan culture was harsh and could be ruthless. The Greek slur for liar was kretizo (Cretan)! Hard drinking, hard living, promiscuity, and greed were the order of the day. Their perception of their main deity, Zeus, a violent, double-crossing, seducer, didn't help the situation. There was a disconnect between religious observance and ethical behavior. How do you think the opening of chapter 3 sounded to the original audience?

There's an odd reference in verses 8-9 about "mindless, pointless quarreling over genealogies and fine print in the law code." That is most likely a reference to the "Circumcision Group" Paul warns against earlier in the letter. These are people who get endlessly entangled in the trivial details of Scripture and miss the big picture. Think of modern people who try to guess when the Second Coming will be based on dubious arithmetic and miss the reality of what God is doing right now in saving and transforming the world.

Conversation – How does this apply to God?

What is God revealing to us about himself in these passages?

Paul touches on a favorite theme in verses 4-6.
Read these verses again. Who saved us? Why did he do it?

Chapter 3 is no exception to the ongoing discussion of transformative character and “good deeds” among God’s people – a focus on action. Do verses 4-6 tell us about God’s actions? What does God’s completed work in Christ tell us about who he is?

Paul sets up an interesting contrast toward the end of the chapter. He tells us that working with God to change the world is “excellent and profitable” and the speculations and superstitions of the con-artists are “unprofitable and worthless.” Richness versus emptiness; peace versus vanity. What does that tell us about the life God wants to give us? How can we discern when we’ve stepped away from that life?

Notes

[illegible]

APPLICATION  **10 mins**

★ **Connection** – How do we apply ourselves to this?

Take a look at verses 1-2 again. Some Bible scholars believe this is Paul building on the description of the ideal Christian family in 2:1-10. Now he describes Christians as “ideal citizens” who are “in but not of” the world. Are we thought of as “big-hearted and courteous” in the world today? Why or why not?

As Christians, we often focus on separating ourselves from sinful practices and perspectives in the world. This is a good thing in itself, but do we stop there? How do we engage and love the world that does not have a confessing faith and yet remain “washed inside and out by the Holy Spirit”?

Paul's odd warning against bickering over genealogies and minor details in the law may seem strange to us, but do we have this kind of distracted quarreling in the church today? Think of discussions over politics and cultural issues that cause divisions between us, but that have nothing to do with the gospel. Do any examples come to mind?

Paul calls us not to withdraw from the world, nor to blend in with it, but to participate in it. How do we do that in a way that is integrated and authentic? Does your “work self” and your “church self” match your “home self”? Why do we make these separations? How do we let God heal them?

★ **DIVINE PARTICIPATION** ⌚ 10 mins

Spend 30 minutes with God three times this week with the intention to see him reveal his character. This can be in many forms, including silent meditation, a nature walk, serving someone in need, creating or building something in God's honor, or praying. The point is to spend time that is not self-serving or convenient for us, but rather to serve God and seek him out for who he is. Take note of how you experience God or his attributes, or how he has revealed something new to you about himself. Come prepared to share at next week's gathering.

Notes

[illegible]

CLOSING PRAYER 🕒 10 mins

Collect prayer requests from the group and assign prayer partners for the week or have one person send out the list to the group.

After prayer, read the final close of Titus. Remember that this was a real letter, written to real people (don't worry about how to pronounce the names, nobody really knows!). Remember the fact that Paul will be killed by Rome within about two years of writing this. He's been arrested once and was just about to be arrested again, for the last time. Think of his love for these people, and God's love for his fledgling church (and his church today).

12-13 As soon as I send either Artemas or Tychicus to you, come immediately and meet me in Nicopolis. I've decided to spend the winter there. Give Zenas the lawyer and Apollos a hearty send-off. Take good care of them.

¹⁴ Our people have to learn to be diligent in their work so that all necessities are met (especially among the needy) and they don't end up with nothing to show for their lives.

¹⁵ All here want to be remembered to you. Say hello to our friends in the faith. Grace to all of you.

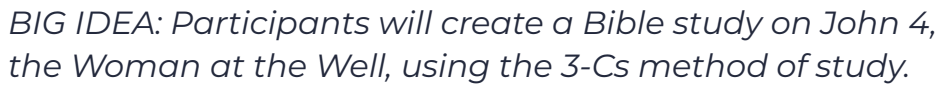
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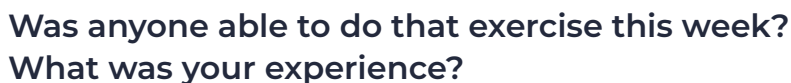
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THE WOMAN AT THE WELL

7: THE WOMAN AT THE WELL



Last week we ended with this “homework”... Spend 30 minutes with God three times this week with the intention to see him reveal his character. This can be in many forms, including silent meditation, a nature walk, serving someone in need, creating or building something in God’s honor, or praying. The point is to spend time that is not self-serving or convenient for us, but rather to serve God and seek him out for who he is. Take note of how you experience God or his attributes, or how he has revealed something new to you about himself.



Open with these words from Psalm 119:17-20 (The Message)
as your prayer:

17-20 Be generous with me and I'll live a full life;
not for a minute will I take my eyes off your road.
Open my eyes so I can see
what you show me of your miracle-wonders.
I'm a stranger in these parts;
give me clear directions.
My soul is starved and hungry, ravenous!—
insatiable for your nourishing commands.



John 4:1-30

[illegible]

DISCUSSION OF SCRIPTURE 30 mins



Our goal today is to create a Bible study on a well-known passage using the 3-Cs method. We are essentially putting together a study for an imaginary group as an exercise in learning by teaching. There are a few choices on how to get this done.

Included below are some prepared quotes that fit into each category – context, conversation, and connection. Members should read the quotes and generate 2-3 questions for each category as a group. How you use the material and how the study comes together is up to you and the Spirit!

Option 1: Split into three groups, and have each group take a different one of the C categories. Use the quotes to come up with the 2-3 questions and bring them back to the group.

Option 2: Go through the quotes together as a whole group, one C at a time, and then generate questions together.


Which option you choose depends on the size and dynamic of your group. Print these quotes out ahead of time or otherwise make them available to those participating in your group.

Notes


[illegible]

The Three Cs: Context, Conversation, Connection


Context

Scripture	Date
	

Conversation

Scripture	Date
	

Connection

Scripture	Date
	



Context – How did this sound to the first readers?



Quote #1

"The Samaritans were a group of people who lived in Samaria - an area north of Jerusalem. They were half-Jews and half-Gentiles. When Assyria captured the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C. some were taken in captivity while others left behind. The ones left behind intermarried with the Assyrians. Thus these people were neither fully Hebrews nor fully Gentiles. The Samaritans had their own unique copy of the first five books of Scripture as well as their own unique system of worship. At the time of Jesus the Jews and the Samaritans did not deal with one another. Jesus, however, ministered to the people of Samaria preaching the good news to them. "

-Blue Letter Bible

Quote #2

"It's a peculiar western thing when we read the story of this woman and suspect her as the wrongdoer. In that culture, women can't initiate divorce, only men can. So it's an intentional depiction of not as a whore, but a victim. A victim of abusive men...she's been abandoned by her husbands. "

-Tim Mackie

Conversation – How does this apply to God?



Quote #1

“The reader of the gospel understands that this woman is standing—all unsuspecting—on the brink of a much deeper gulf than that which divides Jew from Samaritan; it is the gulf between him who is the source of life and the world which is thirsty for that life. The woman does not—cannot yet—understand the offer which Jesus has made. It is the offer of that which quenches not just the natural and ever recurring thirst of the body, but the eternal thirst which can only be quenched by the living God himself.”

-Leslie Newbigin

Notes

[illegible]

Quote #2

“But our Lord did not come to maintain these distinctions of race and caste. It is altogether foreign to the spirit of Christianity for nationalities to be despised. Christ was cosmopolitan, he loved men of every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people. To him, there was neither Jew nor Samaritan; all such distinctions were banished from his mind.”

-Charles Spurgeon

Quote #3

“Jesus is saying, “I’ve got something that your soul needs as profoundly as your body needs water.” It’s eternal life. Eternal life is, through the Spirit’s power, the assurance and the experience of God’s love, pardon, presence and grace.”

-Tim Keller

APPLICATION  **10 mins**

★ **Connection** – How do we apply ourselves to this?

 Quote #1

"Perhaps that is what is most striking about Christ's encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well: He saw beyond her culture, her gender and her string of broken relationships that she wore like a scarlet letter. He saw a woman who was worth dying for and that would bind her heart to His, all her heart, and she would never forget that. If you have ever felt like a stray or one who wears a scarlet letter, don't be surprised when God's love takes you in."

-Sheila Walsh

Quote #2

“She said, ‘Give me this living water. I need it. I need it in my life.’ At the moment she acted on the light she had, which wasn’t much. You don’t have to know much when you come to Christ, you don’t have to know the whole gospel you don’t have to know the Bible. You just come like you are.”

-Billy Graham

Notes

[illegible]

After reading the quotes, generate 2-3 questions for each category and bring them all together on one device or piece of paper.

Here are some examples...

Context:

Historically, Samaritans and Israelites were divided painfully by different beliefs and traditions and so had little to do with each other. How does that make Jesus' interaction with this woman all the more significant?

Conversation:

How does God feel about us dividing ourselves from each other? How did Jesus address these artificial divisions in addressing this woman?

Connection:

How does God feel about those of us who wear a “scarlet letter” like this woman?

Generate questions using these contextual quotes as support. Read with the group and enjoy your work!

Extra Credit: Seal up the study questions you create and get together a year from now to go through it yourselves!

Notes

[illegible]

★ DIVINE PARTICIPATION ⌚ 5 mins

This week in your private scripture study, use the 3Cs method on a passage of scripture, even one you know very well. See where it takes you.

CLOSING PRAYER 🕒 10 mins

Sing or say the doxology together in closing.

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise Him all creatures here below
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*

Notes

[illegible]



THANK YOU FOR STARTING AND LEADING A NEW GCI CONNECT GROUP!

We believe Connect Groups are the perfect place for a community of believers to grow in their love for Christ and one another. In this kind of context people are transformed by God's love. Basically, we see the Faith Avenue as a place for deeper discipleship & relationships.

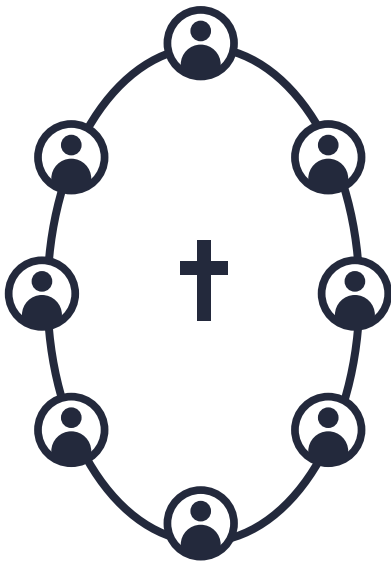
We have developed a basic curriculum to support our Faith Avenue leaders. The curriculum is meant to facilitate discussion that will help disciple new believers and veteran members. Along with the curriculum, we wanted to provide some facilitator best practices to help create a space where people feel a sense of belonging and where enriching, practical spiritual conversations can occur. Here are some best practices to help provide some additional support as you start your group.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A CONNECT GROUP?

- To create a safe space for seekers and members to connect with God and one another. To share, to grow spiritually and to build relationships with one another.



WHY START A CONNECT GROUP?



- We are sanctified through relationships. As we unpack spiritual truths and practical ways to live out our faith, the Spirit is working in and among us, purifying us and transforming us more into the image of Christ. Through these intentional and honest conversations, we experience the love of Christ through one another.

- In his ministry to and with the twelve disciples, Jesus modeled connect group ministry. He did not just preach truth to this group. He lived daily life with them, and they ministered together. He was available and provided opportunities for them to grow in leadership.

- We see connect group type ministry at the heart of who our Triune God is, and at the center of the early church.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)



WHAT ARE SOME QUALITIES OF A CONNECT GROUP LEADER?

- ✝ **Passion for Christ** – be a disciple before discipling others.
- ♥ **Passion for people** – a desire to care for and draw out participation from others.
- 🕒 **Commitment to invest the time** - reliably be available both during the set group time and for other relational opportunities.

WHAT ARE SOME CONNECT GROUP BEST PRACTICES?

When inviting others to participate in your group, have a clear purpose/shared goal and expectations set, create a format (when do you meet, how long each gathering will be, how are children included, etc.).

- Because **Connect Groups** have both spiritual and relational purposes. Our Team Based-Pastor led model recommends having one person serve as a host and another as the facilitator of the discussions. The host creates a warm welcoming environment (often in their home), and provides refreshments. Sharing food together develops relational intimacy. The facilitator prepares for the discussion and leads the group through the curriculum, drawing out participants to share and discuss making sure all voices are able to contribute.
- For group dynamics, we find that 5-15 people meeting weekly or bi-weekly are the size and frequency that work best.
- As you will notice in our curriculum, we find it best to set a six to eight-week timeframe for groups. This allows people to commit for a set time and explore if the group is a good fit for them.



• In the initial meeting discuss group norms and expectations. What will we commit to as a member of this group? How will we create a safe space for everyone? How can new members be integrated into the group? We have provided a [“Shared Covenant of Care”](#) worksheet that will allow your group to discuss and commit to your group standards or norms. Here are few suggested standards:

1. Give priority to attending each week unless unavoidably hindered.
2. Faithfully complete the weekly home study assignments.
3. Participate in the group discussion as I am able.
4. Pray by name for each member of my group during the weeks the group is meeting.
5. Refrain from discussing needs expressed in the group with anyone outside the group.

WHAT ARE SOME BEST PRACTICES FOR GROUP FACILITATION?

Please...

- ✓ Encourage participation.
- ✓ Guide the conversation around the set topic.
- ✓ Model group standards in your interactions and remind members of the standard when decisions are made that conflict with them.
- ✓ Reflect and summarize to the group the overall feelings, reactions, ideas, or solutions shared during the discussion.
- ✓ Resolve conflict by mediating differences in point of view.
- ✓ Be organized and flexible. This helps create the structure, while allowing you to respond to group needs.

Do not...

- ✗ Present yourself as the expert.
- ✗ Dominate the conversation by bringing the conversation back to your experiences, rejecting ideas without thoughtful consideration, using the group to share your personal opinions and values.
- ✗ Compete to have the deepest idea, last word, or be the favored person in the group.
- ✗ Disrupt the process of the group with excessive joking, mimicking, etc.
- ✗ Withdraw by becoming passive or overly formal.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A GROUP MEETING

- ✚ **Pray** – join with the Trinity in praying specifically for the individuals in your group and for an openness toward the movement of the Spirit in and among you.
- ✋ **Content** – to best facilitate the group, become familiar with the flow, big idea, and application of the scriptures. Consider how to contextualize the material for your group.
- 👥 **Coordinate** - connect with the host to discuss relational building opportunities and needs for creating the atmosphere.

HOW TO WRAP UP A GROUP AFTER THE LAST SESSION

- **Evaluation** – create a method to get feedback for the group's experience. This promotes quality and provides accountability, and allows for next steps to be determined.
- **Continuity** – provide next steps.
 - o Has the group grown and created a need to multiply?
 - o Will the group continue to meet after the six to eight weeks?
 - o Will the group desire to take a break? If so, provide some relational opportunities to check in with each other during the break.
 - o Are there other groups starting that members can choose to join?



WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE ON BEING CURRICULUM?

On Being is a four-part interactive connect group curriculum, designed for biblically-based, dynamic discussions around being a disciple.

We will be rolling out a different curriculum quarterly throughout 2021.

The four curricula are: Being a Christian Neighbor, Being the Church, Being with Jesus, and Being with the Bible. Each curriculum has a Facilitator Guide and a Participant Workbook. Included in this document is an appendix with additional resources for facilitators.

Below is the key for each icon included in the Facilitator Guide:



BIG IDEA - main theme of the lesson



SCRIPTURE - Bible passage for this week's lesson



BIBLICAL CONTEXT - additional analysis on this week's passage



CALL OUT - reminder to read this section out loud or explain the concept



APPLICATION QUESTION - questions that bring out of the participants the personal relevance of this week's passage



CALL TO ACTION - How the BIG IDEA impacts how we live our lives

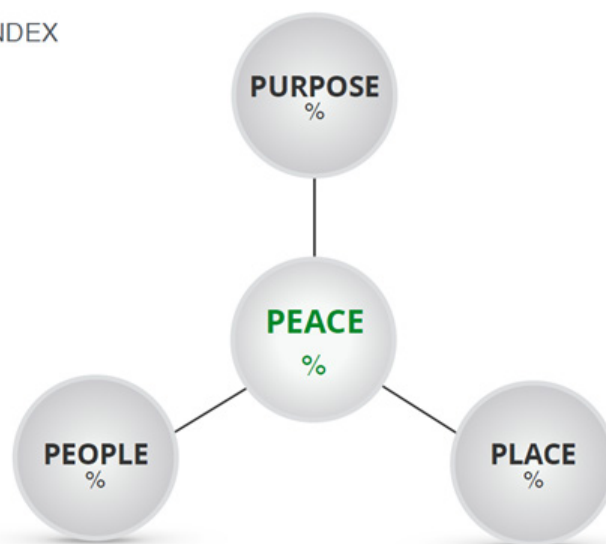
May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Romans 15:13

APPENDIX

Sample Icebreakers (for consistency and variety, please rotate between 2 or 3 icebreakers throughout the course of the curriculum):

- Names of God: display or sort out on separate cards the [names of God](#). Ask group members to choose one that answers the question, “How is God revealing himself to you this week?”, and share why.
- Examen: Go around and ask members to reflect and respond to one of the question pairs below:
 - o What was the most life-giving part of my week?
What was the most life-thwarting part of my week?
 - o What are you celebrating this week? What are you grieving this week?
 - o When did you feel most connected with God, others, and self?
When did you feel least connected with God, others, and self?
- Peace Index: Reflect on each of the following categories: your people (relationships), your purpose, and your place (environment). Combine these factors to develop your peace index. Share your percentage and a few reasons why you chose that number.

PEACE INDEX



- Looking over your week, your day, and how you feel right now, which biblical figure would you say you are and why?
 - o Abraham—A little lost but feeling God is leading me
 - o Mary Magdalene—Sickly and dependent but had an intimate friendship with Jesus
 - o Many examples!

Sample Opening Prayers:

- Begin five minutes of silence allow the group to become centered in the present moment, and then have the leader or assigned group member say a short prayer or simply say amen.
- Responsive reading or reading of a written prayer

Sample Closing Prayers:

- Ask a group member to read a scripture or quote that embodies the theme of this lesson and then pray.
- Give a few group members a descriptor of who God is (God is present, God is powerful, etc.) Ask them to read the descriptor and pause for a moment of reflective silence and then have the leader or another member of the group close in prayer.
- Read the Apostle's Creed together.



**MY CONNECT GROUP
SHARED COVENANT OF CARE**

 **Name**

 **Contact Info**

 **Prayer Need**

As a member of the **Connect Group**, I will:

Signed by: _____ Date: _____