



COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY GUIDE

For the week of December 03, 2023

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Because this is the last meeting of the Fall Quarter, the Community Group Study Questions are shorter than normal. As usual, your final meeting will include looking back on how God has worked this past quarter and taking Communion as a group. The Winter Community Group Quarter will begin the week of January 21, 2024. Have a great Christmas season celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior! Merry Christmas!

Christmas Train December 17, 5:00 - 7:00pm Ballast Point Campus

The Christmas Train is coming back to town on Sunday, December 17, from 5-7 p.m. It'll be a fun time for the whole family! Ride around the Christmas Tree Trail, take pictures with Santa, enjoy free treats, and more. So, invite your neighbors and help us spread the Christmas cheer. No registration is required!

Christmas Services at STF!

Dec 20 (Wednesday)

- 6:30 PM (Ballast Point only)

Dec 24 (Saturday)

- Ballast Point (9 AM, 11, 3,5, 11 PM)

- Davis Islands (5 PM)

- Channel District (11 AM)

My Story

As we prepare for Christmas, here are a few fun questions to help get you in the holiday spirit!

1. When it comes to Christmas...

Was Santa real growing up? If so, for how long?

When and what's your favorite meal during Christmas?

You typically have a good idea of what at least one present will be. (True or False)

What's a memorable present you received when you were young?

2. What are you looking forward to during this Christmas holiday season?

Quick Review: Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or something that caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

The Peace We Have

The good news we have during this Christmas Season is that Jesus did not remain a child but came to be our savior, offering us grace, forgiveness, hope and peace. How does Isaiah 9:6-7 expand our understanding of who Jesus is and His role in our lives?

Isaiah 9:6-7

*6 For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.*

What about this description is similar to and different from how you typically view Jesus?

Remembering

As followers of Jesus, we are able to celebrate the Christmas season because of the amazing gift God has given us – the gift of His son Jesus, born that we might have life through His death and resurrection! Communion is about remembering just that. Our time together this week will conclude by taking Communion and remembering this great gift God has given us through His son Jesus.

To prepare for Communion, read Luke 2:1-7, Luke 22:19-20 and John 15:12-17. If you've been following Jesus for quite some time, chances are you've seen these verses many times over the years... and know the story. But remember, it's an incredible story! As you read, take your time, and don't miss the value and importance of remembering who Jesus is and what He has done for you.

Luke 2:1-7 New International Version (NIV)

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Luke 22:19-20 New International Version (NIV)

19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." 20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

John 15:12-17 New International Version (NIV)

12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

What are you most thankful for about who God is and what He has done for you in 2023?

How To Get Through The Holidays...

It's no secret the holidays can bring a unique mix of emotions and experiences - friends, generosity, parties, isolation, stress and failed expectations. The good news is that as followers of Jesus we can remain hopeful even when nothing seems to be in the "Christmas Spirit." (Philippians 4:6-7) The foundation to our hope, as we heard this weekend, is practicing praise for who our God is and what he's done for us. The questions below will help you celebrate Christmas and not just get stuck in the holidays.

Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Two Minutes on You – Take two minutes and write down everything you're thankful for. If you have a hard time coming up with anything, maybe start with just today, as well as everyone and everything you have that you can be thankful for (there's a lot!).

Two Minutes and More on God – Take two minutes and write down everything you're thankful God has done for you. When you're done, read Psalm 104 and see what else you can add to your list of praise and thankfulness.

Psalm 104 (NIV)

1 Praise the LORD, my soul. LORD my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty. 2 The LORD wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent 3 and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. 4 He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants. 5 He

set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved. 6 You covered it with the watery depths as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. 7 But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight; 8 they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you assigned for them. 9 You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the earth. 10 He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains. 11 They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. 12 The birds of the sky nest by the waters; they sing among the branches. 13 He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work. 14 He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate— bringing forth food from the earth: 15 wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts. 16 The trees of the LORD are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. 17 There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the junipers. 18 The high mountains belong to the wild goats; the crags are a refuge for the hyrax. 19 He made the moon to mark the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down. 20 You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl. 21 The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God. 22 The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens. 23 Then people go out to their work, to their labor until evening. 24 How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. 25 There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number— living things both large and small. 26 There the ships go to and fro, and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there. 27 All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time. 28 When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. 29 When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. 30 When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground. 31 May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works— 32 he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke. 33 I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. 34 May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD. 35 But may sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more. Praise the LORD, my soul. Praise the LORD.

Seven Days of Praise – Looking back at what you wrote, put a star next to your top seven things that are the most important for you to remember and give thanks for. Create a way to thank God for one item each day of this next week (post it on the mirror, in your calendar, text with a friend, etc.).