



beautiful COMMUNITY

***A WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL CREATED
BY A TEAM OF PEOPLE AT
ADVENTURE OF FAITH***

INTRODUCTION ACTIVITY (FOR GROUPS)

Get to know Each other.

Go around the room and share one thing that brings you joy and one thing that you could live without.

REAL TALK:

THIS IS A TIME TO BE
AUTHENTIC, WITH
YOURSELF AND OTHERS.
SHARE HOW YOU'RE
DOING WITH GOD
PERSONALLY AND PRAY
FOR ONE ANOTHER.



SERMON SUMMARY:

The early church was messy. Converts to Christianity came from all different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic classes. The Bible specifically tells us that both men and women believed in Jesus and served His church. Jesus followers spoke different languages, held diverse traditions and values, and profoundly disagreed on many aspects of their faith. And yet the book of Acts describes them as “one heart and soul.”

These differences are most profoundly observed in one of Paul’s letters to the Corinthians. The church in Corinth had been tolerating and even encouraging immoral practices, so Paul decided to write to them. Rather than writing a letter of condemnation, questioning the truth of their salvation, Paul writes to the church by affirming their position as wholly and radically loved by Jesus. Paul doesn’t say that when they get their act together, they will be sanctified, holy and blameless; he greets them with grace and peace and by affirming the work of God in their church body. He says that Jesus’ sanctifying work is already going on within them. Paul reminds the Corinthians -- and himself -- of their identity in Christ as new creations. He knows the Corinthians are following Jesus as best they can and he writes to offer them more help as they do so; he does not see them as perfect, but he sees them as being perfected. Even though he knows the church is in sin, Paul believes the best of them: that they are following Jesus as best they know how.

When we think of our brothers and sisters in Christ, we often think of lines that can’t be crossed: real Christians don’t engage in this behavior, or consume this substance, or vote for this political party, or hold this theological belief. But we have so many examples from Scripture of people who definitely are ‘real’ Christians who probably crossed those arbitrary lines. Perhaps a better way to think of our brothers and sisters, especially those who disagree with us, is to imagine them as moving towards Jesus as best they can. When we assume that our fellow Christians are following Jesus as much as they understand Him, then we erase those lines that separate us. We can’t really be unified in our faith if we constantly draw lines in the sand that separate us from other Christians. Yes, those lines exist, but Jesus draws them and the Holy Spirit points them out to Christians. When we view the brothers and sisters we disagree with or who are actively sinning (and we’re all actively sinning) as fellow pilgrims, moving towards Christ, we bring unity to the church; we focus on what unites us (Christ), instead of what divides us (almost everything else). We operate from grace and humility and cooperation, even when we have hard conversations with each other. When we think the best of our fellow Christians, we look more like the early church.

GOD ENCOUNTERS:

JOURNAL, THINK ABOUT, OR
DISCUSS WITH YOUR
GROUP HOW YOU HAVE
ENCOUNTERED GOD IN YOUR
LIFE THIS WEEK.

WORSHIP SONG:

CLICK IN THIS AREA FOR A
HYPERLINK TO YOUTUBE OR
SEARCH FOR:

SONS &
DAUGHTERS (feat.
Kyle Howard) |
Official Vineyard
Worship



READ:

Matt. 18

Discuss:

- What did you focus on most in the scripture reading?
- Does anything make you uncomfortable that is being taught? Why?
- What did the early church believe that we, the modern church, is missing?
- What would it look like if we could view one another like people in progress?
- How would that change our church family, the community?
- We don't have to agree with everything to pursue Jesus and the Kingdom together but at if we applied this to things that we divide over in our culture?

Memory verse: Matthew 18: 20

"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

PRAYER:

Benevolent Father,

Your mercy and love never fail. You are full of wisdom and we can trust in it as we follow the path you have set before us. We are aware that the church consists of a body of believers with diverse personalities. Obviously, there will be differences of opinion and various interpretations of doctrine. When controversy arises, help us to be acutely aware that our words and behavior should be a reflection of Christ, bearing the positive impact He has had on our life. In this world, we may be someone's first introduction to your mercy. That same love and grace should extend to our brothers and sisters, as well.

Remind us to turn to the instructions and admonitions from Christ, when facing obstacles or uncertainties, so that we will abide in your will always.

In Jesus Name,
Amen