



Proclaiming God's Peace Through Mission

May 6-8, 2015 Atlanta, GA

Small Group Sessions

Group Leader Instructions: (Please read aloud to your group)

- One person should volunteer to lead the group (following the exercises in this booklet.)
- Groups will contain pre-assigned members and everyone will remain in the same group for the entire conference.
- The group is asked to use the process of mutual invitation whenever you meet together. The leader begins speaking, reading, or sharing. When s/he is finished, s/he invites someone else in the group to take a turn. When that person is finished, they invite someone else, etc., until all have shared. If you are invited, you may: 1) share, 2) pass for now, or 3) pass. If the person invited passes, someone else is invited.
- Please allow people to share within the group without interruption, cross talk, or your own additions to their comments. Once everyone has spoken, additional comments may be made and more discussion may take place.
- Thank you for adhering to these guidelines for respectful communication.

Each session includes a mission-related quote or prayer, a Bible passage, and some discussion questions. We pray that your time in your small group will be a blessing!

Small Group 1: Wednesday May 6, 11:00 - 11:45 am

Reflect: Being People of God Together

“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting our time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

Lila Watson, Indigenous Australian (credited)

“Help us discover our own riches; don't judge us poor because we lack what you have.

Help us discover our chains; don't judge us slaves by the type of shackles you wear.

Be patient with us as a people; don't judge us backward simply because we don't follow your stride.

Be patient with our pace; don't judge us lazy simply because we can't follow your tempo.

Be patient with our symbols; don't judge us ignorant because we can't read your signs.

Be with us and proclaim the richness of your life which you can share with us.

Be with us and be open to what we can give.

Be with us as a companion who walks with us - neither behind nor in front - in our search for life and ultimately for God.” *Henri Nouwen*



Read: 1 Peter 2:1-10 (NRSV)

- The leader reads the scripture aloud and asks, by mutual invitation: What word or phrase stood out for you in that reading? Everyone shares just the word or phrase – no explanation.
- Someone else reads it aloud again and asks, by mutual invitation: Considering your own experience of participating in God's mission, what particularly strikes you in this reading? Please give some explanation.
- Another person reads it aloud and asks, by mutual invitation: Thinking about all that you have heard, what do you think God might be asking you to be or do in response to this scripture? Each shares his or her own thoughts on this.

“Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. ² Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴ Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and ⁵ like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

⁶ For it stands in scripture: “See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” ⁷ To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,” ⁸ and “A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people,^[c] in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Discuss

1. Reflecting on the first five lines of this passage, how do these verses inform us about how we should prepare to engage in God's mission?
2. “We are all called to be living stones, and yet we are all a little different. We are not the perfect cornerstone that Jesus is. We have odd shapes; we do not fit as perfectly alongside one another as we would hope. We have corners that are broken off, we have cracks and chips, and we are weathered by the world. We are different colors, shapes, and sizes, and yet we form one spiritual house, one community. We are all God's people, because we all have Jesus as our cornerstone.”
 - Reflecting on the above quote and the reading from 1 Peter, how are we called to live into our baptismal promise to “seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself? And to strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?”
3. If we're honest with ourselves, how much of our desire to engage in mission comes from our own need to feel good about ourselves?



Small Group 2: Thursday May 7, 11:00 - 11:45am

Reflect: Do Justice

“It’s not a coincidence that in the Scriptures, poverty is mentioned more than 2,100 times. It’s not an accident. That’s a lot of air time. You know, the only time Jesus Christ is judgmental is on the subject of the poor. “As you have done it unto the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.” ...

But justice is a higher standard. Africa makes a fool of our idea of justice; it makes a farce of our idea of equality. It mocks our pieties; it doubts our concern, and it questions our commitment. Six and a half thousand Africans are still dying every day of preventable, treatable disease, for lack of drugs we can buy at any drug store. This is not about charity: This is about Justice and Equality.

Because there's no way we can look at what's happening in Africa and, if we're honest, conclude that deep down, we would let it happen anywhere else -- if we really accepted that Africans are equal to us....

Look what happened in South East Asia with the Tsunami. 150,000 lives lost to the misnomer of all misnomers, “mother nature”. Well, in Africa, 150,000 lives are lost every month -- a tsunami every month. And it’s a completely avoidable catastrophe.

It’s annoying but justice and equality are mates, aren’t they? Justice always wants to hang out with equality. And equality is a **real pain...**” *Bono, Keynote address at the 54th National Prayer Breakfast, 2006¹*

Read: Micah 6:6-8 (NRSV)

- The leader reads the Scripture aloud and asks, by mutual invitation: What word or phrase stood out for you in that reading? Everyone shares just the word or phrase – no explanation.
- Someone else reads it aloud again and asks, by mutual invitation: Considering your own experience of participating in God’s mission, what particularly strikes you in this reading? Please give some explanation.
- Another person reads it aloud and asks, by mutual invitation: Thinking about all that you have heard, what do you think God might be asking you to be or do in response to this scripture? Each shares his or her own thoughts on this.

“With what shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
7Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,

¹¹ The full speech is available here:

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/bononationalprayerbreakfast.htm>



the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

⁸ He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

Discuss

1. In the context of engaging in mission, what does it “look like” to
 - a. do justice?
 - b. To love kindness?
 - c. To walk humbly with your God?
2. Who are your models, heroes, or witnesses of this kind of life? This may be someone you have known personally or read about.
3. What will you take with you from the 2014 GEMN conference to help you do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God as you engage in mission?

As we go out into the world:

May God bless us with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that we may live deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that we may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless us with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war, so that we may reach out our hands to comfort them and turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless us with enough foolishness to believe that we can make a difference in this world, so that we can do what others claim cannot be done.