

10/17 Foundation Group Facilitator Guide

Commitments of Unconditional Love and Acceptance: *These are a place to start. Groups may add their own or modify these to suit their groups.*

- **What is shared by someone else, is not our story to share elsewhere.** We will keep confidence unless we have reason to fear harm has been done or is going to be done. In these cases, we will collaborate on next steps.
- **We have all come needing to hear and be heard.** We will leave space for everyone to talk if they wish. We will not stray into small talk until after the blessing. We will not talk over each other.
- **Our role is to be present.** We will not give advice, try to fix, or try to solve. We will pray for each other in the moment. We will not push or prod, people may choose not to answer.
- **Time matters.** We commit to come on time and we will end after no more than one hour. It's ok if the discussion ends earlier. We may socialize after as long as people have the ability to leave if they need to.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid. Purify and unify the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may more perfectly love you and more worthily magnify your holy Name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Review Commitments of Unconditional Love and Acceptance

Connecting Questions: *Choose one or two based on what works with the group. It is helpful for everyone to take notes here. It helps us all to remember to follow up with each other week to week. The notes must be kept in confidence.*

- How is it with your soul?
- Tell us one high (happy, good thing, success) from the week. Tell us one low (crappy, struggle) from the week.
- Where have you seen God at work this week?
- What are you carrying in your heart (on your mind) as you come to this group?

Theme Discussion:

Take away from the message: Our natural human response to pain is to harden our hearts and build up walls. Jesus shows us, and enables us, to stay soft toward the world and live in empathy.

Scripture to Read: Hebrews 5:1-10

- Discuss a time when you've put up walls to protect yourself or made decisions to appease someone with power over you.
- What does the word empathy mean to you?

Response to the Discussion:

- What questions do you have after this discussion? (These will be shared with the pastors.)
- How are you being led to respond after this discussion?
- What gifts may we offer to God?

Closing Prayer: *Pick one each time. Find one that feels right in the moment and right for your group.*

- You, or another volunteer, may pray what is on your heart.
- *Hold hands in a circle-ish shape. Open the prayer with something like "God, we thank You for being with us tonight and speaking to us through each other. We offer up our prayers as we close..." Then the prayer passes from person to person with a hand squeeze. People may pray silently or out loud when it gets to them, then squeeze the next hand. When it gets back, speak whatever is your heart and add something like "We thank You for hearing us before we speak and from the places we cannot name. Give us a hunger and thirst for You even as we leave this place. Keep us until we gather together again. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen."*
- From the hymnal: *After each petition* Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

Together, let us pray for
the people of this congregation...
those who suffer and those in trouble...
the concerns of our local communities...
the world, it's people, and it's leaders...
the church universal - it's leaders, its members, and its mission...
the communion of saints who have gone before and show us the way...

Blessing: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.