

1 Vision Area

1 Group

The Big Picture

This lesson continues our getting to know one another on a “relational” level, but also turns our focus on the importance of how we treat and care for one another spiritually. We will also continue to share our thoughts on the group covenant we are developing together.

Biblical Text

Colossians 3.12-17

Materials Needed

Index Cards, *if used*
White Board, *if used*
Pens or Pencils
“In the Name of Jesus” Cards (1 per person)

Preparing for the Lesson

Today’s lesson builds on what was begun in the previous lesson. If there are people who were not present at the first meeting, they need to be asked to share the same questions everyone else was asked. Those who were present last week need to at least give a summary of their answers so that everyone knows each other.

Continue to be focused on helping people get to know one another and making connections with others. Now is not the time to assume everyone feels comfortable with one another, in fact, assume the opposite just to be sure people are getting to know one another.

Spend a little more time in the discussion portion of the lesson this week. If need be, remind your group members prior to meeting that you will be looking at Scripture and to be sure to bring their Bible, if they are not in the habit of doing so. This will ensure everyone is prepared to be a part of the discussion.

Our text this week highlights the way we relate to and treat one another. It helps us be “other focused.” This will be important not only for how we become disciples, but also for what we focus on as we develop a group covenant.

Speaking of our covenant, this week will be the “collecting ideas” stage of the covenant development process. This can happen in a couple of different ways, as listed below.

Three things that may help you in the process of developing your covenant:

Preparing for the Lesson (cont.)

First, Allen White's blog post on a group agreement is helpful. I mentioned a portion of this during our training and equipping time, but you can find the entire blog post at: <http://allenwhite.org/2011/08/09/why-do-we-need-a-group-agreement/>

Second, Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky has produced some quality small group training videos you can find online. Bill Search oversees their small group ministry and can be seen in this video entitled: Creating a Group Covenant. I highly recommend you watch this and it can be found here: <http://vimeo.com/27309758>

Finally, the worksheet titled "Creating a Group Covenant" sent with this lesson will provide you some helpful tips as you go through this process.

(By the way, if you have young children, in the same way you have to determine how to approach a group lesson with your children, you must do the same for the process of forming a group covenant. We have formed a covenant – discussing components of the covenant and deciding together what that should be – with children as young as 2nd or 3rd grade. They understood the process and later developed a covenant of their own among just the children. This does not mean every child will embrace this process. You do not want to spend the time you should be focused on forming guidelines with the group thinking only of how to stop your child from putting his feet all over the furniture and others. This may be a good time to allow the children to play in the other room. If you choose to do this, finish your lesson with a time of prayer, dismiss the children, and then take a few minutes to work on the covenant.)

Possible Lesson Outline

As with last week, be sure to focus on making sure everyone is greeted at the door and welcomed into the group. Do this even if you are not the host for the week. Introduce one another to new people.

If you do a meal or snacks, the beginning is still a good time to do this. It allows people to get to know one another better and open up to one another prior to spending time discussing together.

Bring everyone together for the group time.

Begin with a casual conversation of how everyone's week went. Be sure to try and get everyone to share, simply because it helps break the ice for further discussion.

If you did not finish sharing the questions from last week, finish at this time. This includes giving people who were not present last week time to share their answers, as well as a summary of those who were present last week. This allows everyone to hear everyone's answers.

Spend some time in discussion using Colossians 3.12-17 and the Discussion Questions below. While you do not need to ask all of the questions, they were designed to go from introductory questions about the text to more in depth questions about what we feel or think about the text. Whichever questions you use, I would do them in order for this reason.

Conclude emphasizing Colossians 3.17, which leads into the prayer time, as described below.

Pass out the "In the Name of Jesus" cards and do the For Next Week exercise listed below. (If you are not going to involve the children, you might dismiss them prior to this exercise.)

If your children are still a part of the group and they are not going to be a part of the covenant forming, dismiss them here.

Using one of the Collecting Covenant Ideas below (Lesson Activities), compile thoughts group members have about your covenant. Share what you have up to this point so people can be thinking about them during the upcoming week.

Dismiss with a prayer.

Lesson Activities

Collecting Covenant Ideas

Method One: Have everyone write down on an index card two or three guidelines they think of when they are thinking about behaviors or actions that should govern the group. It is helpful if you have a couple of ideas to “prime the pump,” such as “We will maintain confidentiality of things others have said in the group,” or “We will deal with conflicts we may have with others in person and with that person, not via email and amongst the entire group.” After everyone has written down their ideas, collect them. You may now read the ideas so everyone can hear these and begin to evaluate them. You may also choose to simply collect the cards and during the week compile and condense the ideas for the following week. I prefer the former because it allows people an extra week to be thinking about an idea(s) that may be important to their vision of what group should be.

Method Two: Instead of writing down the ideas, have group members say out loud their ideas. Collect these on a white board (or write them on a piece of paper if you do not have a white board). Tell members that you are simply collecting ideas, not evaluating them at this time. After collecting the ideas, read the ideas again so everyone has these ideas in mind. Using this list, compile and condense a “master” list to be evaluated at the next meeting.

For the Kids

Our discussion time today is filled with examples of ways we are to treat one another. As you share with one another in your group, be sure to take some time ask the children: “Can you give me an example of a way you could be kind to someone here in group?” “How about a way you can be patient (bear) with someone?” “Can you think of a time when you had to forgive someone? Was that hard to do?”

Kids can also be great examples of how to be thankful for the things around us. If you have ever sat through a prayer of a child while he or she looked around the room listing things they were thankful for, you know what I mean. Often times, children “see” things you and I overlook. Let me highly recommend that you look at the Prayer Ideas section below and allow your children to be fully involved in this time. You may have to prompt them or help guide them, but I think they and you will be richly blessed from the experience.

Spiritual Formation / Worship

It takes a well-disciplined life to continually give thanks. Most of us, if we are honest, find it easier to discover how life has treated us unfairly or how things are just not going our way. We forget and overlook those things for which we have to be thankful.

Allow the time of prayer this week to be a jumpstart on a week of constantly giving thanks. Use a small notebook to write down things for which you are thankful. At key times during the day (when you wake up, breakfast, lunch, dinner, bedtime, for instance) evaluate the previous few hours and say a prayer of thanksgiving.

While this may not be directly related to your relationship with others in your group, my suspicion is that if you are not able to be thankful throughout your day, you will also find it difficult to focus on being a blessing to others. Selfishness, someone has said, finds its root in a lack of thankfulness.

For Next Week

Using the “In the Name of Jesus Cards,” (Copy/print the template on card stock and cut into eight per page.) have everyone write their names on the back of the card. Have someone (this is a great job for a child, if they are still present) come up with a number between 1 and 1 less than the total number of participants. Then, pass the cards that number of times around the circle to the right. (You can also just randomly collect and then pass back out the cards, but I like the randomness of picking a number.)

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For Next Week (cont)

Tell everyone that their assignment is, per Colossians 3.12-17, to be thankful in the name of Jesus. They are also to in some manner show kindness, compassion, love, etc. to the person on the back of their card.

It will be more difficult for children to make contact with others in the group, so if you include the children, parents need to commit to making a priority to mention and pray for these individuals. Parents may also want to facilitate the children deciding what they want to do to show kindness, etc. and then help them act on this.

Prayer Ideas

After your time of discussion, conclude by highlighting Colossians 3.17 – we are to be thankful to God the Father. For your prayer time, tell group members that you are going to do just that through a special time of prayer. Have someone start the prayer, then, conversationally, begin to share with one another things for which you are thankful. Be sure to include the children here. After an appropriate amount of time, have someone conclude the prayer time with another “formal” prayer.

Remind group members of 1 Thessalonians 5.17, which says “Pray continually,” or as we may better know it, “Pray without ceasing” (KJV). Although we may have our eyes open and are in conversation with one another, we are really in prayer. We are lifting our requests or our praises up to God even as we share them one another. In some ways this is no different than sharing with one another what we need group members to be in pray about, but when we emphasize the fact that we are still praying, it gives our conversation a heightened sense of importance.

Discussion Questions

1. How does being “dearly loved” (v. 12) affect our ability to “clothe ourselves with compassion...” etc? How does this change when we forget we are dearly loved?
2. Colossians 3 is often used as a guide for living the Godly life. (In fact, the 1984 version of the NIV titles this section: “Rules for Holy Living.”) Why are having such guides important for living holy lives? In what ways can this be abused?
3. How many times does Paul say “one another” or “each other” in this passage? List specifically what he says. What stands out to you in this list?
4. Why/how does love bind all of these virtues together?
5. For what are you thankful?
6. In what ways can we as a small group ensure that the words of Christ dwell in us richly? Specifically, what does that mean we do?
7. How do we live today in the name of the Lord? How about tomorrow? How can we encourage one another to do this this week?

For Further Reading/Study

A couple of resources that I quote in the “Creating a Group Covenant” guide which I think are valuable to you as you look at leading small groups.

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For Further Reading/Study

Bill Donahue. *The Willow Creek Guide to Leading Life-Changing Small Groups*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.

Neal F. McBride. *How to Build a Small Groups Ministry*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 1995.

What's Next

We will finish up our forming of a covenant and spend some time in discovering how we have been given gifts that are to be used to support and build up one another in love.

*In the Name
of Jesus*

*In the Name
of Jesus*