

Growth Group Homework

For the week of November 30, 2014

Because this is the last meeting of the fall quarter, the homework is shorter than normal. As usual, your final meeting will include a look back on how God has worked this past quarter, along with completing Feedback Forms. Our winter Growth Group quarter will begin the week of January 11, 2014. Have a great few weeks off celebrating the birth of our Lord! Merry Christmas!

QUICK REVIEW

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

MY STORY

1. Many of us have funny memories of Christmas traditions with some we loved and some we despised. Rank the list of Christmas traditions below with the following descriptors: Love It – Indifferent - Not a Fan

- * Homemade Christmas sweaters
- * Christmas carolers at your door
- * Fruit cake/eggnog
- * Homemade Christmas decorations
- * Pictures with Santa and/or animal pictures with Santa
- * Putting Christmas decorations up before Thanksgiving
- * White elephant gift exchange
- * Watching the movie "A Christmas Story" for the umpteenth time

2. As you look back on this quarter and our Heroes vs. Zeros study, what are one or two things about your Growth Group experience that you have appreciated most? (It can be time spent together, how your group has encouraged you to continue to live your life for Christ, a service project, spiritual breakthrough, growth challenge or anything else.)

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Christopher taught us this weekend that God is in the business of "winback," not payback, which is why he sent us his son. Christmas is a time of great ritual and tradition centered on the birth of Jesus. As we look at the progression from Jesus' birth (Luke 2:1-20) to present day traditions (see list above) a lot has changed! How can the following verses help us balance our own Christmas traditions and what's really important this holiday season?

Isaiah 9:6-7

Philippians 2:5-8

John 3:16

How does Ephesians 2:11-18 expand our understanding of why Jesus' birth is important and what that means for us today?

2. This weekend we heard how God is knocking, and we just need to “answer the door.” For many of us, it can be hard to accept that God wants a relationship with us because we’ve chosen to go our own way and have “left him at the door.” How can the following verses help us accept God’s forgiveness and free us up to answer when he knocks?

Ephesians 1:7

Ephesians 2:8-9

Colossians 1:13-14

Hebrews 10:17

How does Romans 12:14-21 model how to take God’s forgiveness for us and extend it to others?

THE REASON FOR THE SEASON

As followers of Christ, 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! Jesus is always knocking on our door to remind us that he brings us grace and life. Communion is about remembering just that. Your 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; 22:19-20 & John 15:12-17. What catches your attention as beneficial to remember as you take Communion in your group?

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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. [NIV]

Philippians 2:5-8

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:
6 Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
7 rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross! [NIV]

John 3:16

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. [NIV]

How does Ephesians 2:11-18 expand our understanding of why Jesus' birth is important and what that means for us today?

Ephesians 2:11-18

Jew and Gentile Reconciled Through Christ

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)— 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. [NIV]

2. This weekend we heard how God is knocking, and we just need to “answer the door.” For many of us, it can be hard to accept that God wants a relationship with us because we’ve chosen to go our own way and have “left him at the door.” How can the following verses help us accept God’s forgiveness and free us up to answer when he knocks?

Ephesians 1:7

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace [NIV]

Ephesians 2:8-9

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift

of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. [NIV]

Colossians 1:13-14

13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. [NIV]

Hebrews 10:17

17 Then he adds:

“Their sins and lawless acts

I will remember no more.” [NIV]

How does Romans 12:14-21 model how to take God’s forgiveness for us and extend it to others?

Romans 12:14-21

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,”

says the Lord. 20 On the contrary:

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. [NIV]

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