

# Sermon Discussion Guide- Week of Feb 18, 2018

“Community and Confession” Pastor Temple 8:15 & 10:55, Pastor Hook 9:30

## Getting Started- Life Updates, Prayer Requests & Opening Question (15-20 min)

- Is there anything that came up this past week in regard to the previous witness or application points that you would like to share? (The Joy of Jubilee and Restorative Justice Sunday)
- Are there any joys or concerns that you would like to share with the group for the closing prayer time or for group members to hold in prayer during the week? (please note them below for later)

- Do you have a story to share about a personal mistake you made that was embarrassing at the time, but that you can laugh about now?

## Review the Sermon (25 min)

Please read aloud the sermon scripture below. As you go through the discussion questions that follow, know that it is ok to skip questions in order to manage the time for discussions in each section.

### James 5:13-20

<sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

<sup>17</sup> Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. <sup>18</sup> Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

<sup>19</sup> My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, <sup>20</sup> remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

- If you had to give a one-minute summary of the sermon message this week, what would you say?
- When we have wronged others, admitting our mistakes and saying we are sorry are things we are often taught to do at a young age, yet as adults we may find it difficult to do in practice. Why do you believe this is the case?

- This week's theme and highlighted spiritual discipline is "Community and Confession" at Christ Church. Verses 15-16 present both a call for prayer for the sick and a call to confession, that those with maladies of the body or of the soul may be made well. Do you believe unconfessed sin can bear a toll on the body and physical health as well as mental or emotional health? How so?
- Catholic and Protestant Christians may have different ideas about the formality and use of clergy in the practice of confession, but both perspectives would agree that confession of sin to God is a necessary step in finding forgiveness and reconciliation with God through Christ. Have you ever thought about confession as a spiritual discipline before? Why do you think that, in protestant communities at least, confession is often overlooked as a spiritual discipline?
- Would a volunteer please read 1 John 1:8-9 out loud. We know that forgiveness is made possible for us because of the grace of God and that all have sinned. Since the grace of God in Christ is sufficient for the forgiveness of all our sins no matter how many or how bad they may be, why do you believe it is important to name our particular sins before God as a regular discipline?

### **Personalize the Sermon (15 min)**

- What were points of encouragement or challenge for you personally in the sermon?
- The early Methodists were known for "class" and "band" meetings that were accountability groups among trusted friends who were trying to grow in Christ and watch over one another in Christian love. The class meetings were of a small group size of 8-12 men and women whose primary discussion question was "How is it with your soul?" The Band meetings were smaller (3-5 people and either all men or all women) and typically raised questions about temptation and sin to offer group members the opportunity to confess their spiritual failings in a safe environment and be encouraged to press on in Christian growth. How is being in honest relationships in community an environment that is well suited for personal spiritual growth (rather than trying to go it alone)?
- Do you have trusted friends with whom you can admit your faults and sins to, either one on one or in a small group setting?
- Unconfessed sin can also wreak havoc on our relationships when we sin against others. Yet, confession can be the early steps toward forgiveness and reconciliation with others we have wronged. What gets in the way of taking this important first step in our relationships?

### **Apply the Sermon (15-20 min)**

- The hand out at church on Sunday contained daily prayers and reflections for this week which are also available online at [www.christchurchsl.org/lent](http://www.christchurchsl.org/lent). Would you be willing to take on these mid-week disciplines and challenges to gain a stronger spiritual life during lent? Have you already tried some? How did it go?
- Did today's discussion remind you of an old friend you have not been in touch with for awhile? Would it be appropriate to call or email them this week to offer or receive spiritual encouragement and personal support from?

### **Witness & Closing Prayer (5-10 min)**

- Is there someone you know who appears to be disconnected from the church or Christian faith that God has placed in your life and given you opportunities to share your faith with? Would you be willing to share their name with the group to be in prayer for you and for them?
- The group leader or another volunteer who took notes on the prayer requests shared earlier in the meeting, may now lead the group in closing prayer.