

Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides

July 10th

Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)

1. If your house was burning down, and everyone you knew was safe, and could only save one thing, what would it be?

Bible Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 18:10-14
 - What do you notice in this story? What point is Jesus trying to make?
2. This story is specifically aimed at “wandering” Christians. What kind of things do you think most often cause Christians to “wander” in their faith?
3. Seeking to restore wandering Christians is a priority for God. Pastor Michael said that there is only one thing in Scripture that God is said to be rich in, “mercy (Ephesians 2:4). How does that impact your view of God? Does that connect or challenge your view of God?
4. How have you seen the church generally treat those who are struggling in their faith? Shoot them, passively ignore them, or to seek their restoration? What approach for you generally take?
5. What would it look like in a church community where they take this call to restore wandering disciples seriously?
6. Is there someone right now that God is laying on your heart that needs restoration? Spend time as a group praying over these people.

July 10th: Those Wandering Sheep

Matthew 18 began with Jesus using a child for an illustration and talking about stumbling blocks. As Christians, we need to be deliberate about removing stumbling blocks from our lives. But what should we do when other people stumble? In verses 10-14, Jesus uses an everyday illustration to help his disciples answer that question.

- I. **The story of the lost sheep reveals Jesus' commitment to pursue wandering disciples:** When people think of the parable of the lost sheep, people generally think of Jesus telling the story in Luke 15 in which he finds a "lost" sheep and brings it home. The point that Jesus is looking for sinners to bring into the kingdom of God. This story though is different. The shepherd is searching for a "wandering" sheep and it is talking about disciples who have begun to wonder from their faith.
- II. **What this story tells us**
 - a. **The heart of God prioritizes restoration:** This story tells us about the priorities of God. When a believer begins to wander from their faith, God is neither harsh nor passive, but pursues them. In the story, Jesus opens the possibility that the shepherd doesn't find the sheep, but he will make every effort to find them. This story reminds us that God is a God of mercy whose heart longs for the restoration of his people. This means that for parents who have a wandering child, they can have comfort knowing that God cares deeply about their struggle.
 - b. **We are to share in God's work to restoring wandering fellow disciples:** Jesus shares this with the disciples to help them understand how they should approach fellow disciples who have wandered. We should be in the business of restoration. Often we fall into two extremes. One is to shoot those who stumble out of a fear that they will infect us. The other is to passively stick to our own business. Yet followers of Jesus are called to be a family who care for each other. As a result, we should take an active interest in caring for our fellow believers who are wandering.

Conclusion

There is a question that is sometime asked. If your house is burning down and everyone you love is safe, what would you save? If God's house was burning down, he would save everyone of his children who

are wandering. His heart burns with that passion. In the church we should love each other with that same care.