

LOVE IS THE WAY

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK FIVE

Chapters 9&10: How can love overcome what divides us?

“Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children.” –Chief Sitting Bull

Welcome everyone to this fifth session. Watch this recent version of “We Are the World” to open:

<https://tinyurl.com/wearetheworld-voicesofhope>.

Connecting:

Invite the group to reflect aloud on this question:

- Where do you see and feel hopeful about our children showing us the way?

Close this section with prayer. You might use the prayer to the right as your weekly opening prayer.

Covenanting:

Lift up the guiding principles from your covenant as you center yourself in this time together.

Bible Study: Philippians 2: 1-11 (MSG)

Watch Bishop Curry’s message “Who Shall We Be?” that he offered to the church in response to the events of Jan. 6: <https://tinyurl.com/bishopcurry-whoshallwebe>

Then read this scripture:

“If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don’t be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn’t think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn’t claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.

Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father.”

Loving God, fill my heart with the love that you freely give. Make love my first and last thoughts. May I love others and freely give to them. Make my spirit a spirit of joy, happiness, and love for both my friends and my enemies. Help me love abundantly as you have loved me. Amen.

*Based on John 13:34
DailyPrayerGuide.net*

Invite the group to share their responses to these questions:

- Where are you convicted in the message of Bishop Curry or this scripture?
- What is the invitation to us as followers of Jesus?

Video: Watch this week's video with Rev. Susan Nienaber.

This week, break into groups of three so people can share more deeply. Invite each person to tell their story of how they developed their conviction about a matter that is important to them, and ask others in their group to listen deeply—not debating or defending their own position, but simply listening to one another. Each person will have five minutes to share their story, and others will offer a simple thank you in response. Coach persons to tell their story from a first-person experience, using “I” statements. This is not a time to convince others but rather to share how they came to that position for themselves.

Going Deeper:

Invite the group to reflect aloud on this question.

“Our stories have power. They have power to change how people understand the world—but even before that they have the power to heal the storyteller,” writes Bishop Curry. Consider your position on a social struggle such as racial reconciliation, care of creation, or LGBTQ+ rights. To borrow Charles Robinson's question, What is the story of your life that's brought you to that conclusion?

Going Out:

Invite the group to share responses to these questions:

- What is your takeaway idea from this week's reading/video?
- Bishop Curry's ask in his message is to bless someone you disagree with and someone you agree with this week, and to pray for our nation—that we will have the courage to love. Can you make those two commitments this week?

Closing:

Show “God of Grace and God of Glory” at <https://tinyurl.com/godofgraceandgodofglory> or sing or read it together from #577 in the United Methodist Hymnal as the closing benediction.

Remind the group to read Chapters 11 and 12 for next week.