

A Listening Life *Small-Group Experience* of Newberg Friends Church

Leader Guide — Weekly Gathering

John 15 & 16
For the week of April 2
by Aj Schwanz

Materials Needed

Christ candle
Matches
Bibles
Prayer of Examen handout
Writing utensils

Opening (approximately 5 minutes)

Greet people as they enter. Tell them how glad you are they are here.

As the leader you may want to share a time when you thought about the group in conjunction with the message of John. Take a moment to affirm the group as followers of Christ.

Check-in Time (15 minutes)

Go around in a circle. Ask participants to share:

Can you name all of the Seven Dwarfs?
If you were a dwarf, what name would best describe your week (you can use one of the seven or make up your own)?

Centering Worship (15 minutes including music)

Light the Christ candle. Read John 16:13-15: "But when the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth, he will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth there is. He won't draw attention to himself, but will make sense out of what is about to happen and, indeed, out of all that I have done and said. He will honor me; he will take from me and deliver it to you. Everything the Father has is also mine. That is why I've said, 'He takes from me and delivers to you.'" (*The Message*)

Reinforce the fact that the Spirit is present and working.

Say: Life may be chaotic or simple, like a rollercoaster or a stroll in the park; in all walks of life, the Spirit will be present to make sense out of what is to happen and is happening. How wonderful to have such a companion!

Music Suggestion

"Spirit of the Living God" — Listening Life CD

Sharing (15 minutes)

Check in to see how the reading is working for folks.

Say: We've been reading John for some time now. What themes have you noticed—for yourself and for our worship gathering?

Go around the circle.

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What exercise has been meaningful to you? Why?

Do you have any favorite quotes or Scriptures regarding truth? What do they mean to you?

Stepping Stones – Highlights Form Individual Journeys (10 minutes)

Remind folks that the Spirit is present in all things, in each moment of everyone's day-to-day, minute-by-minute lives.

As the Spirit is present in the daily parts of our lives, the Spirit can bring to mind things we might share with others. We now have the blessing of hearing from a participant's life—events, thoughts, promptings from the Spirit.

When the participant has finished, spend time in prayer. Thank God for this gift of expression and ask God to bless the daily life of the person who shared.

Group Listening Practice (40 minutes)

Read John 16:13-15:

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you."

Repeat the last line.

"That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you."

Share a bit about the Prayer of Examen. Look at *Creating a Life with God* by Daniel Wolpert for additional background.

Say: Tonight's listening practice will involve the Prayer of Examen. This practice is a prayer of examination, seeking to encounter the immanent (always with us) presence of God. It's easy to go about our days compartmentalizing—this is sacred (small-group time, Sunday morning worship) and this is secular (work, eating, going about the daily life, vacationing); but *everything* is sacred—not one place lacks God's presence.

Tonight we're going to examine the sacredness of our lives, to listen for places where Christ invites us to participate in God's redemption of the world.

Pass out Prayer of Examen handout. (Resource Material, p. 21) Make sure everyone has Bibles and writing utensils.

Give some guidelines for time and the structure of the listening practice.

Say: Over the next 15 minutes we are going to pray over these questions, reading Scripture and journaling answers, questions, and thoughts as the Spirit prompts us. I will let you know when you have three minutes left before we gather back together. Look for a place to get comfortable where you won't find too many distractions.

Explain that this is simply a guideline of helpful questions so that we can look over our weeks with a spiritual intention.

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Say: This handout will help you have a conversation with the Spirit and look more intentionally at your life. Not all questions have to be answered. You may feel drawn to answer one or none. These questions are simply a resource to help us draw close to the Spirit and examine our ways of sacred living. You may want to use John 16 as the passage of Scripture or choose another passage.

Have the participants go to places where they may journal in solitude. Watch the time.

When the time is up, have them break into small groups of two or three. Give them guidelines for debriefing the experience. Have them share in their groups for a few minutes.

Say: In your small groups, share about *your experience with this practice* (not necessarily what was revealed to you during the experience). Have you ever prayed over your life this intentionally? Were you challenged? Did you feel the Spirit's presence? Is this something you'd like to do regularly?

Ask participants to bring their discussion to a close before giving them new questions.

Say: Now if you feel comfortable, share one thing revealed to you during your experience. What did God show you as you examined your life with the conviction of the Spirit? What truth was revealed?

Closing (5 minutes)

Gather participants back together in a big group. Talk about the idea of living in the sacred, living holistically.

As the folks go out, pray a prayer of blessing that the Spirit will be present with them in the week, continuing to guide them into all truth.