



CELEBRATION COMMUNITY GUIDE

for April 3, 2022

Part of the mission of our church is to awaken people to Christ and His message and equip them to practice their faith in real life. One way we do this at Celebration is through Communities.

Church is more than a one-hour gathering on a Sunday morning. Church is also a community gathering around a table, doing life together the other six days of the week.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Celebration Communities are an opportunity for our church family to live in a deep web of relationships. We eat together, pray for one another, and practice the way of Jesus in Brantford and the surrounding areas.

As you read through this week's guide, remain centered around these purposes:

Love God

Learn the ways of Jesus

Live with purpose

The following guide is meant to help direct your time together. These are best practices and *not* a rigid set of instructions to follow.

GUIDED COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

Gather as a group in a comfortable setting. Your Celebration Community leader will lead a brief time of prayer at the beginning, asking the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time together. Take time to be silent before you begin. It's important to declutter our minds so that we may focus on one another and God's presence. Pray the ancient prayer: 'Come, Holy Spirit'.

Work through this week's guided questions:

(1) What brought me joy this week?

(2) Where did I notice God's presence?

(3) Was there anything God revealed to me?

(4) Reflecting on this past month or past year, what might others assume about my character based on the words I use and the manner to which I use them?

(5) Would I say that my words are more likely to point others towards Jesus or away from Jesus? In what conversations might Jesus be inviting me to reflect on the condition of my heart?

(6) In what ways can I take next steps to worship God with my words and conversations? How will I invite Jesus to help me transform my relationships *this* week?

PRACTICE THE WAY

Recall a recent conversation where the words you used may have been harmful or destructive towards the person to whom you were speaking. Was this a discussion with a loved one? An encounter with someone you had never met? Recall the circumstances surrounding this conversation in as many details as possible. What were the events that led up to this? How were you feeling or what thoughts were in your mind before this took place? Where do you believe your heart was aligned in this moment? What was said?

It might be helpful to write down this experience in a personal journal.

Ask yourself:

- (1) Was what I said true?
- (2) Was what I said helpful?
- (3) Was what I said made to the correct person?
- (4) Was what I said loving?

Be truthful and honest with yourself about your words and your actions.

Now, ask yourself a series of follow-up questions:

- (1) Based on Biblical truths, what do I know to be true of this person?
- (2) In what ways does God love and recognize both me and the other party?
- (3) How do I believe Jesus would have handled himself if he were me?
- (4) What might God be trying to teach me about the condition of my heart?

Consider tomorrow with hope, asking God for the strength and wisdom to walk the path of Jesus in the everyday moments of life. Pray for healing between you and the person to whom you spoke of, considering steps you might take to reconcile.

If hurtful or destructive words come easy for you, consider the Prayer of Examen as part of your daily and weekly rhythm. This ancient form of prayer is a prayer for paying attention to the smaller details of our lives.

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN

A form of prayer emerging in the sixteenth century from Ignatius of Loyola, the **prayer of examen** is the practice of recognizing instances of God's grace throughout our day. The examen is a practice for paying attention to our lives. During this nightly prayer, we discover how God has been present to us throughout the day, as well as examine the areas of our lives where we need healing. We reflect on the day having just ended.

I REPLAY

Replay the key events and emotions from your day, asking God to reveal His presence to you in those moments.

II RECALL

Thank God for the moments of joy within your day. Thank God for His presence and any blessings that come to mind, no matter how small.

III REPENT

Recognize the moments where you veered off track. Were there words, thoughts, desires or actions that didn't look like Jesus? Confess, receive His grace and ask for His spirit to empower you.

IV RENEW

Consider tomorrow with hope, asking God for the strength and wisdom to walk the path of Jesus in the everyday moments of life.

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN

I REPLAY

Replay the key events and emotions from your day, asking God to reveal His presence to you in those moments. A helpful way of exploring this is by examining key emotions you felt and thoughts you had throughout the past 24 hours.

Ask yourself:

What made me happy?

What made me angry?

What made me anxious?

What made me sad?

What made me scared?

When did I love or feel love?

What thoughts did I come back to again-and-again?

What did I obsess over?

What did I spend my money on?

What did I want to accomplish?

Why did I want to accomplish these things?

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN

II RECALL

Thank God for the moments of joy within your day. Thank God for His presence and any blessings that come to mind, no matter how small.

Ask yourself:

What brought me joy?

What moments am I grateful for?

What am I thankful for in the last 24 hours?

What action, mindset or rhythms should I try and repeat with intention?

Are there habits that made me more like Jesus today?

Are there habits that made me take notice of you God?

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN

III REPENT

Recognize the moments where you veered off track. Were there words, thoughts, desires or actions that didn't look like Jesus?

Confess, receive His grace and ask for His spirit to empower you. Though we find complete and permanent justification in Jesus, it's still important for us to be honest with ourselves and God.

Ask yourself:

Was there a moment when I acted aggressively towards someone else?

Was there a moment where I might have lacked compassion for someone or ignored a need?

Was there a moment where I recognized there is something I need to stop doing because it's harming me or the people around me?

Are there habits that made me less like Jesus today?

Always remember that (a) God meets us where we are and that (b) for every three steps forward in our spiritual formation, we often take two steps back. Resist the temptation to feel shame but be prepared to be honest and real with God and yourself.

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN

IV RENEW

Considering tomorrow with hope, asking God for the strength and wisdom to walk the path of Jesus in the everyday moments of life.

Ask yourself:

What are my plans for the next 24 hours?

What are my hopes?

What are my concerns?

What is God calling me to do tomorrow?

Where do I need to be especially aware of God's presence?

PRAY TOGETHER

Spend time together in conversation with God.

Ask yourself before praying:

(1) What has God revealed to me this past week?

(2) Where is God inviting me to meet Him this upcoming week?

(3) Who might God be nudging me to carefully and intentionally begin watching my words with this week?

Your leader will begin praying for individuals in the group. Take turns praying for each member. If everyone in your group is comfortable with laying hands on each other, feel free to do so.

If this is your first time in a Celebration Community, and you don't feel comfortable sharing something or praying out loud, feel free to be silent. Your Community is an opportunity and space where you can grow. You're welcome and safe here.

THE WEEK AHEAD

As you live out the rest of your week, consider what has been shared during your time together.

Ask yourself:

Who has God placed in my life to pray for and encourage?

What can I ask my Community to keep me accountable for next time we meet?

As a Community, we encourage you to continue planning a significant act of service within your neighborhood or city. Take time to read through our booklet for this project, creating a concrete plan for your group to pray about and execute together by this summer.

For more information on this initiative, ask your Community leaders or head to the Resources page at happychurch.ca.

