

Practice Guide for February 18th 2024

Happy Healthy Holy, pt. 6—A Healed Soul

Suggested Ice Breaker (5 minutes)

“I’m Going on a Picnic”

Start by saying, “*My name is [X], I am going on a picnic and I am taking...*” and then say an item that starts with the first letter of your name. For example, you might say, “*My name is Jesse, I am going on a picnic and I am taking jam.*” The second person says their name and what they are bringing, then repeats what the previous person said: “*My name is Michaela, I am going on a picnic, and I am bringing milk. Jesse is bringing jam.*” Each person repeats everyone's name and items that came before them, making the game increasingly more challenging. Keep going until the chain is broken.

Opening (5 minutes)

Before beginning, open the meeting time with 2 minutes of silence to help you focus on interaction with God and one another. At the end, ask someone to open the gathering time with prayer.

Question for the group: How would you describe the atmosphere you grew up in? Try to use just a word or two (*affirming, critical, cooperative, competitive, close, distant, etc.*).

Reflecting On Scripture (30 minutes)

Read aloud this opening paragraph:

Today we are going to discuss Joseph, the man who became the rescuer of an entire nation. He was known for his ability to interpret dreams, his wise counsel, hard work and for conducting himself honorably. Let’s take a peek into his childhood (Genesis 30-37):

- Born into a family with a dad Jacob had two wives, Leah and Rachel, and two concubines.
- Obvious tension and competition between those women at home.
- Overbearing and manipulating grandfather that takes advantage of his father, Jacob for 20 years.
- Big family move from his grandfather’s estate to a nomadic life before settling in a new land.
- Watched his father fear for his life while trying to appease his uncle by showering him with gifts.
- His father was known for his stubbornness and manipulation, wrestled with a God and had a limp the rest of his life.
- Lost his mother while she was in child-birth with his youngest brother, Benjamin.
- His sister was sexually abused by the son of a powerful man.
- Some of his brothers murdered all the males in that city to avenge their sister.

All of this before Joseph was 17. Which helps us understand his own immaturity and his brothers’ state of mind when they chose to sell him into slavery simply because they were jealous of the favor he had with their father.

After he was sold, Joseph’s life became very difficult. For the next ten to thirteen years, Joseph lived first as a slave, and later, as a prisoner who had been falsely accused.

Question for the group: Imagine yourself in Joseph’s shoes sitting in a prison cell without any hope of freedom. What thoughts, feelings, or doubts might you have about your family? About yourself? About God?

Read this paragraph aloud:

Through God’s miraculous intervention, Joseph was pulled from the pit of prison and made the second most powerful person in Egypt. Later, when his brothers came to Egypt for food during a famine in Israel, Joseph invited them to return for their father and live in Egypt—which they gladly did. But after Jacob died, the brothers began to worry.

Read Genesis 50:15-21 (silently or out loud)

Group Discussion:

- What assumptions are the brothers making about Joseph in verse 15?
- Why do you think Joseph weeps (v. 17)?
- Joseph breaks the “normal” way he grew up seeing hurt feelings and conflict be dealt with by forgiving his brothers. Put yourself honestly in his shoes, how might you have responded if you were in his position?
- Have someone slowly reread verses 19-21. Carefully consider the different aspects of Joseph’s response to his brothers. Thinking about your own life, which one speaks the most to you?
 - “Don’t be afraid.”
 - “Am I in the place of God?”
 - “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.”

Community Practice (15 minutes)

Read Matthew 11:28-30 (silently or out loud), then read the following paragraph aloud:

A healthy soul is someone who, led by the Spirit, is walking out the care for their whole soul. God calls us to come to him and to give him all the weight that we are carrying. Our issues, our problems, our struggles. This includes the words others have spoken over us and the words we have spoken over ourselves. It requires laying down our imperfections and pride, asking God to help us see ourselves the way He sees us. When we truly release those fears, pain, frustration, the anger, that is when we find the peaceful rest of God. As we take up the easy yoke, we often are also unlearning the destructive patterns of our past.

Take 5 minutes on your own to prayerfully journal your response to the following questions:

- Are there areas of my soul that were affected by the past that I have been neglecting?
- What negative messages did I receive over the years, explicit or implicit, that impacted how I see myself or others? (These can be from trauma experiences, landmark events, or even subtle ongoing interaction)
- How do those messages compare with the messages below that reflect who I am in the family of Jesus?
 - You are lovable.
 - You are good enough.
 - You are a joy.
 - You have nothing left to prove.
 - Your needs are a delight.
 - You are allowed to struggle and make mistakes.

Share and explain your answers in groups of 2 or 3.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Have one person close in prayer, and/or slowly read aloud this prayer by C.S. Lewis:

May it be the real I who speaks. May it be the real Thou that I speak to. Infuse my being with vitality again, that I may love You with all the simplicity and fire with which I once loved You, as if I had never been hurt or distracted by lesser things and lesser loves. Grant me this depth of inner healing, O Lord, that I might fully embrace Your love again. Amen.