



FLOWER MOUND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

CONNECTION GROUPS

BECOMING | *Connection Group Study Guide* | Week 1 of 5

CONNECT (5 TO 10 MINUTES)

Use this time as an icebreaker to introduce yourself to one another and prime the pumps for more study and discussion

- If this is your first time meeting as a group, then take some time to introduce yourself. Share:
 - Your Name, where your from, and two sentences to describe the role of faith in your daily life
 - If you're already familiar with one another, then share your thoughts about worship this week:
 - What aspects of worship did or did not connect with you this week?
 - What challenged you to move and how did you live into that?
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CONTEXT (30 TO 45 MINUTES)

Dig deeper into the videos and scripture for this week through questions and discussion.

- Before diving into the scriptures or video, ask this question:
 - Looking back over the past 5 years of your life, in what ways are you most different? Has this been good or bad change?

Read Philippians 3:1-14

- What are your initial thoughts on this passage? What stands out to you? And what questions might it raise?

Biblical Context: Paul's words might sound a little harsh. At a surface level, he seems to be making a strict distinction between the flesh and the spirit. We must be cautious to bifurcate the two, as the Incarnation of Christ teaches us that God, indeed, values creation – of which the flesh is a part. Rather, notice how Paul describes his own faith journey: from his days as a Jewish Pharisees who strictly followed the law to his transformed faith in Christ. In particular, pay careful attention to verses 12-14. Paul seems to be speaking of a paradox in his faith life. One the one hand, he's arrived; on the other hand, not yet.

- Drawing your attention to *how* Paul speaks of the transformation in his own faith life, how does this effect your reading of this text?

- What might it say to us today that even Paul underwent a conversion in his faith journey later in his life?

Watch the Connection Group Video

- If you're new to the language of Christian Perfection or *epectasy*, how do these theological beliefs effect your understanding of the Christian journey?
- If God is Perfect AND scripture encourages us to be perfect, then what is the goal of the Christian faith?
 - How does re-defining perfection from a static to dynamic movement change your understanding of the goal of the Christian faith?
- With this video in mind, re-read Paul's words in Philippians 3:12-14.
 - In what pragmatic ways do you hold in tension where you've been and who you are becoming?
 - What practices, if any, do you have that help you remain intentional and focused on this process?
 - Is the "end goal" of Christianity mor about the "end" or the "journey" toward the end?

CALL (10 MINUTES)

The purpose of and how we measure success in Connection Groups boils down to our whether or not we see growth in our ability to move from theory to practice, from theology to lived-faith. Use the remaining time in your group to make the leap from ivory-tower to life.

- If we begin to see the Christian journey as a dynamic process of becoming rather than a static "make to the end and win," how might that begin to effect your daily living?
- What is an area of your life that you have maybe been ignoring, hesitant about, resistant, or fearful of new-ness happening?
 - Is this new thing of God? Could it be a prompting of the Holy Spirit to live in faith?
- Spend some time this week reflecting on your past year, five years, decade, etc. Does who you are today reflect what you understand God to be about?

CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

It's unrealistic for everyone in a Connection Group to become best friends for life – although it does happen. And yet, we want to be more than just a group that meets on occasion. We want to be a community of support, which requires knowing what one another is going through. One way to do this is through Rose, Thorn, and Buds (RTB). You're invited to not simply share things at a surface level (e.g. I had a job interview this week), but rather dig deeper (e.g. I had a job interview and walked away feeling inadequate and irrelevant, etc. etc.)

- **Rose** – what is something in your life that is going really well? That is contributing to your flourishing as a human? That is helping you grow as a disciple?
- **Thorn** – What is something in your life that isn't going so well? What tough situation has derailed you lately? What is happening that's making you feel out of touch, anxious, disoriented from yourself, others, creation, and God?
- **Bud** – What is something that is emerging in your life? What new and beautiful thing is bubbling up?