

Open your Life Group with prayer. Spend whatever time is needed for any of the members to share needs or concerns. Go through the discipleship questions your group has decided to use. If you have time then:

Have someone read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9.

Have the same person or another person read John 1:29-42.

1. The Rev. Dr. King in his sermon “Paul’s Letter to American Christians” wrote, “I still believe that standing up for the truth of God is the greatest thing in the world. This is the end of life. The end of life is not to be happy. The end of life is not to achieve pleasure and avoid pain. The end of life is to do the will of God, come what may.” In what ways did John the Baptist stand up for the truth and will of God? (For those curious what happens to John the Baptist after his first introductions in all 4 Gospels, have persons look up Matthew 11:2-19, Mark 6:14-29, Matthew 14:1-12.) In what ways did Rev. Dr. King stand up for the truth and will of God?

2. In the same sermon, the Rev. Dr. King continued and said,

I must say to you, as I said to the church at Corinth, that I still believe that love is the most durable power in the world... This principle stands at the center of the cosmos. As John says, “God is love.” He who loves is a participant in the being of God. He who hates does not know God...you may give your goods to feed the poor. You may give great gifts to charity. You may tower high in philanthropy. But if you have not love it means nothing. You may even give your body to be burned, and die the death of a martyr. Your spilt blood may be a symbol of honor for generations yet unborn, and thousands may praise you as history's supreme hero. But even so, if you have not love your blood was spilt in vain. You must come to see that it is possible for a man to be self-centered in his self-denial and self-righteous in his self-sacrifice. He may be generous in order to feed his ego and pious in order to feed his pride. Man has the tragic capacity to relegate a heightening virtue to a tragic vice. Without love benevolence becomes egotism, and martyrdom becomes spiritual pride. So the greatest of all virtues is love. It is here that we find the true meaning of the Christian faith. This is at bottom the meaning of the cross.

Rev. Dr. King’s words asks us to do the work of self-examination too, especially in our call to do the will of God. When have there been moments in your life where someone reflected to you uncomfortable truths about yourself? How did that help you re-orient yourself? Do you regularly have people who will tell you the truth so that you are walking always in love and not in ego? How can this practice of truth-telling to one another be viewed in terms of our shared baptism? (If needed, refresh last week’s discussion regarding baptism.)

3. Last week, you were asked to discuss how you can identify with the poor and the outcast. In what ways does truth-telling help to do so? Have you seen people who use this skill to identify with the poor and the

outcast? (If people bring up Rev. Dr. King, have a discussion regarding Rev. Dr. King but also ask for other examples.) What can you glean from those people's examples for your own life?

4. If you decided to form a new habit rather than follow a "New Year's Resolution," how is that going? Do you give yourself grace to not get the habit right all the time? What do you do when you notice yourself falling back into an "old" habit? What are some ways those in your Life Group can help support you?

Announcements:

- Sunday Night Programs for Children resume next Sunday, January 26.
- Church Council Meetings are open to ALL. It is a great way to hear about all the things that go on in the life of the church. The first meeting of the year is Monday, January 27 @ 7 PM.

Potential Areas of Service:

- Prayerfully consider if your Life Group or persons within your Life Group are able to serve as transportation for those in our church who otherwise would be home-bound. This could look like driving someone to an appointment or even picking up simple groceries when there is bad driving weather. If there is any interest, contact Lynda Newsome, lnewsome1994@twc.com
- Prayerfully consider if your Life Group will be willing to take a month as Greeters for the 9 am and 11:15 am services. If so, contact Valerie Mountcastle, valmount@bellsouth.net
- Prayerfully consider if anyone will be willing to volunteer at the Welcome Table in the Narthex. Volunteers are encouraged to assist visitors to help connect them with other members or areas of church ministry. Contact Brenda Tillman pampurred7@cs.com. or call her cell 910-639-5370.