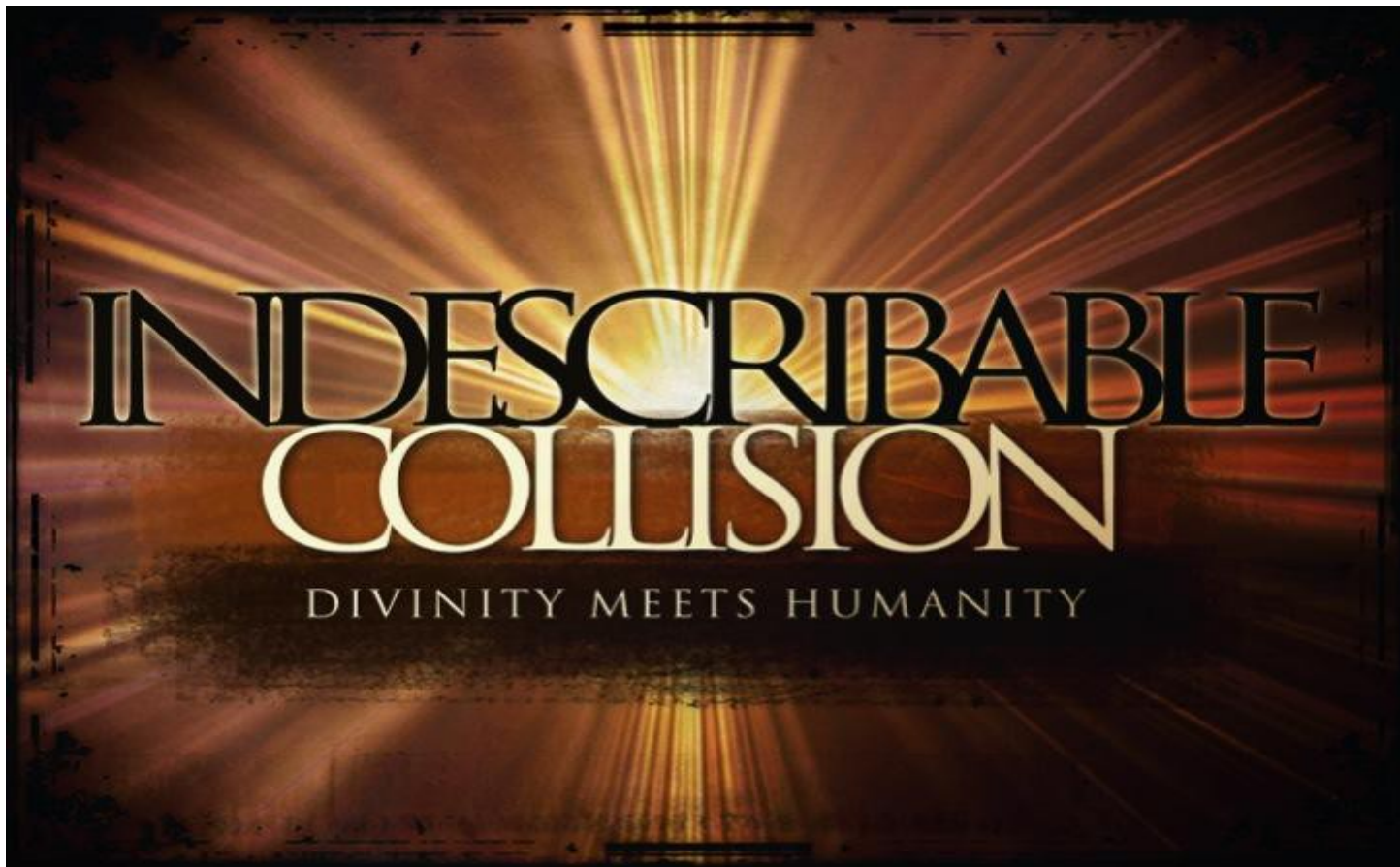


Highland United Methodist Church

Home Group Study

January 2018



Epic Fulfilled

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth"... "For from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

Ground Rules for Home Groups

DON'T FIX: Try to hear what people are sharing without trying to fix them. If they want your advice, they'll ask for it. If people think that as soon as they share a problem or issue everyone is going to immediately try to fix them (offer advice/solutions) often they simply won't share at all.

LISTEN: Let's value one another during the discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Don't be thinking about what you're going to say next or how you're going to respond. Really listen (for the purpose of understanding).

PAUSE: After someone shares, give a pause to allow the group to feel the weight of what was just shared and to fully consider it before the next person shares. This also provides the person sharing with the opportunity to continue with their thought without feeling rushed. Often people will only share what's above the waterline, but if given the opportunity (and encouragement), they might share the deeper things. (Lots of things happen in the 'pause')

SILENCE: This is much like the pause but used in a broader and more deliberate way. Silence is used to wait for someone to share next without trying to fill the void with talk. Silence can create tension in a group, but tension isn't a bad thing if used wisely. (Let silence do what silence does.)

NO "CROSS-TALK": Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations.

DON'T RESCUE: When people are sharing something deeply personal and/or painful, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation. Often this will cause people to stop sharing and result in their not getting as deep as they might have gone. Resist the temptation to rescue people.

USE 'I' STATEMENTS: It's easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Try to use "I" statements rather than "them", "the church", "us", "we", etc.

BE SELF-AWARE: Be self-aware of how you are personally effecting the environment – words, actions, and non-verbal communications.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: It's important that we all use this time to consider where we stand on any given subject or issue. How am I walking this out in my personal life? How does this affect my ability to lead others? What is my part of the issue and/or solution? What positive change does God want me to make?

MODEL HOME GROUP:

Week 1

Epic Fulfilled

Matthew 1-5

Big Idea:

In Jesus the best stories come true

Daily Encounters:

Day 1: Matthew 1

Day 2: Matthew 2

Day 3: Matthew 3

Day 4: Matthew 4

Day 5: Matthew 5

Things to wrestle with as you read the Daily Encounters:

Day 1: What is the first thing Matthew writes in his gospel? Why do you think this genealogy is there? What does it say about God's character? (Matt 1)

Day 2: Review the events surrounding Jesus' beginning with the Magi and continuing through the reactions of Herod and the Angels. Why react like this to a baby? (Matt 2)

Day 3: How does John the Baptist relate to the prophecy from Isaiah? How does this set the tone for the rest of the chapter? (Matt 3)

Day 4: Where did Jesus go after being tempted in the wilderness? Why is it important that Jesus started his ministry in Galilee? (Matt 4)

Day 5: Read Proverbs 23:7. In what ways might this passage shed light on this first part of the sermon on the mount.

Home Group

Warm up:

(Leaders: choose a question that you think is best for your group)

1. Where were you born? Is it the same town you grew up in?
2. What was the farthest you have traveled to meet someone?
3. John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin. What is your funniest story about a time with your cousin?

Hearing God's Word Together

Story passage: Matthew 1:18-24; 2:10-14; 3:13-17; 4:18-22; 5:17-20

Assign each of the above passages to a different person in your home group and have them read it aloud.

Exploring God's Word Together

There are more questions provided than you will have time for. Leaders: Choose questions that are appropriate for your group.

1. How many prophetic words are referenced in Matthew chapters 1-5? Read Matt 5:17-18 again. Considering this, what is the purpose of referencing so many prophecies?
2. In Matthew 1-2 Joseph receives a lot of instructions from God through angels and dreams. Consider what the angels ask of Joseph. Absent an angel, do these seem like reasonable instructions? If you were in Joseph's place, would you be able to believe? What does this teach us about following God's direction today?
3. It's tempting to read the sermon on the mount as a challenge to our moral laziness. But are Jesus' moral demands attainable? What would have to change inside of us in order to meet the moral demands laid out by Jesus?
4. Review Matthew 3:15. Why do you think Jesus, the Son of God, considered it important to "fulfill all righteousness." What does this tell us about the nature of Christ?

Faith in Action

1. Jesus, who was not obliged to humble himself before anyone, was willing to humble himself before John the Baptist. Are any areas in your life where you could practice humility more effectively?
2. Compare the obedience of Joseph to the obedience demanded by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Does the story of Joseph give us any hints about how we might approach the problem presented by Jesus' high standard for obedience?

Week 2

Jesus Brings the Kingdom of God to Earth

Matthew 6-10

Big Idea:

Jesus here to rescue us from the law

Daily Encounters:

Day 1: Matthew 6

Day 2: Matthew 7

Day 3: Matthew 8

Day 4: Matthew 9

Day 5: Matthew 10

Things to wrestle with as you read the Daily Encounters:

Day 1: According to this chapter, what does it look like when one "seeks first" the kingdom of God (v 33)?

Day 2: What does the "golden rule" (v 12) say about what the hundreds of Biblical laws were intended to do?

Day 3: How can some be so certain of Jesus' ability to heal them (v 2, vv 8-9), yet others who witness or hear of a miracle, only want Jesus to leave (vv 33-34)?

Day 4: What did Jesus do that so upset the religious leaders of the time?

Day 5: The picture that Jesus paints of how people will respond to the message that 'The kingdom of heaven is near' is not very good; why would people respond in such a way to that message?

Home Group

Warm up:

(Leaders: choose a question that you think is best for your group)

1. Relate an instance when something looked a lot better than the actual experience of it.
2. Who is someone in your life you consider to be wise, and why?

Hearing God's Word Together

Story passage: Matthew 7:7-12; 9:35-38; 10:7-10

Ask someone to tell the story passage or read the passage together as a group.

Exploring God's Word Together

There are more questions provided than you will have time for. Leaders: Choose questions that are appropriate for your group.

1. What is the "kingdom of God" that is near (or within - see Luke 17:20-21)? Why do people, and particularly the religious leaders of the time, react so negatively to this proclamation?
2. Review Jesus' teachings regarding the law. Do Jesus' teachings nullify the law or imply that the law is wrong? (see Matthew 5:17) What do you think Jesus was trying to explain about application of the law?
3. What does Jesus have to say in these chapters about hypocrites? Given Jesus' description of what it means to follow the law, is anyone innocent of hypocrisy? Can anyone really follow the law? What should we do about this?
4. Review Jesus' teachings in these chapters regarding giving, praying, and fasting. What should our lives look like with respect to all of these things?
5. What do the healings of chapters 8-9 and Jesus' choice of dining companions in chapter 9 say about the kingdom of heaven and who is a part of it?

Faith in Action

1. About what do you worry? What can you do now to better surrender those worries to God?
2. Where in your life do you need to start putting knowledge into action? What is the first concrete step in the process? What help do you need to get started?

3. What can you do this week to show those around you that 'the kingdom of heaven is near'?

Prayer Time with Group

Week 3

The Kingdom of God Comes to Us in Jesus' Stories

Matthew 11-15

Big Idea:

Jesus uses stories to bridge the gap between God and us

Daily Encounters:

Day 1: Matthew 11

Day 2: Matthew 12

Day 3: Matthew 13

Day 4: Matthew 14

Day 5: Matthew 15

Things to wrestle with as you read the Daily Encounters:

Day 1: Whom does Jesus invite to come to him? Why do you think he privileges these people in his invitation? (Matt. 11)

Day 2: Review how religious leaders reacts when Jesus performs His miracles? Why do you think they reacted in this way? (Matt 12)

Day 3: Why does Jesus speak in parables? (see Matt. 13:10-17) What does this tell us about the disciples? What about the rest of us? (Matt 13)

Day 4: How do the stories of the miracles in this chapter reveal the Kingdom of Heaven? (Matt 14)

Day 5: Why do you think Jesus places barriers in the way of the Canaanite woman? How effective is he in discouraging her? (Matt 15)

Home Group

Warm up:

(Leaders: choose a question that you think is best for your group)

1. Which fable from Aesop or someone else is your favorite?
2. Have you every moved away? What did you miss most about your hometown?

Hearing God's Word Together

Act out the story in Matthew 15:21-29.

Exploring God's Word Together

There might be more questions provided than you will have time for. Leaders: Choose questions that are appropriate for your group.

1. Jesus repeatedly returns to the theme of the heart (our wants and desires) as the center of our moral lives. How does this affect your thinking about how you govern your own moral choices? A common

expression goes like this: “The heart wants what the heart wants.” Does Jesus’ teaching justify bad behavior?

2. Review Jesus’ parables in this week’s reading. Based on these parables, how would you describe the kingdom of heaven?

3. Do you think Jesus is surprised that the Canaanite woman knocks down all the barriers he erects against her? Or do you think he can see her determination? If he knows she will destroy the barriers, why do you think he puts them up? Who besides her might he be trying to teach?

4. Jesus radicalizes every situation he enters. Those who are for him grow in their commitment to him while those who are against him oppose him even more. Explain which characters move in which direction in each of the passages you read.

Faith in Action

1. Does it surprise you that bad people get worse when they reject Jesus? Have you ever known anyone who encountered Jesus but did not accept him?

2. Have you ever been tempted to give up on Jesus because he did not treat you the way you thought he should? What happened when you persisted?

3. How many chances do you have each week to meet with Jesus? How are you using these opportunities?

Prayer Time with Group

Week 4

Who is first in the Kingdom of God?

Matthew 16-20

Big Idea:

Ambition in the kingdom of God is not you think.

Daily Encounters:

Day 1 – Matthew 16

Day 2 – Matthew 17

Day 3 – Matthew 18

Day 4 – Matthew 19

Day 5 – Matthew 20

Things to wrestle with as you read the Daily Encounters:

Day 1: Why is Jesus' question in 16:13 and 15 so important? Did Peter understand his own answer to the question? (Matt. 16)

Day 2: Why did Jesus frequently predict his death and resurrection? Why do you think the disciples were distressed by this? (Matt. 17)

Day 3: What does Jesus teach about being great in this chapter? (Matt. 18)

Day 4: How does Jesus respond to tricky questions and people who want to manipulate him? (Matt. 19)

Day 5: Twice in this chapter Jesus asks, “What do you want?” What do you want from Jesus? (Matt. 20)

Home Group

Warm Up:

(Leaders: choose a question that you think is best for your group)

1. What Christmas gift did you most want as a child? What happened when you got what you wanted?
2. How are children an inspiration to you?

Hearing God’s Word Together

Story passage: Matthew 18:21-35

Divide the parable into parts and act it out. Describe the motivations of each character.

Exploring God’s Word Together

There are more questions provided than you will have time for. Leaders: Choose questions that are appropriate for your group.

1. Several times in these chapters Jesus is tested by questions. What are some of them? Why and how were they trying to trick him?
2. What does it mean to follow Jesus in 16:24-26?
3. In what ways is Jesus misunderstood in these chapters? How is he misunderstood today?

4. In chapter 18 what is the heart of Jesus' teaching about leadership to his disciples?

Faith in Action

1. How would you explain the need for and the practice of self-denial?
2. Is there anyone in your life you need to forgive? How can you do this? Describe a time when you received forgiveness from someone.

Prayer Time with Group

Home Group Leaders Role Description

Highland United Methodist Church

Mission of Home Groups

- Equip followers of Jesus Christ to be disciples who make disciples (*Matt. 4:19*)
- Connect believers to other believers
- Help develop disciples and build Christian relationships
- Support each other as we apply God's Word in our lives
- Provide social and service-oriented fellowship opportunities

Roles of Home Group Leaders

- Shepherd – share your life, go after stray “lambs” and model Godly habits
- Facilitator – coordinating communication within your group and the Home Group Support Team
- Prayer Warrior -- pray for members and keep a prayer journal

Recommendations for Home Group Structure

- Establish consistent meeting dates and locations
- Consider Home Group Co-Leaders to share the responsibility and provide ongoing support
- Provide regular communication (email or phone calls) for meeting reminders
- Request group members to RSVP for proper planning before each meeting
- Offer light refreshments - *optional*

Resources for Home Group Leaders

- The Bible
- Home Group Study Booklet (*monthly hard copies on Table in lobby/electronic version available*)
- Sermon Notes
- Home Group Leader Coaching provided by _____
- Home Group Roundtable Conversations (_____)

CONNECT with God. GROW in Spirit and Truth. SERVE the World for Jesus Christ.

