

“In a World Restarting: Getting our Bearing Coming out of Chaos”

Welcome to your Small Group- Week 3 (for the week following Sunday, Oct. 10th)

We pray that your group is moving into a new level of trust and appreciation as we begin week 3. This week we will continue our small group conversation with a focus on Mark 8:27-38. A reminder that Dr. Matt Skinner of Luther Seminary has made an 8 to 10-minute video for each week to introduce us to Sunday’s Gospel story and to frame one question for your discussion. You can find this in Enews each week prior to Sunday and on the Small Group page in the box on our website homepage, “In a World Restarting”.

*+ **NOTE:** Each week we’ll suggest a question to open with, then turn to the Bible text for the week (with the video and a question from Dr. Skinner), and then suggest a few other questions to discuss as you ponder what it means for you to get your “bearings coming out of chaos”. Feel free to choose the questions that resonate most with your group, in any order you like. If you have time for all, great, but no worries if you don’t.*

Check-in: In addition to being week 3 of our small group study, this is week 1 of our 3-week stewardship focus. Begin your session reflecting on how you utilize your resources in light of the pandemic. Has the way you’ve prioritized the use of your time, talents, and financial resources changed in any way compared to the time before the pandemic? Share your answers with one another and why.

Bible Reading this week: Mark 8:27-38

In this week’s video, Dr. Matt Skinner shares that this is the high point of Mark’s Gospel as this is where a turn is made toward the cross. In the text we hear Peter both accurately name Jesus’ identity while completely misunderstanding what it means. Dr. Skinner focuses his remarks on the famous words of verse 34-35 and lays out an important distinction of what “deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow me” means.

+ Please listen to Dr. Skinner’s video on Mark 8:27-38 as a group if you haven’t had a chance yet. (Link each week is in Enews from Tuesday of last week and on the website on the homepage in the “In a World Restarting” box.) You can decide if you all want to listen to this together each week, or if you will listen beforehand.

Question from Dr. Skinner’s video:

In this week’s video, Dr. Skinner argues that the phrase “deny yourself” is not about human debasement or an anti-flourishing statement as is sometimes argued. Instead, it is statement calling followers to turn from their old identities (in Jesus time this would have been primarily about family identities) toward a new identity as being a cross-bearer and a Jesus follower. He then asks us to wonder what that mean in this moment. What does this mean as we have a new corporate identity emerging out of this COVID moment: A moment that includes the reality of COVID as well as a polarized society. What does it mean to not debase oneself, but to take

up a new identity as individuals and as a congregation as cross bearers? What does it mean to “live differently” in 2021 to pursue greatness because you/we are yoked to Jesus? Offer up some specifics.

Coming out of chaos, ponder together:

On Sept. 22nd Dr. Jodock led Session 2 of “God, the Pandemic, and Our Vocation”. You can find the video by clicking on the “In a World Restarting” tab. At the end of his presentation, he shared some questions for us to ponder as we think of our various vocations in this COVID moment. We invite you to discuss these questions and to include some thoughts about how you orient your resources (time, talent, finances).

1. Our call to seek the thriving of our neighbor in all our roles (work, family, friends, as a citizen etc.) is always contextual. Considering the current moment, are there ways that your priorities have been re-thought? Has this affected how you utilize the resources with which God has gifted you?
2. Are there places where improving personal relations and building social capital would allow you to seek the thriving of others. {Social capital is defined as the network of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society.}
3. If you were to focus on relations at work, or in the family, or in your neighborhood, what would receive your attention? Why?
4. What mentors or conversation partners would be helpful to you in this moment as you seek to faithfully “pick up your cross and follow Jesus”?
5. How would your answer any of these questions from the perspective of Westwood and how it prioritizes the use of its resources? What is your role in how you answer?

Close with prayer:

Close your time together with the Prayer of Good Courage.