

## A Creative Minority Discussion Guides January - February 2021

### Week 1 – Covenant



#### Teaching Text

#### John 13:34-35

*“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

#### Recap

This week, Pastor Jon launched our new sermon series, A Creative Minority by talking about the importance of covenant relationships, and laid the groundwork for how we can begin to live out this kind of community in our current moment. If we build a web of stubbornly loyal relationships, we can knit them together in a living network of persons who are committed to practicing the way of Jesus for the renewal of the world. We must find and be friends who are willing to risk for each other, refresh each other, encourage each other, fight for each other, and speak truth to each other in all circumstances. A community of covenantal relationships built on these foundations creates a net that has the power to capture the hearts of those around us, and reveal Jesus like never before.

## Week 2 – Narrative

# NARRATIVE



### Teaching Text

#### Luke 24:13-25

*Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" "What things?" he asked.*

*"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus." He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"*

### Recap

This week, Pastor Jon continued our Creative Minority series by talking about the importance of Narrative and that the stories we believe in are forming us deeply. He taught that

narratives make larger claims on reality, and we live out the story of a specific narrative when it controls our habits, attentions, and practices. While we live in a time of warring narratives, Pastor Jon called us to take a step back and evaluate the stories we are taking part in, and deeply root ourselves in the one, true narrative that Jesus Christ is Lord. By routing our actions, thoughts, and expectations through the person of Jesus, our lives will become compelling stories that display the Gospel, and shake the world from spiritual sleep.

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## Week 3 – Ethics



### Teaching Text

#### 1 Peter 1:14-16

*"As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'"*

### Recap

This week, we continued our Creative Minority series, in which we're learning how to live as the people of God in our cultural moment. Pastor Olivia challenged us to consider ethics and how we make decisions in our lives. First and foremost, we can look to Jesus's life and see how He responded to ethical conundrums of His day, such as when religious leaders approached Him about healing sick people on the Sabbath. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral is also a helpful tool, outlining four sources we can use to draw ethical conclusions: 1) scripture; 2) tradition; 3) reason; and 4) experience.

Christian ethics must be a response and not a restraint. It's about responding to the grace and character of God. Love is what our ethic hangs on, and our lives are a response to God's love for us. The Christian ethic is a response from the heart, and our behavior and motivations should align. Christian ethics should also put a spotlight on our Savior, pointing people to Jesus so that He receives all the glory. Lastly, Christian ethics are counter to our culture, especially in the areas of money, sex, and power. As Christians, we must ask ourselves: how can I love generously, faithfully, sacrificially, and humbly so that the world is enticed to ask follow-up questions for which the gospel is the answer? Ultimately, the Christian ethic is love from beginning to end.

## **Spiritual Practices**

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**Testimony:** Each week someone will be sharing a 5 minute testimony with the Group, starting with the Leaders. This could be a 2021 testimony, a defining relationship, or story about a significant discipleship moment in their lives. Take some time to frame what this will look like (Ex: Is everyone sharing? Will you select someone each week? What kinds of stories will you ask people to share?).

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**Presence of God:** This season we will spend time waiting on, listening to, and blessing the presence of God. This could come up during prayer or at any point in the night when we just sense we want to pause and get a feel for what God is doing in our time.

## **Discussion Guide**

### **Connect**

1. Welcome to a new season of Community Groups! Some have attended the same group for a long time and some are joining a new group for the first time. To kick off your first meeting, give everyone a few minutes to introduce themselves. Ask your group members to share their name, what neighborhood they live in, how long they have lived in New York and/or attended COTC, and how they spend their time.

2. Many of us see the threshold of a new year as an opportunity to assess our habits, practices, relationships, beliefs, circumstances, risks, etc. What is something that you want to leave behind in 2020? What is something new that you hope to establish in 2021?

### **Check In**

Spend some time setting vision and goals for your group:

1. Why did you join this group and what are you hoping to receive from this group this season?

2. How can you serve this group this season?

3. How do you hope to grow this season, personally and as a community?

If your group has been established for a while or you feel comfortable going a bit deeper, ask your group members how they are holding up emotionally this month? What is troubling their spirit this week?

### **Contemplate**

Choose one or two of the following passages to dig into with your group:

- 1 Peter 1:14-16 (teaching text)
- Matthew 22:37-40
- Romans 12:1-2

Ask someone (or multiple people) to read the passage aloud. Allow your group to sit with the verses for a bit. Then, dig into the passage with at least one of the following questions:

1. Which words or phrases stand out to you?
2. What is highlighted about God's character?
3. What does this Scripture teach us about how we are to live as holy children of God?

### **Consider**

1. As we are continuously being transformed by God's love, we are to live lives that stir up questions for which the gospel is the only answer. What would it look like to live a "questionable" life, professionally and socially?

2. Pastor Olivia unpacked the cultural idols of money, sex, and power. Which one of these do you tend to elevate higher than God? What could it look like for you to respond to God's love with your money? With your sexuality? With your power/influence?

### **Create**

Choose from one of the options below:

Take a few minutes to intentionally introduce the practices you want to observe together as a group, listed below.

- Bible reading plan & TIME method of studying God's Word
- Prayer and fasting
- Sharing weekly testimonies
- Taking communion

## **Cover**

1. Allow time for your group members to linger in God's presence alone. Play worship music or stay silent. Encourage your group members to pray, read Scripture, journal, or simply practice listening for God's voice. Give space for people to share anything they feel God impressing upon their hearts.

2. In smaller breakout groups or as a whole group, give your members the opportunity to share prayer requests for the week and spend time covering those requests in prayer.

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## Week 4 – Practices



### Teaching Text

#### Philippians 4:9

*Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

### Recap

This week, we continued our Creative Minority series, in which we're learning how to live as the people of God in our cultural moment. Pastor Jon challenged us to consider how we have implemented practices of counter-cultural discipleship into our daily lives. We can look to the example of Jesus to see that He did not simply tell a story about someone giving His life for others but incarnated it in His own body and blood. This was not a private act, but as an "embodied drama." Pastor Jon provided us with 3 core practices we can implement in our lives so we can continue to be formed into the likeness of Jesus: 1) abiding; 2) discernment; and 3) intercession.

We want to be able to discern which specific practices fit the kingdom of God and which are appropriate for people whose lives are surrendered to God. When we learn the practice of abiding in Jesus, what happens is that His heart and character forms within us, and then that fruit flows out of us.

Abiding in Jesus also helps us to discern God's presence in our day-to-day lives, which is so important in preventing burnout and exhaustion. We can't do everything, so this discernment helps us to watch for the hand of God and get in the "picture frame" when He calls us to.



We also want to intercede through prayer and fasting on behalf of others because prayer is our most powerful weapon to fight invisible principalities. Jesus set the example for us by spending alone time with the Father and interceding privately, while also interceding on behalf of others in public spaces. Some specific intercessory prayers we can do are: 1) prayers that tear down ideologies; 2) prayers that God will open eyes; 3) prayers asking God to break through. Asking is the rule of the kingdom.

## **Spiritual Practices**

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## **Discussion Guide**

### **Connect**

1. Winter is in full swing now. What's one thing you're doing to cultivate joy in this season when we're largely indoors?

### **Check In**

Spend some time reviewing the vision and goals you set last week as a group. Ask your group if they feel there is anything else that should be added. If you have new people in your group this week, invite them to contribute to your collaborative list.

## Contemplate

Choose one or two of the following passages to dig into with your group:

- Philippians 4:9 (teaching text)
- John 15:1-17
- Ephesians 6:10-13

Ask someone (or multiple people) to read the passage aloud. Allow your group to sit with the verses for a bit. Then, dig into the passage with at least one of the following questions:

1. Which words or phrases stand out to you?
2. What is highlighted about God's character?
3. What does this Scripture teach us about abiding, discerning, or interceding?

## Consider

1. There are 3 "root-level" practices we can implement in our daily lives as disciples: 1) abiding in Jesus; 2) discernment; and 3) intercession. Which one, if any, do you feel you practice most naturally? Which one would you like to grow in?

2. Pastor Jon described attention as "the source of all adoration" and as "just and loving concentration." What usually steals your attention? How can you practically practice setting your attention on Jesus this week?

## Create

Jesus says that some things can only be broken by prayer and fasting, and as disciples, we are called to practice fasting on behalf of others. Ask your group to take time and reflect on someone in their life who needs breakthrough, or to consider a larger issue they care deeply about. Together, come up with practical ways you can fast this week for that person or issue. Encourage one another to press into this practice, even when it's difficult.

Set aside time to take communion together.

## Cover

Spend time together practicing one of the intercessory prayers introduced by Pastor Jon: 1) prayers against any ideologies that set themselves up against God; 2) prayers for people's eyes to open; and 3) prayers for open doors to share the gospel. Or, break out into three smaller groups and have each group take up one of the intercessory prayers.

## Week 5 – Authority



### Teaching Text

#### Hebrews 11:9-10, 13b-16

*By faith [Abraham] made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.... They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

### Recap

This week Pastor Suzy continued our Creative Minority series by reminding us that Jesus is our ultimate authority and our true citizenship is in Heaven. She exhorted us to ponder what we do when our narratives, ethics, and practices as Christ-followers come into conflict with those of the world. Pastor Suzy gave us three possibilities for living in this cultural moment: syncretism (accepting the world around us and fully adopting the narrative of where we live and work), separatism (withdrawing from culture as we wait for another world), or exile (living fully present while longing for the kingdom to come). Though we may come against worldly temptations, we can combat those with biblical responses. Specifically, we can fight acceptance with our identification with Jesus, compromise with obedience, idolatry with monotheism, stopping with unceasing prayer, violence with non-violence, and self-preservation with self-sacrifice.

When we live as a creative minority and choose to be exiles like Abraham and Jacob, we recognize there is no true authority except the Lord's, and we can live freely in the world but not of it. We can be a light in dark places because we know our citizenship in Heaven is secure through our sole allegiance to God. When Jesus returns, our deepest longings will be met, we will live as new creations through Him, and He will be unashamed to call us His people.

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## **Discussion Guide**

### **Connect**

1. What is one of your current favorite worship songs and why?

### **Check In**

Spend some time reviewing the vision and goals you set last week as a group. Ask your group if they feel there is anything else that should be added. If you have new people in your group this week, invite them to contribute to your collaborative list.

Check in on the spiritual wellbeing of your group. Ask your group members how their relationship with God is on a scale from 1-10. Where do they sense God moving in their life? Where do they most need God to break in? No need for everyone to share; only those who feel comfortable.

### **Contemplate**

Choose one or two of the following passages to dig into with your group:

- Hebrew 11: 9-10,13b-16 (teaching text)
- Philippians 3:20
- Matthew 22:21

Ask someone (or multiple people) to read the passage aloud, maybe in a few different translations. Allow your group to sit with the verses for a bit. Then, dig into the passage with at least one of the following questions:

1. Which words or phrases stand out to you?
2. What is highlighted about God's character?
3. What does this Scripture teach us about authority? Being true exiles of this world for Jesus?

### **Consider**

As a creative minority, when our ethics and principles come into conflict with our world and society, we can respond in one of three ways: syncretism (accepting/fully adopting the world's narrative and hoping that God will forgive you later), separatism (withdrawal from society and culture), exiles (being fully present in culture while longing for the Kingdom).

1. Which posture is easiest for you to default to and why?
2. What thoughts/emotions do you associate with the word, 'Exile'? Are they positive/negative? Has this sermon challenged your current definition of it?

Pastor Suzy mentioned two ideas we can practice that will enable us to better become God's exiles here on earth. We are called to "Seek the peace of the place we are currently living in, for the sake of the Gospel." And, to "Pray for governing authorities, while being subject to their laws (as long as they are not breaking God's laws.)"

1. What does "seeking the peace of the place you are currently living in," look like to you? How can you be more mindful in practicing this?
2. Have you ever prayed for governing authorities? How can we pray for them in a way that seeks first God's Kingdom?

### **Create**

Pastor Suzy mentioned some temptations we all deal with while trying to live as a Creative Minority under Christ's authority: acceptance, compromise, idolatry, stopping, violence, and self preservation. As a group, discuss which temptations you struggle with the most and specific situations that tempt you in these areas. Encourage others to offer practices, thoughts, or Scripture that have helped them in rebuking these temptations so you're able all encourage, teach, and strengthen each other.

### **Cover**

Spend some time talking about some of the other authorities we find ourselves bowing down to (parents/friends/media/politics/etc). For each person who shares, popcorn pray for them to have breakthrough against this, and for beautiful obedient submission to God's one and only authority!

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## Week 6 – Participation

# PARTICIPATION



### Teaching Text

#### Matthew 5:13-16

*“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

### Recap

This week, Pastor Jon closed out the Creative Minority series by discussing our participation. As Christians, we are members of a deeply intertwined network, dedicated to living in the way of Jesus and bringing forth renewal in our world.

We must live up to the expectation that Jesus' followers will show up in hard places - places plagued with evil and darkness. Christians attend to these difficult situations and pray together to overcome evil with good. Pastor Jon reminds us that our participation ultimately means we are responsible for being fully vested in our community, not withdrawn or separate from those going against God's will. Just as Jesus called upon the ordinary to push for transformation in the world, we do the same and show up for the vulnerable by using the resources and privileges we carry.

Those who claim to live in Christ are called to live a Christ-like life, and find glory in gathering and uplifting those who are outcasts. As Christ followers, we live beyond the confines of our

comfort zone and show up in difficult places, even if it results in criticism. In this day and age, it is imperative we continue to engage with culture with the same sacrificial and humble spirit of Jesus Christ, standing against evil and empowering the vulnerable.

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## **Discussion Guide**

### **Connect**

1. What is a sphere of culture you are an active participant in or feel personally invested in? (e.g. fashion, entertainment, sports, politics, etc.)

### **Check In**

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate how your 2021 has been so far? Has the new year brought any new changes to your life or renewed your hope?

### **Contemplate**

Choose one (or both!) of the following passages to dig into with your group:



- Matthew 5:13-16 (teaching text)
- Acts 10:37-39

Ask someone (or multiple people) to read the passage aloud, maybe in a few different translations. Allow your group to sit with the verses for a bit. Then, dig into the passage with at least one of the following questions:

1. Which words or phrases stand out to you?
2. What is highlighted about God's character?
3. What does this Scripture teach us about how Christians are called to interact with/participate in the world?

### **Consider**

Pastor Jon talked this week about how a creative minority influences culture through redemptive participation.

1. What comes to mind when you think of the word "influence"? Positive/negative connotations? Do you think of yourself as someone who has influence on others? Why or why not?
2. To go back to our earlier icebreaker question, what is an area of culture that you see yourself as an active participant in? What do you think it could look like to participate in this sphere in a way that is redemptive?

### **Create**

Pastor Jon outlined three ways that the church is called to show up in the world: 1) showing up against evil, 2) showing up for the vulnerable, and 3) showing up in the hard places. Spend time as a group (or in small groups in breakout rooms) to discuss the above.

1. What are some ways you have seen the church (either COTC or other churches you have been part of in the past) show up in the world when it mattered?
2. What are some ways you hope to see our church (or, on a smaller scale, your community group) show up in 2021?
3. What kind of internal (spiritual, mental) and external (physical, practical) changes would this require of us?

### **Cover**

In small groups in breakout rooms, spend time praying for each individual to be able to live out redemptive participation in the areas of culture that they feel called to or invested in. Pray against the Enemy's plans for our city and nation, and ask God to use us as individuals in our respective areas of influence to push back on his plans.

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