

**Icebreaker:**

Valentine's Day was this past week. Have you ever thought of Valentine's Day in terms of God's love for us?

**Homework (from last week):**

*Find someone this week who does not have power (i.e. an immigrant or homeless person) and listen to their story. What did you learn?*

Who was able to complete the homework? Who did you meet and what did you learn? If you were unable to complete the homework, why, and did you learn anything from that?

**Read this week's scripture and discuss:**

1. John 17 is a prayer of Jesus. In verses 20-23, Jesus prays for future believers like us. What does it mean to know Jesus has prayed and continues to pray for you?
2. Read verse 21 again. Jesus says he is in the Father and the Father in him, so God's people are "in them" as well. What do you think it means to be "in" God the Father and Jesus as they are in each other?
3. John Wesley said we can stay unified even if we disagree. How can we love those we disagree with?
4. Author Christine Pohl says, "While gratitude gives life to communities, ingratitude that has become established sucks out everything good, until life itself shrivels and discouragement and discontent take over." What things can we be grateful for at ZPC?
5. In his book *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote:  
"Innumerable times a whole Christian community has broken down because it had sprung from a wish dream. The serious Christian, set down for the first time in a Christian community, is likely to bring with him a very definite idea of what Christian life together should be and to try to realize it. But God's grace speedily shatters such dreams. Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves."  
When have you seen God's grace in the midst of being disillusioned with others?
6. In a world of increasing independence, how do you cultivate interdependence in place of independence?

**Prayer:**

As you pray for one another, please pray for the following needs in our church family:

**prayer requests**

- > Prayers of healing for Robert Neal and Loretta Bowsher.
- > Prayers for the team and guests of the Girls Awakening taking place at ZPC this weekend.

In John 17, Jesus prays to his Father for unity among his followers. Unity (and community) are so needed today and so often lacking. We live in a time when there is much isolation and division. Being separated or divided does not allow us to have relationships deep enough to work through difficulties. Jesus prays for and calls for us as believers to be one, to be unified. May we learn from Jesus' prayer and Jesus' passion how to live more as one.

**Homework follow up:** Encourage your group members to share if they had an interaction with someone not like them, to share that experience. If they were unable to meet someone, encourage them to try again next week.

1. When we realize that the Son of God prays for us and cares for us, it is truly humbling and hard to comprehend. Hopefully, knowing that Jesus prayed to the Heavenly Father for us compels us to love Jesus, obey him, follow him, and to love others.
2. Jesus talks about being in God as well as being unified. When we are in God, God is in us. God is in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. When we are unified with God, we are aligned with God's purposes to love God and to love others and to do that in tangible ways in the world.
3. John Wesley offered five ways we can show love to those we disagree with:
  - Treat them as companions.
  - Do not think or speak evil of them.
  - Pray for them.
  - Encourage them to do good.
  - Collaborate with them in ministry. (from *The Good and Beautiful Community* by James Bryan Smith)
4. Ingratitude can lead to discontent and complaining. Gratitude is healthy and can give life to relationships. List some things you are grateful for at ZPC, especially in terms of community.
5. It is grace to see people as they actually are rather than as you want them to be. It is healthy not to see people as perfect and on a pedestal, but to see real people. We can feel empathy for imperfect people and be in deeper relationship with them if we also acknowledge our own imperfections.
6. Interdependence is a sign of real community. It can mean sharing meals together, sharing babysitter duties, sharing a lawnmower, sharing bikes, and sharing life together.