

SAC Small Groups Discussion Guide – Nov. 16th, 2025

This guide comes with the expectation that even if someone has missed the Sunday service, they have watched the sermon before coming to their small group.

Fellowship Time

Make sure to have time where people can chat and catch up. This section could include a dinner together, having a potluck, preparing snacks, etc. The key to this section is make people feel welcomed and seen.

Read the Scripture & Overview Aloud Together

This section contains the text and a brief summary of the sermon that was preached on Sunday. It will have the main point explained as a way to help those remember the sermon. This is not an in-depth overview because the expectation is that everyone will take the time to listen to the sermon. Make sure to read this aloud for everyone to hear.

Text

John 12:37-50

37 Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. 38 This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: “Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” 39 For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: 40 “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them.” 41 Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him. 42 Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved human praise more than praise from God. 44 Then Jesus cried out, “Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. 45 The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. 46 I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. 47 “If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. 49 For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. 50 I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”

Overview of Sermon

How do encounters with Jesus transform me? That was the central question this week that we pondered from the text in John 12. Throughout the book of John, there is an underlying tension between those who believe and those who don’t believe the miracles that Jesus performed that pointed to his divine nature. But this was expected as this was the case in the prophet Isaiah’s time as well. God’s people had fallen into complacency during Isaiah’s time, they knew what to say, how to do the things that were expected of them, but their hearts were far from God.

John quotes from Isaiah 6:8-31; 52:13-53:1 to illustrate his point. Isaiah had an encounter with God that changed the trajectory of his life that led him to preach to a complacent generation that had “hard hearts”. This reference indicates that God hardens hearts to reject him, but as DA Carson notes, “God’s judicial hardening is not presented as the capricious manipulation of an arbitrary potentate cursing morally neutral or even morally pure beings, but as a holy condemnation of a guilty people who are condemned to do and be what they themselves have chosen.” Ultimately, these people were getting what they had asked for. God does not force people into a relationship with Him, rather He is a loving Father who invites his children into relationship with Him.

John continues in his discourse to highlight that some leaders believed, but they did not openly acknowledge their faith because they were scared to lose their positions of power and loved human praise more than God’s. God is sovereign, but people are responsible for their own actions and decisions. Which leads us back to the question we began with: how do encounters with Jesus transform me? Every step of obedience and faithfulness is an opportunity for transformation.

Discussion Questions

These questions are prompts to help the group have meaningful dialogue over the sermon this past weekend. Do not feel the need to ask all these questions. You are more than welcome to create your own questions or mix the questions together.

Connection to Other (Icebreaker/Light)

- As we head into the Advent season soon here, what is your favourite Advent practice?

Connection to Head (Study/Knowledge Questions)

- Are there any words, images, or phrases that stand out to you? Things that make sense, don’t make sense, or you find challenging?
- What does this passage teach about “belief” and salvation?

Connection to Heart (Deeper Engagement)

- Have you ever fallen into complacency with your faith? What helped to get out of that stage?
- What have been some recent encounters with God that have shaped and changed you? These can be big and small encounters.
- John mentions that the religious leaders were more concerned with man’s praise rather than God’s. In what ways do we fall into this same pitfall that leads us away from transformation?

Reflect and Discuss the Practice and Prayer.

This is an opportunity for accountability and formation in your group. Accountability to ensure people are practicing the practices and formation because we believe that these practices will shape and form us into the people that God intended us to be. Take time to practice this together and reflect on each person's experience of these practices.

Practice: Take time in silence today to reflect on the question: how do encounters with Jesus transform me?

- Read through the passage 2-3 times. At the end of each read, pause and reflect on the passage. Consider words that might stand out or phrases. Each time go back to the question listed above.
- At the end of your time reading, take a few minutes to record and journal your thoughts. Often God speaks to us and writing it down can help to process.

Prayer: Loving God that desires to save, thank you for Your grace. Thank you for endlessly pursuing us. Holy Spirit, open our eyes to see the light of Jesus and prepare our hearts to respond to divine encounters. Heal our blindness. Fill us with courage and hope. Grant us strength to take steps of obedience. Jesus, we believe; help us overcome our unbelief! Amen.

Prayer Together.

Take some time to pray with each other. This is not a time for gossip or to be cynical, this is an opportunity to share with each other our burdens, to celebrate and praise God together, and to pray expectantly that God would move.