

## USG Small Group Ministry Curriculum: July 2017

### Devotion

#### Chalice Lighting

What an enthusiastic devotion is that which sends a man from the attractions of home, the ties of neighborhood, the bonds of country, to range plains, valleys, hills, mountains, for a new flower.  
—Dorothea Dix (1802–1887, Superintendent of Army Nurses during the Civil War and Unitarian)

#### Check in

*Share briefly what's been on your mind lately or your highs and lows since we last met. We will listen to each other without asking questions or offering advice to allow people the safety to share what's in their hearts.*

#### Quotes for Inspiration

de·vo·tion

- Love, loyalty, or enthusiasm for a person, activity, or cause
- Religious worship or observance (*synonyms: piety, religiousness, spirituality, godliness, holiness, sanctity*)
- Prayers or religious observances (*synonyms: worship, church service; e.g., morning devotions*)

I'm a very hard-line, angry atheist. Yet I am fascinated by the concept of devotion.

—Joss Whedon (1964–present, co-writer of *Toy Story*, director of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Firefly*)

I've sometimes thought that it's only by recalling that desperate devotion my kids once felt for me that I can maintain my own desperate devotion in the face of their adolescent sneering.

—Ayelet Waldman (1964–present, Israeli-American novelist and essayist)

I may worship the image of the Lord, but that act is worthless if it is not accompanied with devotion. In the absence of devotion, the idol will just be a piece of stone, and so shall I, and the worship will only mean that a stone is facing a stone!

—Vinoba Bhave (1895–1982, Indian advocate of nonviolence and human rights)

The heart can think of no devotion

Greater than being shore to ocean

Holding the curve of one position

Counting an endless repetition.

—Robert Frost (1874–1963, American poet)

## Spiritual Exercises

- *Devotions*, when used as a noun, can refer to practices or activities that are undertaken every day and may be spiritual in nature. Ask yourself what act(s) of devotion you already do every day, regardless of whether you consider them to be based in spirituality and no matter how small the actions may seem. Then consider what new act of devotion you could comfortably undertake, and *do* it every day for a week. Notice how you react and journal about it or talk about it with a friend.
- Find a friend who practices devotion differently than you do. Talk with them about what their experience is like, and if you each feel comfortable, try participating in their act of devotion with them once.

## Questions for Contemplation

- Does devotion have relevance or meaning without an object? Or must devotion be *to* something?
- What are you devoted to? How do you show that devotion?
- Does devotion have to be unconditional?
- Do you consider devotion to be a *selfish* or a *selfless* attribute? Why?

## Sitting in Silence

*Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts.*

## Sharing/Deep Listening

*Respond with your thoughts/experiences with the topic.*

## Reflection

*This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared.*

## Singing: “Just as Long as I Have Breath,” *Singing the Living Tradition*, #6

Just as long as I have breath, I must answer, 'Yes' to life;  
though with pain I made my way, still with hope I meet each day.  
If they ask what I did well, tell them I said, 'Yes', to life

Just as long as vision lasts, I must answer, 'Yes' to truth;  
in my dream and in my dark, always: that elusive spark.  
If they ask what I did well, tell them I said, 'Yes' to truth.

Just as long as my heart beats, I must answer, 'Yes' to love;  
disappointment pierced me through, still I kept on loving you.  
If they ask what I did best, tell them I said, 'Yes' to love.

## Extinguishing the Chalice

He came by a leap to the goal of purpose, not by the toilsome steps of reason. On the instant his headlong spirit declared his purpose: this was the one being for him in all the world: at this altar he would light a lamp of devotion, and keep it burning forever.

—Sir Gilbert Parker (1862–1932, Canadian novelist, poet, and politician)