

This is Us, Week 3

Vision for these seven weeks:

- To interact with the “This is Us” document, and the reflection material/questions in the weekly handout, bringing our own reflections to the gatherings (large group and breakouts);
- To cultivate a shared ownership and understanding of the themes brought out over these seven weeks.
- Collectively hear God’s call for us as a community of His people in San Francisco.

Theme: Belovedness

We are Beloved. As beloved children we are invited into a trusting relationship with Redeemer God who first loved us and is worthy of our faith, our hope, and our love. As we abide in this love, we experience abundant life. This abundant life is lived out not only as individuals but is experienced more fully in the company of a worshiping community with whom we learn and practice what it means to love our neighbors as ourselves. As a people we bear witness to the good news to a needy and broken world so deeply loved by God. As beloved children we seek to imitate Christ in our deep love for our neighbors, near and far. -From the “This is Us” Vision Draft

Scripture Text:

'But now thus says the Lord , he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, “Give them up,”

and to the south, “Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth— everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.” -Isaiah 43:1-7, NRSV

Quote

We are the Beloved. We are intimately loved long before our parents, teachers, spouses, children, and friends loved or wounded us. That’s the truth of our lives. That’s the truth I want you to claim for yourself. That’s the truth spoken by the voice that says, “You are my Beloved.” Listening to that voice with great inner attentiveness, I hear at my center words that say: “I have called you by name, from the very beginning. You are mine and I am yours. You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests. I have molded you in the depths on the earth and knit you together in your mother’s womb. I have carved you in the palms of my hands and hidden you in the shadow of my embrace. I look at you with infinite tenderness and care for you with care more intimate than that of a mother for her child. I have counted every hair on your head and guided you at every step. Wherever you go, I go with you, and wherever you rest, I keep watch. I will give you food that will satisfy all your hunger and drink that will quench all your thirst. I will not hide my face from you. You know me as your own as I know you as my own. You belong to me. I am your father, your mother, your brother, your sister, your lover, and your spouse...yes, even your child...wherever you are I will be. Nothing will ever separate us. We are one.” -Henri Nouwen (From Life of the Beloved)

Questions for Reflection

1. What does it mean to you to be God’s beloved? What words or phrases from the Vision draft, Scripture or Henri Nouwen resonate with you? Circle/Highlight
2. How is it difficult for you to embrace your belovedness?
3. How can we bear witness to each other’s belovedness? What practical actions can we embody as a community, in our friendships?

Breakout Groups Guidelines:

- 1) Let these be brave spaces - each person is encouraged to speak honestly and the rest hold space, be present, listen, learn and pray. We are not here to solve problems or judge.
- 2) Recognize that we all will be at different places and that's ok.
- 3) Each person's story is theirs to tell.
- 4) For the first part of the breakout time, allow each person a chance to share for no more than two minutes each, while the rest listen. Allow each person a chance to speak. Not everyone has to speak.
- 5) For the second part of the breakout time, there can be more interactive discussion until it is time to regather, while still being mindful of each other to allow each other a chance to speak.
- 6) Ask for a volunteer to monitor the time (first part, second part, 10 minute warning, time to regather).
- 7) Ask for a volunteer to be scribe to take notes to send to Randy, and a volunteer willing to share comments from the breakout group to the larger regathered group. They could be the same person or two different persons.