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Hey small group leaders! We began a NEW series called “Real Talk” this week! Relationships are beautiful AND complicated, aren’t they? Whether it’s friendship, family, or community, navigating them isn’t always easy. In this series, we’re having honest, biblical conversations about what matters most. When Jesus is at the center of our relationships, everything begins to change. We’ll explore real talk about how to build stronger, healthier connections that reflect God’s heart and His design for us!

Thank you for shepherding a group of people to Love God, Love Others, and Live Sent!

NEED A RESOURCE, HAVE A QUESTION, OR WANT TO HAVE A CONVERSATION?
Let us know how we can help! Contact your groups director or discipleship@rockbridge.cc

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“To love another person is to see the peace of God.”
[Victor Hugo]

LEADER RESOURCES || **Leader Note** *We do our best to equip, empower, and encourage you to shepherd your group well. Access a resource by clicking on the underlined title and share them with your group!*

- **Passage Summary**
 - Paul addresses relationships within the church (see also 2:1-4). In transparency, he conveys the importance of these relationships and the connection with God’s sufficiency, strength, and grace. Then he addresses a conflict between two women, highlighting the reality that all relationships are in the “middle” and include messes, but what is shared in the gospel always outweighs and counts more than the mess. This is evidenced by the power of joy in the Lord and His constant nearness.
- **Philippians Ch. 4 Commentary & Joy In Every Circumstance**
 - Use the commentary and short video for background and encouragement. These would be good resources to share before you gather.
- **How COVID Affected Our Relationships—and What To Do About It**
 - This would be a good resource to share with your group after you gather.

ENGAGE & CONNECT || **Leader Note** *The goal for the icebreaker is to prepare your group for the conversation ahead by connecting with one another’s hearts and building joy together.*

When you’re considering a new friendship, what quality or characteristic is near the top of your list for someone to be your friend? What’s important about that to you?

BEGIN WITH PRAYER || **Leader Note** *Begin your time together thanking God for his presence and praying His word back to Him. Ask a few people to pray, taking a posture of humility and dependence!*

Spend a moment praying this passage, beginning your time together in humility and gratitude!

“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”
[Proverbs 17:22]

BIG IDEA || Leader Note Read this aloud so your group knows the theme of today's reading and discussion.

The potential in our relationships is not set by problems, the past, or preferences ... it's set by Christ!

PASSAGE & DISCUSSION || Leader Note Have people read aloud the passage as instructed. Your role is to FACILITATE, so keep your group moving along, encourage people to share, and look for opportunities to point out the grace and glory of God! Here are two reminders: 1) Every question does not have to be answered ... go where the Spirit leads! 2) Answers do not have to be read aloud ... they're for guidance!

Have someone read Philippians 4:1-5. Have another person read it again in a different translation.

1. In v. 1, how does Paul describe the church in Philippi? What does this language reveal about his view of Christian community? *Paul calls them "dearly loved," "longed for," "my joy and crown," and "dear friends." This shows his deep affection and investment in the relational life of the church. He sees community not as optional, but as central to the Christian journey.*
2. How does he frame the solution to the issue between Euodia and Syntyche? What is the significance of Paul urging others in the church to "help these women"? *Paul urges the women to "agree in the Lord." Instead of focusing on their disagreement, he elevates their shared identity in Christ as the basis for unity. He also encourages others to help them reconcile. This shows that reconciliation is communal work. Paul calls for mature believers to step in and support unity, reflecting the shared responsibility of the church body.*
3. In the sermon we heard, *"Our relationship to Christ resets the potential of our relationships."* How does this challenge you? What does that mean for Christian communities today? *Answers will vary: the standard and source for relationships is no longer our personalities, preferences, or past—but the person of Jesus. His grace redefines how we relate, making peace and forgiveness possible.*
4. How does joy in the Lord help Christ followers avoid idolatry in relationships? *When we find our ultimate satisfaction in Christ, we don't look to others to fulfill us. This frees us from manipulation, unrealistic expectations, and offense, leading to healthier relationships.*
5. What does "let your gentleness be evident to all" mean? Why is this a vital witness to the world? *Gentleness includes patience, humility, and kindness. In a world marked by outrage and division, visible gentleness demonstrates the transforming power of Christ and invites others to the gospel.*
6. Why is it important that Paul grounds all of these relational commands in the truth that "the Lord is near"? *God's nearness gives both urgency and comfort. It means Jesus is actively involved and will soon make all things right—so we can pursue peace now, knowing He sees and empowers our efforts.*
7. Think about a current or past relational strain. How might "agreeing in the Lord" change how you engage(d) that situation? *Answers will vary: it calls us to focus on shared identity in Christ, not just the issue. That leads to prayer, patience, humility, and a willingness to reprioritize love over winning.*
8. What relational responses (anger, withdrawal, manipulation, etc.) do you tend to fall into? What might it look like to respond instead "in the Lord"? *This is a good opportunity to go first!*
9. In what relationship do you need to "put Christ back at the center"? What would taking one step toward that look like? *It could look like initiating a hard conversation, forgiving a past hurt, letting go of control, or asking for help from someone wise. Centering Christ reorients our responses.*

10. How might our small group respond when conflict arises—either within or around us—so that we reflect the spirit of this passage? What practices could we begin to cultivate “gentleness known to all” in our relationships? *Answers will vary: we can move toward conflict, asking, “How can we agree in the Lord?” and staying committed to truth and love, with gentleness and joy as our posture. Possible practices include gratitude sharing, confession and prayer, role-playing responses to conflict, or choosing a monthly relational challenge like intentional encouragement or reconciliation.*

STEP OF OBEDIENCE || **Leader Note** This is an opportunity for people to put into practice what the Spirit is inviting them to do and live in obedience to God for the sake of love! You can encourage your group to be accountable to one another and use these to follow up with one another throughout the week.

Paul shows that **resurrection hope shapes relational reality**. He reframes conflict through the lens of the gospel: Christ’s presence, love, and lordship reset the potential of every relationship. When joy in the Lord is our foundation, it leads to gentleness, reconciliation, and witness to a watching world. **As you consider your next step, here are two questions to reflect on:** 1) How am I allowing personality or the past to define the potential in relationships instead of Christ? 2) How could seeking joy in the Lord (instead of from people) better shape my relational habits?

Give your group a few moments to reflect on their answers to the questions above. Then have your group answer the question aloud. Feel free to separate into smaller groups of 3-4 for this question. The possible next steps of faith below are not for discussion, but simply a resource for your group members.

Possible Next Steps of Faith

1. Reach out to someone you’re in conflict with or distant from and ask how you can move forward “in the Lord.” Start with prayer, and then take a small step of reconciliation.
2. Spend one week journaling or praying each morning, “Lord, help me to respond in gentleness and joy today.” Reflect at the end of the week on how your relationships were affected.

PRAYER FOCUS || **Leader Note** We want to commit to praying for OTHERS as a unified church who is dependent upon God for everything. Be intentional about saving at least 5-10 minutes for prayer at the end of your gathering each week to pray together. Pray for one another as well as the prompts below!

**Over the next few months, we will include a short blurb about the Red Letter Challenge, along with a reflection question, so that our church family is encouraged to keep what we experienced last fall in mind.*

Red Letter REMEMBRANCE

SERVING → We are Bridge Builders who use our gifts and abilities to help others.

- How have you been using your gifts and abilities to serve our church family over the past few months?
- In what specific way do you sense God inviting you to serve those around you more consistently?