

Small Group Meeting on

Celebrating the God who is creative

Review (20 mins)

Reflect together on your experiences over the last week. What has God been teaching you? Where have you been growing in your walk with Him? Had you set yourself a challenge in your discipleship? How is that going? Share those experiences with your small group.

Read (10 mins)

Recap on the sermon from last Sunday. Try to give a summary to those who were not able to be present.

Exodus 31:1-11

Read the Bible passage for this week, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. 'Setting the Scene' below gives some background information.

As you read, look out for *shockers* and *blockers*.

Shockers – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

Blockers – something from the text that raises questions for you.

Setting the scene:

- Our God is creative (Genesis 1:1); made in his image we are called to be creative too. So, as early as Genesis 4:19-22, we find creativity being recognized – farmers, musicians and metalworkers.

- In Exodus 31 the people of God have left Egypt and come to Mount Sinai. In chapters we perhaps often skip over, God gives instructions for the building of the tabernacle and its contents. The tabernacle was to symbolize God's presence with his people. Significantly it was portable – where the people went, God went; and where God went, they went. In the reading Bezalel, Oholiab and others are set aside by the Spirit to bring the tabernacle into being using their creative talents.

Reflect (20 mins)

After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.

Begin your reflection time by each naming your *shockers* and *blockers*. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.

You might also like to explore these questions:

Q1. What favourite places do you have where you have stood in awe at the wonder of what God has created, and what makes such places special?

Q2. What gifts of creativity do you have within the group, how are they being used in the world and in church? How might you encourage each other to grow in those gifts?

Q3. As noted, the tabernacle went everywhere with the people; just as Jesus promised his Spirit would accompany us. How conscious are you of the Spirit's creative presence (Genesis 1:2) in your day to day activities? How might you help each other to recognise that more?

Q4. Bezalel's call is immediately put on hold. The people's creative juices are diverted to build a golden calf to worship (Genesis 32). What fears do you have of the misuse (by yourself or others) of creative gifts and how might you overcome them?

Q5. Have you been put off doing something creative because people have said to you in the past 'you're no good at...'? Pray for each other for God to bring healing and courage to try again.

Respond (20 mins)

As you draw near to the end of your session, consider how you might respond to your reading and reflection by "walking the talk". How will you use the creative gifts that God has given you this week? Are there past challenges that you are still working on – how will you continue your engagement with them? Be prepared to share how you are growing in them.

Some new challenge ideas

1 Offer your creativity back to God

Find something you have made to bring to church on the 23rd June as we celebrate together the creative gifts God has given us.

2 Go on a summer ramble

Organise a summer ramble to admire God's handiwork. Invite neighbours to join you and share your joy of the Creator with them. If your group is not that mobile, sit in a garden for a while.

3 Develop your creative gifts

Look for an evening class to join in the autumn, a choir to start singing with, a reading group to join...

Group Prayer

As a group, pray for one another this week as you explore a deeper life with God through prayer. Pray that you will become more aware of the Spirit guiding you each day.

Some additional passages on creativity

This is not an exhaustive list but suggests some passages to mull over across the summer.

Exodus 31 – Bezalel and Oholiab creating the tabernacle; 1 Kings 7:13ff – Hiram/Hiram, and his role in creating the temple; 1 Sam 16:14ff – David’s appointment as court musician; Psalms – Poetry and music combined; Nehemiah 12:27ff – The musicians brought together to celebrate the wall being finished; Colossians 3:16 – The place of music in building up the people of God (see also Ephesians 5:19); Revelation – An impressionist painting portraying God’s power over evil and the beauty of a renewed heaven and earth

For the joy, wonder and playfulness of God’s creativity: Psalms 104, 148; Job 38-39; Proverbs 8:22-31.

To ponder as a contrast to the rhetoric of a ‘Science v Religion’ war:

‘The frequent calls in the Psalms and elsewhere to wonder and astonishment at God’s creation are a stimulus to science and should be shared even more readily by scientists than most others’ (Oliver Barclay in *New Dictionary of Theology*)