

# COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Spring 2025 - Signs - "The Glory of His Work"

Monday, Mar. 17 - Sunday, Mar. 23 (Week 7)

**EMPHASIS FOR THE MONTH:** **Building Relationships.** This month, we are focusing on deepening the relationships within our groups. Strong community is built on intentional connection and taking the time to truly know and care for one another. Whether through eating together, thoughtful questions, or simply creating space for honest conversation, I want to encourage you to invest in the bonds that make our groups a place of belonging and growth. Relationships take time to develop, but every small step toward deeper connection strengthens the foundation of our groups. Let's be intentional, lead with care, and cultivate a culture of trust. I'd love to hear how it's going! Please share any wins or creative ideas!

**ICE BREAKER:** If you could instantly be free from one daily stress or burden, what would it be and why?

## CAB ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. Celebrate the hope and joy of Easter with us! We invite you to our Good Friday service on April 18 at 5:45 PM and our Easter Sunday services on April 20 at 9:15 & 11 AM. Come as you are and bring your family and friends...we can't wait to worship with you!
2. We're excited to invite you to the BergenKIDS Family Easter Party on Saturday, April 12, from 10–11:30 AM! Join us for games, crafts, food, story time, and an Easter egg hunt. This event is for children ages 2 through 5th grade, and we ask that you bring a basket or bag for egg collection. It's also a great opportunity to invite friends and family to join you. Please email [info@churchatbergen.org](mailto:info@churchatbergen.org) to let us know you're coming by Wednesday, April 2. We can't wait to celebrate Easter with you!
3. We hope you will join us every Tuesday evening at 6:30 PM for our weekly corporate prayer gathering.
4. Join the Prime Timers (50+) for a Pizza Outing! Come enjoy an evening of great food and fellowship at Mangiamo Pizza Restaurant in Paramus on Saturday, March 22, at 6 PM. For \$25 per person (cash only), you'll get pizza, salad, and pitchers of soft drinks. Sign up by emailing [info@churchatbergen.org](mailto:info@churchatbergen.org) by Wednesday, March 19. Questions? Contact Keith and Elisa Mandra at: [kem777@optonline.net](mailto:kem777@optonline.net)

**PRAYER FOR DISCUSSION:** Leader or Co-Leader prays for the discussion time. Pray that the The Holy Spirit would assist in the conversing, processing, and listening of the discussion.

**SERMON DISCUSSION TIME:** Have someone read the passage: John 5:1-17, and then read this sermon summary to jog everyone's memory:

*In this sermon, Pastor McKinney delves into John chapter 5, where he explains the significance of the miracles that Jesus performed, referring to them as "signs" that reveal the glory of Christ. Specifically, he focuses on the miracle of healing a man paralyzed for 38 years at the pool of Bethesda. Pastor Mike emphasizes how this story reflects our common struggles with self-help superstitions and the burdens of religious legalism, both of which can leave us feeling trapped and without hope. The pool, representing self-reliance and futile striving, symbolizes how we often seek fulfillment through worldly efforts rather than through a relationship with Jesus.*



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*As Jesus approaches the man and asks if he wants to be healed, Pastor Mike highlights that true healing requires more than physical restoration; it demands a deeper spiritual awakening. He points out that Jesus offers a radical form of rest and peace that comes not from our efforts or conforming to rules, but from grace - freedom from both the futile expectations of self-help and the oppressive demands of legalism. The sermon culminates in the reminder that true peace with God is found solely in Jesus' sacrifice, which allows us to step away from striving and fully embrace the rest He offers.*

### Understanding True Rest

- Before listening to this sermon, what would you have said about the concept of "rest" and what it means to you personally? How does this compare to the rest that Jesus offers according to the sermon?
  - (The rest that Jesus offers is a deep, significant type of rest that goes beyond physical relaxation or cessation from work. It is a soul rest that comes from trusting in Jesus as Lord and Savior. This rest is characterized by peace, which is defined as the complete removal of every opposition against you and every demand upon you. The sermon emphasizes that this rest is not about achieving a state of calm through self-help efforts or religious legalism, but rather through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus provides this rest by fulfilling the demands of God's holy law and removing the opposition of God's wrath against sin through His life, death, and resurrection. This rest is a gift of grace, offering believers peace with God and freedom from the burdens of striving for self-sufficiency or trying to earn God's favor through legalistic means.)
- Are there any areas of your life where you feel you are striving without rest. How can you invite Jesus into that area to experience His peace?

### Jesus IS our Sabbath Rest

- The sermon said that Jesus Himself is our Sabbath rest. What does that mean?
  - When we say that Jesus Himself is our Sabbath rest, it means that true rest is found not in merely ceasing from physical work or adhering to religious rituals, but in a relationship with Jesus Christ. This concept is rooted in the understanding that the Sabbath, as originally given in the Old Testament, was a day set aside for rest and renewal, pointing to a deeper spiritual reality. In the sermon, it is highlighted that the ultimate purpose of the Sabbath was about resting in God for renewal and sustenance. Jesus fulfills this purpose by offering us rest from the burdens of sin, self-effort, and legalistic striving. Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus has accomplished the work necessary for our salvation, satisfying the demands of God's law and removing the opposition of sin and guilt. Therefore, Jesus as our Sabbath rest means:
    - **Spiritual Peace:** We find peace with God through Jesus, as He has reconciled us to God, removing the barrier of sin and offering us forgiveness and grace.

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- **Freedom from Striving:** We are freed from the need to earn God's favor through our own efforts or adherence to religious rules. Instead, we rest in the completed work of Christ.
- **Renewal and Sustenance:** In Jesus, we find the spiritual renewal and sustenance that the Sabbath was meant to provide, as He is the source of our spiritual life and strength.
- **Eternal Rest:** Jesus offers us the promise of eternal rest, a future hope of being with Him in perfect peace and joy forever.
- In essence, Jesus being our Sabbath rest means that He is the fulfillment of the rest and peace that our souls long for, and we are invited to trust in Him and rely on His grace for our ultimate renewal and satisfaction.
- How does this understanding of "Jesus IS our Sabbath rest" change the way you approach your daily life and spiritual practices?
- Reflect on one area of your life where you are seeking rest or fulfillment outside of Jesus. What steps can you take to intentionally seek rest in Him this week, acknowledging Him as your ultimate source of peace and renewal?

## Vulnerability and Transformation

- The man at the pool had been waiting for 38 years. What are some long-standing struggles or burdens you have been carrying? How does Jesus' question, "Do you want to be healed?" resonate with you?
- Commit to praying for each other's burdens this week, asking Jesus to bring healing and rest in those areas.

**PRAY TOGETHER:** Spend time taking *and recording* prayer requests and then pray together as a group (*I strongly encourage you to send out the prayer requests weekly to your group to keep everyone informed and in the loop on how to pray for one another throughout the week. This also makes it easier to check-in with people who have shared requests to see how the Lord has been working in their lives*).

