

## **Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

### **God is Not Distant - Week 1: Community**

1. Was there anything in the message this week that resonated with you or that seemed timely? What did you find surprising or uncomfortable? Was there anything you disagreed with?
2. Describe a time when you have experienced God through connection to another person or people. What made this a “spiritual” experience for you and why?
3. Read Acts 4:44-47 and Acts 6:1-7. How does the description of community differ in these passages? In what ways is it the same? How does this relate to your own experience of both the beauty and messiness of community? In what ways do you see beauty and messiness at Cedar Ridge?
4. Read Luke 19:1-9. The name Zacchaeus means “innocent”. In what ways is Zacchaeus innocent in this story? In what ways is he guilty?
5. Who excludes Zacchaeus in this story and how do they do it? What action does Zacchaeus make as a result of his change of heart and enlightenment? How might our own actions exclude others (intentionally or unintentionally)? How might our own actions alienate ourselves from community?
6. What actions does Jesus take to include Zacchaeus? Do these actions come before or after Zacchaeus’ transformation? In what ways is Jesus challenging us about how kindness and inclusion can be transformative?
7. Break into groups of 2 or 3 and share about ways in which you are feeling lonely, excluded, or isolated at the moment. What changes might you be able to make yourself to remedy this? How would you like others to change their actions and behaviors towards you? How could you practice these same actions and behaviors towards others? After discussing, take some to pray for one another.

#### **Practice for the week: Reimagining Family**

Read Mark 3:31-35. Jesus seems to be creating a new paradigm for family where we are made one by the common pursuit of “doing God’s will.” In other words, seeking God and being intentional about our lives is our common family trait with Jesus. So, this week, let’s endeavor to “do God’s will” by reaching out to others. Return to your reflections on the discussion you had above and determine how you feel God might be challenging you to reach out. Then, decide what action you need to take and intentionally work this into your schedule. Be realistic and aim for change that you know could be sustainable.