



NALC

life-to-life

DISCIPLESHIP

an experience in intentional discipleship for congregations

This discipleship manual belongs to:



NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Experience for
Congregations
Written by the NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Team
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Forward

Following his resurrection from the dead and before his ascension back into heaven, our Lord Jesus gave his followers a mission that was to be their first priority and that would become the driving force behind everything they would do. We refer to it as *The Great Commission*. We consider it to be our Lord's deepest desire and calling for his Church. As a result, until our Lord returns, we understand it to be our primary task.

Disciples of Jesus are not born but are made. They do not just happen. They result from a faithful and faith-filled response to a certain and secure promise. Through Baptism and the teaching of God's Word, the Holy Spirit works to produce faith and to change and transform lives. We are not the ones who transform others. That work belongs solely to the Holy Spirit. We are the ones, however, through whom God has chosen to work.

This NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience booklet is designed to give guidance and direction to the work we are called to do. It provides a foundation for the task we have been given and a framework for how that task might be carried out. It is not a foolproof method. It is not the only way in which the Holy Spirit can and does work. At the same time, it is consistent with the commission and the promise given to us by Jesus, and in concert with the teachings of our Lord that call us to a living relationship with others and a life-giving relationship with Him.

"I am the vine," Jesus said, "you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5 NIV). Discipleship begins with a living relationship with Jesus. Discipleship is lived out as we pass on what we have come to know and believe and have experienced to others.

When Jesus met Peter and Andrew by the shores of Galilee, he invited them into a journey that would ultimately change and redefine their lives. "Come, follow me, Jesus said, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:19 NIV)

In that sense, it is not hard to understand what discipleship is about. A disciple is one who is called by Jesus, ("Come, follow me"), is transformed by Jesus, ("and I will make you"), and is on mission with Jesus ("fishers of men"). Another way to say it is to say that a disciple is someone who accepts the invitation and challenge to follow Jesus, strives to live a life consistent with his, and teaches others to do the same.

The North American Lutheran Church (NALC) is committed to following our Lord's commission. We view

"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." — Matthew 28:19-20 NIV

the making of disciples as our number one priority and task. Everything we are about is designed to serve that primary purpose. All that we do is structured to support the calling and commission we have received from Jesus.

For the same reasons, our vision for the North American Lutheran Church is that every congregation develop a disciple-making culture, every pastor and lay leader become a disciple-producing branch, and every congregational member come to know and believe and trust that the calling and commission Jesus gave to his first followers and, ultimately, to his Church is one that belongs also to them.

My prayers are with you as you respond to our Lord's calling and as you commit to actively sharing in his commission. We are in this together. It is why we exist. And until our Lord returns, it is our primary task.

The Rev. Dr. Daniel Selbo

Bishop

North American Lutheran Church



Introduction

NALC Life-to-Life

An Experience in Intentional Discipleship for Congregations

In order to encourage our congregations to be more intentional in living out the Great Commission, the North American Lutheran Church has introduced this NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience. An important part of this initiative is engaging our congregational leadership in learning how to have discipling conversations with others in ways that are faithful and natural. Discipleship, however, is about more than simply learning techniques or offering conversation starters. Though we can teach someone how to proclaim the Good News of Jesus, we cannot implant the desire to share the Gospel with others. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. For this reason, this manual for NALC Life-to-Life discipleship is intended to be an experience rather than a course. Yes, it will engage the mind in sound learning but the ultimate goal is to change hearts and implant a deep desire to live out the Great Commission in our personal and congregational lives.

In pursuit of this goal, this experience will focus on three essential areas.

- 1. One with God** — It is important to remember that we make disciples when we are disciples. In the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) Jesus sends his disciples to make disciples and promises to be with them forever. We cannot convince others of the importance of following Jesus if we are not doing so ourselves. For this reason each participant will be asked to devote time each day in prayer, meditation, reflection on God’s Word and in honest evaluation of their personal discipleship.
- 2. One with another** — Proverbs 27:17 states, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” (NIV) At the heart of this Life-to-Life Discipleship experience is learning how to engage others in faith conversations. Each participant will be asked to put what has been learned into practice by partnering with one or two others between each session for mutual support and conversation.
- 3. One Body in Christ Jesus** — In his high priestly prayer Jesus prayed, “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” All participants will gather together either weekly or bi-weekly for learning, worship, prayer and mutual support.

An important part of this initiative is engaging our congregational leadership in learning how to have discipling conversations with others in ways that are faithful and natural.

Who is this resource for?

The NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience is both for everyone, and not for everyone. Jesus calls us to follow him as his disciples (Matthew 4:19) and gives us a commission to make disciples. (Matthew 28:18-20)

This call and commission is for all followers of Christ by virtue of their baptism. Yet, the Holy Scriptures remind us that not everyone who Jesus called responded by following. The reasons were varied: one was not willing to give up his possessions (Matthew 19:20-21), others had family obligations that they held as a higher priority (Matthew 8:19-22), and still others just felt that the teachings of Jesus were too hard to follow (John 6:60 & 66).

The real question of discipleship is not “who is called” but rather “who will follow?” This NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience is not a program or course, but rather a call to fulfill our baptismal vocation to be and make disciples. This call is extended to all but can only be answered by those who, like those early disciples, put following Jesus as their highest priority. It will require a high commitment from those who take part to spend time in prayer, study, personal reflection and encouraging others to walk more closely with Jesus. This is why the resource is both for and not for everyone. The invitation to take part in this discipleship journey is extended to all, but it is intended only for those who are willing to take seriously Jesus’ call to follow.

How to use this resource

Step 1 — Gather your group:

Meet with the key leaders in your congregation and do some honest evaluation about how well you are living out the Great Commission in your personal and





congregational lives. These key leaders might be members of your church staff or congregation council. They might be persons who are passionate about particular ministries or simply people you know who have a deep desire to grow in faith. To make the most of this discipleship experience we suggest a minimum of four or five people go through it together, but more would be even better.

Before you actually begin the NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship experience, spend some time in the preparatory material entitled, “Prayer: The Heart of Discipleship.” Throughout this process you will be praying daily. This section of instruction simply lays the foundation for prayer which is essential for hearing God.

You will also find that many parts of this manual are repetitive in nature. The reason for that is to create a pattern of study, prayer, and reflection. The goal is not simply to finish this experience, but to form a way of life in Christ. Daily patterns will form around the reading of Scripture, meditation and prayer.

Invite people to attend the initial information meeting.

Agenda for the Informational Meeting:

Open with prayer.

Scripture reading — Matthew 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Discussion Questions:

1. What words or phrases stood out for you?
2. In verse 16 it says that some of the disciples had doubts, yet they are also sent to “make disciples.” Does this surprise you? Why do you think Jesus commands all of his disciples to “go and make disciples?”
3. Note that the Great Commission begins and ends with Jesus. He has the authority to send the disciples and he promises to be with them. In other words, the disciples don’t stop being disciples themselves while they are making disciples of others. How might this shape the ways we understand discipleship?
4. Before we can *make* disciples we must first *be* disciples. How do you think you are doing in your personal discipleship?
5. How intentional is our congregation in fulfilling the Great Commission?

Invitation:

Ask those present if they would be willing to join you in beginning a journey of intentional discipleship. This would require a commitment from each person to:

1. Meet together regularly with the Life-to-Life group which would include seven weeks of learning how to be a discipleship guide. Following a short break, it also means spending eight weeks exploring their personal faith journey using the skills they have learned.
2. Spend time each day in personal Bible study and reflection.
3. Attend the large group meetings.
4. Be willing to learn how to have intentional discipling conversations.
5. Be open and honest in discussing their faith life in small groups of two or three.
6. If you are willing to make this commitment, sign the covenant found in the appendix of this book.

Commitment:

Take five minutes for those present to spend time alone prayerfully considering this invitation to discipleship. Have a sign up sheet available for those who wish to join you on this journey.

Close with prayer.

Step 2 — Nuts and Bolts Planning

1. Send out a thank you note to those who are participating in the discipleship experience.
2. Set the times for the large group meetings. Because the large group meetings will most likely take between one and a half hour to two hours, we suggest meeting at a time other than the normally scheduled Sunday school hour.
3. Hand out copies of this manual or let participants know where to download it for themselves.

Videos:

Links to each of the companion videos can be found [HERE](#) or at thenalc.org/manual.



Prayer: The Heart of Discipleship

Why does prayer matter so much in the life of a disciple?

Prayer is the fuel that empowers and enables us to hear, listen and follow Christ. Prayer is the on-going, daily conversation we have with God. Without it, our spiritual lives tend to limp and sputter along. In fact, one could say that prayer is not only the fuel, but prayer is our ministry.

Martin Luther went so far as to say, “To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.” Prayer is the natural response to God as we hear him speak through his Word. It is sharing our heart with the One who longs for our companionship and who cares about our concerns. Prayer not only trains our hearts and minds to know the power and glory of God, but it also turns his ear towards action in our lives and of those who we pray for (John 15:7, Phil 4:6-7). Martin Luther also said, “No one can believe how powerful prayer is and what it can effect, except those who have learned it by experience. It is important when we have a need to go to God in prayer. When we pray earnestly, we come to realize that we have been heard and have obtained more than we prayed for. God sometimes delays, but he always comes” (Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, “What Power Hath Prayer”).

Consider Paul’s prayer to the believers in Ephesus 1:15-20. Paul did not pray for protection from marauding armies, for a better emperor or for bread for the next meal. But what Paul did pray for is the spirit of wisdom and revelation, “that he may know God better.” Paul desired to know God, not just cognitively but emotionally. The heart is the control center of the self. And prayer opens our heart towards God. Paul prayed to have the “eyes of his heart opened.” To have the “eyes of the heart enlightened” with a particular truth means to have it penetrate and grip us so deeply that it changes the whole person (Keller, 20).

Scripture reading —Ephesians 1:15-20

¹⁵...for this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit [of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms...”

Imagine what prayer can do!

Imagine praying this petition: “That you may know God better.” Have you ever prayed that prayer? What about this prayer: “Lord help me daily to pray to you, to seek you face-to-face.” We invest so much of our time and effort in securing the outer life — achieving and performing daily tasks, that we often spend very little time tending to the inner life. But it’s the inner life that informs and shapes our outer lives. In prayer, we

come to identify and bring into the light (examen) our joys, pride, self-doubts, self-pity, anxieties, fears and old grudges. This encourages us to pay attention to the promptings of God that we may have missed, and the times we were less than Christ-like. This grants us an opportunity to receive again the grace and forgiveness of Jesus.

The disciple's life is grounded and centered in prayer. And as we grow and develop our prayer life, prayer brings us into the very heart of God. Jesus' ministry was powered and sustained by prayer. Before he chose his disciples, he prayed (Luke 6:12-13). Prayer was one of his most common teaching topics (Matt. 6:5-13). Jesus prayed before the raising of Lazarus (John 11:41-42). He prayed at his Baptism (Luke 3:21-22); before feeding the 5,000 (Luke 9:16) and the 4,000 (Matthew 15:36); and at the moment of his transfiguration (Luke 9:29). Jesus also prayed after entering Jerusalem (John 12:27-28).

There is no fixed way to spend time alone with God but its helpful to combine reading Scripture with prayer and to do so at a regular time each day.

One of the most profound and beautiful prayers of Jesus is in John, chapter 17. His prayer takes up the entire chapter. Here, Jesus prays for himself, his disciples and all future followers. He prays for unity in the Spirit and that each of us may be one with him and the Father. And the prayer that digs at the heart of every one is Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:36-56). Jesus in this prayer is asking for his Father's help as his impending death draws near.

Prayer is central to the life of every disciple. You cannot live a life of discipleship without a life devoted and fully dedicated to prayer. Prayer is a serious undertaking. It is intentional. And if not now, prayer is something that over time, you will love and long for. So, let's get started!

How do you get started?

Below are a few ways you can begin to develop a life of prayer. Remember these prayer methods can take five minutes or one hour. If you practice one of these every day, it will truly transform your faith, your life, your family and your ministry.

How to Have a Quiet Time

What is a quiet time? A quiet time can take many forms, but at its simplest means stopping and pausing to pray with God.

Why have a quiet time?

If we don't maintain a quiet time each day, it's not really because we are too busy; it's because we do not feel it is important enough. "Quiet time is not just a helpful idea, it is absolutely necessary to spiritual growth." (George Sweeting)

Don't pray when you feel like it. Have an appointment with the Lord and keep it. Just as you would keep a luncheon appointment or meeting. Quiet time is an appointment with God.

A Quick Introduction to Quiet Times

There is no fixed way to spend time alone with God, but it's helpful to combine reading Scripture with prayer and to do so at a regular time each day. There are also devotional resources, but you don't have to use anything at all. It's worth experimenting to see what best feeds your soul. Below are various ways to engage in prayer.

Do it: How to have a 10-minute quiet time

(1 min) **Pause** — sit quietly for a minute, stilling your soul.

(2 min) **Rejoice** — read a short Psalm or listen to a worship song.

(3 min) **Ask** — Tell God what's on your heart. Pray through your day. If you have a prayer list or use a tool such as the "Prayer Inner Room" app, quietly name each situation, person before God.

(3 min) **Yield** — Read a few verses from Scripture, until a particular phrase or word surfaces and talk to God about it. Ask God what he is trying to reveal to you - any sin that needs to be confessed, any forgiveness that needs to be given or any encouragement that needs to be received. Ask God to help you apply the phrase or word to your current life situation.

(1 min) **Amen** — Pray the Lord's Prayer.

There are many ways to have a quiet time. The most important thing is that you make a commitment to set up a daily rhythm and make an appointment with the Lord to seek him face-to-face.

The Lord's Prayer: Teach us to Pray

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. (Matthew 6: 9-13)

The disciples came to Jesus with a sincere request. They wanted to know how to pray. And he shared with them what we call the Lord's Prayer. Many of us pray this prayer during Holy Communion. This prayer can be prayed at any time throughout the day. It is a powerful prayer and holds within it the entire Gospel.

In Luther's Small Catechism, Martin Luther broke the Lord's Prayer into sections (introduction, seven petitions and a conclusion) to further explain and deepen our understanding. Luther's explanation of the Lord's Prayer can be found in the appendix and is well worth your time to read.

The Five Essential Aspects of Prayer

Before you begin your daily devotions, spend several minutes in quiet prayer. Use the Five Essential Aspects of Prayer as a guide for prayer.

1. **Praise** — praise God for all his many blessings (holiness, grace, love, mercy goodness and sovereign care...).
2. **Confession** — take a moment to confess your sins. Ask God to reveal to your sins, repent and receive God's forgiveness.
3. **Intercession** — pray for your own needs (revisit Eph 1:15-19). Pray for an increase of faith, spiritual insights, wisdom and to know God better, pray for healing and your relationships.
4. **Petition** — pray for the needs of others (the church, leaders, your community, family and friends...).
5. **Thanksgiving** — thank God for your prayer time.

The Examen Prayer

The Examen (*ex-am-en*) is a simple four-step way of reflecting and praying through the day. This prayer tool outlines how to start praying the Examen. It was popularized by Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) and is a form of Lectio Divina (*lex-ee-oh dub-vee-nah*) which is a slow, meditative reading of Scripture.

1. **Replay** — think over your day like a movie replaying in your head the events and people you encountered that day. Notice what you are noticing. What made you happy? What made you anxious? What made you angry or sad?
2. **Rejoice** — thank God for those things that are obvious. But also thank him for those things which are hidden or the things we forget — random acts of kindness, being healthy, a positive song or meal. Relish and give gratitude to God.
3. **Repent** — say “I am sorry” to God for the moments that surface as you review the day, e.g. getting involved in gossip, reacting with a tone that was aggressive, lacking compassion in a situation. Ask God to reveal any impure motives, ignoring a need. Then, ask God to forgive you and receive his forgiveness afresh.
4. **Reboot** — decide in your heart to live for Jesus tomorrow and ask for grace to see his presence more clearly.

Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio

Martin Luther found in the Psalms a way of reading, praying, and wrestling with the Word of God. Similar to lectio divina, it is a way of praying (oratio), meditating on the Word (meditatio), and struggling with the Word (tentatio). Luther said that it is this form of prayer that makes a theologian.

Vitor Westhelle says it best in his book *The Scandalous Cross*, “Luther’s schema begins with oratio, which is more than prayer; it is all God-talk, talk of and to God when one knows that reason will not suffice. Second is meditatio in which he includes lectio which is not limited to meditation in the internal sense but also

“external,” hence engaging others in reflection. Luther does not follow the third medieval rule, *contemplatio*, but instead he brings up a very different and original concept, *tentatio*, which becomes the foremost the “touchstone” he calls it — and the last characteristic of theological reflection.”

For Luther, one step led to the next, to the next. As Christians we pray the Word, which causes us to meditate on it, listening for God’s Word for our lives. Then, hearing his Holy Word for us, we share it with others. It is not just for our benefit, but for the benefit of others who seek to follow Christ in a life of discipleship.

Resources on Prayer

Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster

How to Pray by Pete Greig

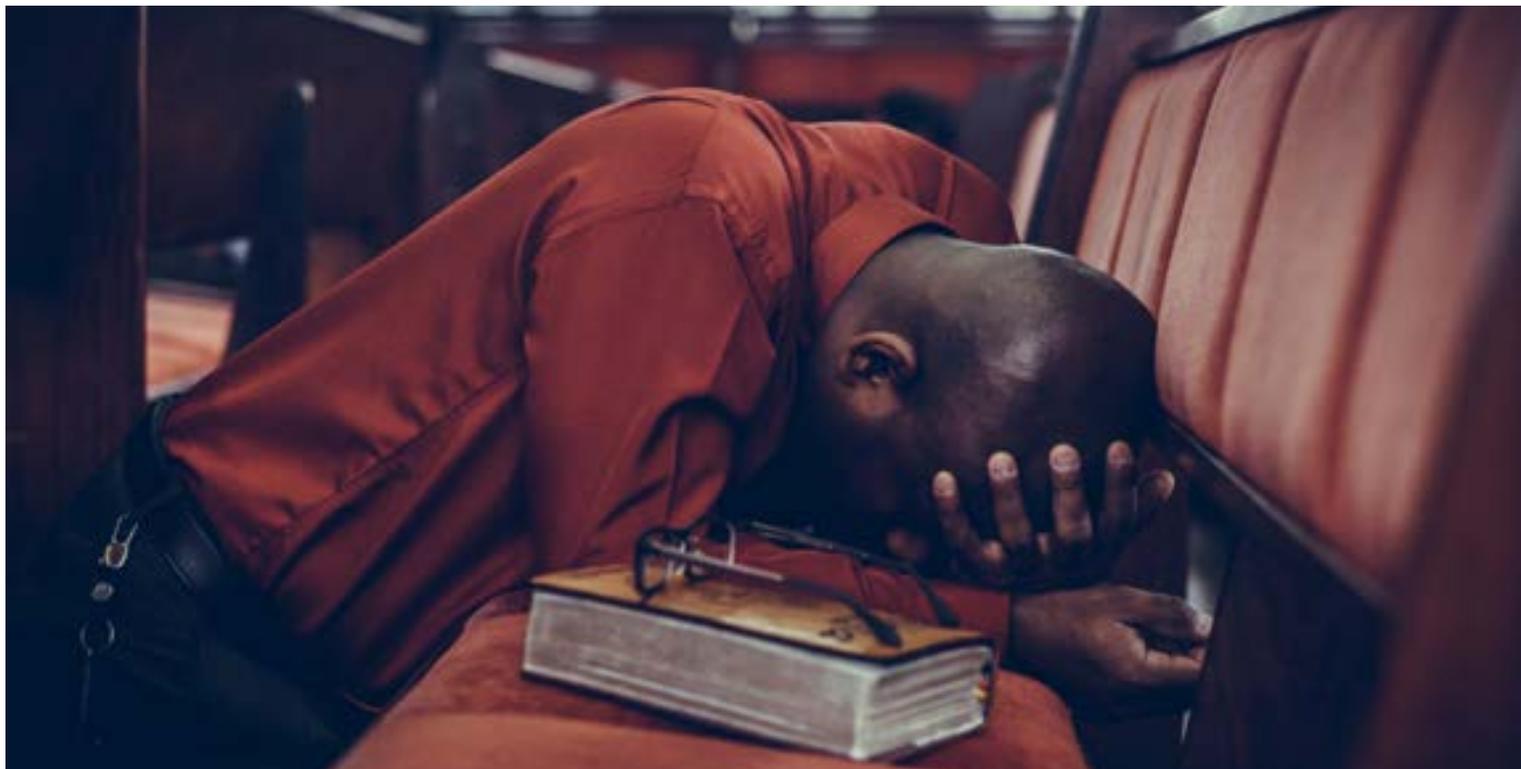
Longing for God by Foster/Beebe

Prayer by Tim Keller

The Examen Prayer, Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives by Timothy M. Gallagher

Where Two or Three are Gathered: A Guide for Mutual Conversation and Consolation of the Saints by Steven King, Sola Publishing

Luther’s Oratio, Meditatio, and Tentatio as the Shape of Pastoral Care for Pastors by John T. Pless



NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Experience Outline

Part 1 – The Discipleship Guide Training Experience (Seven Sessions)

Session 1 – What is a Disciple?

Session 2 – The Importance of Intentionality

Session 3 – What is a Discipleship Guide?

Session 4 – How to have a Discipling conversation, part 1 (overview)

Session 5 – How to have a Discipling conversation, part 2

Session 6 – How to have a Discipling conversation, part 3

Session 7 – The Importance of Asking Questions

(Break)

Part 2 – Going Deeper (Eight Sessions)

Session 8 – Faith life

Session 9 – Priorities

Session 10 – Family Life

Session 11 – Finances

Session 12 – Health & Wellness

Session 13 – Boundaries

Session 14 – Servant Leadership

Session 15 – Moving Forward with Intentional Discipleship (Life Planning)

Suggested Schedule for Large Group Meetings *(flexibility is the key)*

Welcome, Prayer and Sharing – 10 to 15 minutes

Time in the Word - Scripture and Discussion questions – 10 to 15 minutes

Study & Large Group Discussion – 20 to 30 minutes

Breakout groups – 30 to 40 minutes

Wrap up and Prayer – 10 to 15 minutes

Part 1

The Discipleship Guide Training Experience (Seven Sessions)

“No one should be surprised at the difficulty of faith, if there is some part of his life where he is consciously resisting or disobeying the commandment of Jesus. Is there some part of your life which you are refusing to surrender at his behest, some sinful passion, maybe, or some animosity, some hope, perhaps your ambition or your reason? ... How can you hope to enter into communion with him when at some point in your life you are running away from him?”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*





Session 1

Following Jesus: What is a Disciple?

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer. This or a similar prayer may be used to begin your study.

Gracious Lord Jesus, as you invited James and John to follow you, by your Holy Spirit, enable us to hear your call this day. Grant us courage to follow where you lead, partner with other disciples on the way, and draw deep upon your promises. This, we pray, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sharing

Each week as we gather together in a large group, we will share some observations, insights, or gleanings from the prior week. As this is our first gathering, here are two questions to ponder and share aloud as you feel led.

1. Why did you sign up to give your time, energy, and focus to this NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship experience?

2. What are you hoping to receive from the Lord and one another over the course of our time together?

Day of week start:

Introduction of Session Focus

Scripture reading — Luke 5:1-11

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus calls Simon Peter in a miraculous way. They caught so many fish they needed help hauling the nets into the boat. Immediately, Simon Peter declares his unworthiness. Jesus ignores Simon Peter's statement and calls him into something bigger.

1. Name some reasons you think it is significant that Jesus calls, elevates, and invites into this journey someone whose self proclamation is "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man?"
2. What is it about Jesus that makes "sinful" Simon Peter a worthy disciple?
3. If it is Jesus that calls and is the one who qualifies the ones he calls, what excuses do you need to let go of that are barriers to your discipleship journey?

Watch the Video: "What is a Disciple?" with Pastor Scott Ness

Large Group Discussion

1. What did you find most helpful or challenging in this video teaching?
2. Reflect on the difference between "if/then" and "because/therefore" thinking as it relates to God's working in your life.
3. In a world obsessed with leadership, what does it mean to define discipleship as "followership?"

Breakout sessions

Gather in groups of two or three to read and discuss the following Scriptures. Revisit any of the above large group discussion questions as you feel necessary.

Scripture reading — John 10:28

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

This is one place, of many, where we find the unadulterated Good News. Because of who Jesus is, what he has done, and because you are a part of *The Family* — nothing takes you from his nail pierced hands.

1. How is this verse lived and experienced in your life through worship and the gifts of the Sacraments?
2. Reflecting on Holy Communion, when was a time when this sacred meal stirred your heart and what were the circumstances?
3. Earlier in this same chapter, Jesus declares, “I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly.” Share with the group ways in which you are and are not living an abundant life.

Scripture reading — Micah 6:8

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (NRSV)

Reframing this verse in the because/therefore framework may look something like this: Because of who God is and what God has done for you, therefore live a just life, filled with loving kindness, always recognizing it is because of God’s work in your life that you can live this way.

4. Why does the Lord call us to “do” justice and “love” kindness instead of “loving” justice and “doing” kindness?

5. How does the because/therefore framework help you with motivation and action to live this verse in daily life?

Large Group Wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups. Remind participants to do the daily devotions and encourage them to journal their insights and questions.

Next week: “Intentionality”

Close in prayer, remember concerns and joys that were shared in this session.

Helpful Resources

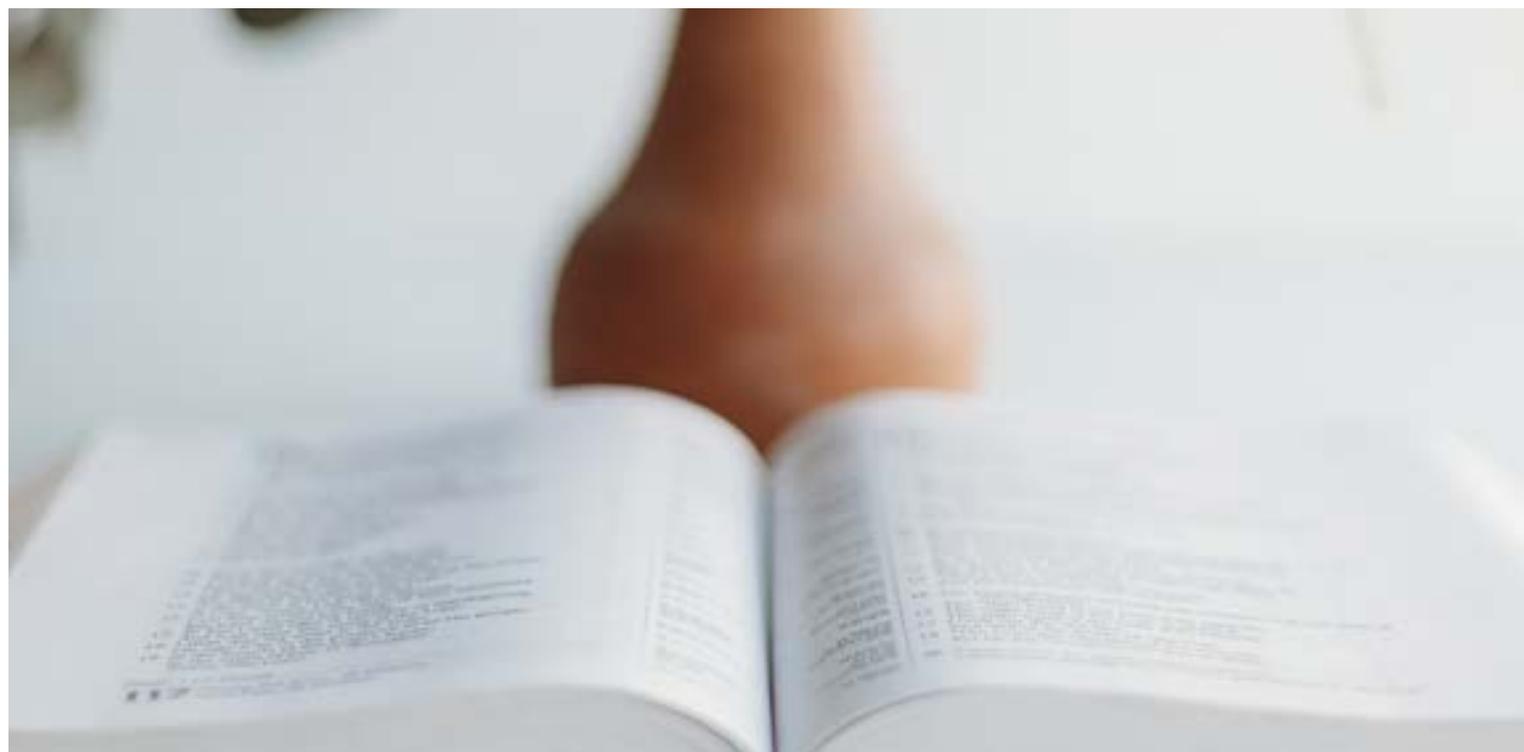
Cost of Discipleship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster

Following the Master: Stories of Sacramental Discipleship by Scott Ness

The Ways of the Alongsider by Bill Mowry

Discipleship: What it Truly Means to Be a Christian by A.W. Tozer





Devotions: Week One

Life as a disciple springs out of the relationship that Christ Jesus has invited you into through his life, death and resurrection. This relationship takes hold in Baptism and is nourished at the table and throughout your life. Also, worth noting, a disciple's life is personal, but it is never private. You, as a disciple and follower of Jesus, are part of a community that extends through time and space.

Each week through the NALC Life-to-Life journey you will dive deeper into God's Word for your own study and reflection. Don't rush. Marinate in the Word and give space for the Holy Spirit to penetrate your heart and mind. And share your reflections. Have a conversation with others about what God is cultivating in you through your intentional time in his holy Word.

Flow of the Week

Saturdays and Sundays are days of preparation and reflection. The other five daily reflections are labeled as weekday 1-5. The flow of the week will change depending on when you meet for the large group sessions. For example, if your group meets on Wednesday evenings, you would begin the next day (Thursday) with the daily reflection for weekday 1. Friday would be weekday 2. You would then do the reflections for Saturday and Sunday, and Monday you would do the reflection for weekday 3, Tuesday would be for weekday 4, and Wednesday would be for weekday 5.

Week Day 1

Scripture reading – 2 Kings 5:1-14

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife.

She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet

Day of week start:

who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.” So Naaman went in and told his lord, “Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel.” And the king of Syria said, “Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.”

So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, “When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy.” And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, “Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me.”

But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, “Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel.” So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha’s house. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean.” But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, “Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage. But his servants came near and said to him, “My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, “Wash, and be clean?” So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

Focus Questions:

1. Read through the story a second time and highlight any words or phrases that stand out for you.
2. It was hard for Naaman to believe Elisha - what are some truths that God declares that are difficult to believe as well?
3. Naaman was expecting a complex solution to his struggle - God’s solution was, instead, simple. Reflect on the times you have made following Jesus complex and complicated, as well as a time when following him was simple and plain.
4. What does restoration look like for you?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

List declarations that God has made about you, from the Scriptures, from hymns and songs of praise, and through other people:

Week Day 2

Scripture reading – Acts 8:26-40

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over and join this chariot.’ So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: ‘Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.’

And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Focus Questions

Read through the Scriptures a second time and highlight any words or phrases that stand out for you.

1. What is going on in your life that connects with a word or phrase from this passage?
2. Who is your Philip - the one who sits with you and points you towards Jesus?
3. Who is your Ethiopian Eunuch - the one who you sit next to help them on their journey?

The Ethiopian Eunuch encountered Christ in Scripture and through Philip. His response was Baptism. How will this Scripture story shape the way you remember your Baptism throughout today and this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you are longing for?

Week Day 3

Scripture reading — Ezekiel 3:1-3

And he said to me, “Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.” So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. And he said to me, “Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.” Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.

Focus Questions

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight any words or phrases that stand out for you.
2. How does the Word nourish you for life?
3. For disciples, reflecting on the Word is similar to the digestion process - it's the way the nutrients get into your system. How has deep reflection in the Word rewarded you with insights and strength for living?
4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Week Day 4

Scripture reading – 1 Peter 1:3-9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Focus Questions

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight any words or phrases that stand out for you.
2. How have you experienced a living hope in difficult times and situations?
3. What is the Holy Spirit speaking to you in the midst of a current challenge you are facing?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

Hope is cultivated as we discern God's vision, identify our current reality and determine steps to move from where we are to where we want to be. Focusing on one area of your life, reflect on God's vision for you in this realm. For instance, what is God's desire for you in regard to your financial health and future?

Week Day 5

From our Baptismal Liturgy:

In Holy Baptism our gracious heavenly Father liberates us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are born children of a fallen humanity; in the waters of Baptism we are reborn children of God and inheritors of eternal life. By water and the Holy Spirit, we are made members of the Church which is the Body of Christ. As we live with him and with his people, we grow in faith, love, and obedience to the will of God. (LBW p. 121)

From our Communion Liturgy:

Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Father: Endless is your mercy and eternal your reign.

You have filled all creation with light and life; heave and earth are full of your glory.

Through Abraham you promised to bless all nations. You rescued Israel, your chosen people.

Through the prophets you renewed your promise; and, at the end of all the ages, you sent your Son, who in words and deeds proclaimed your kingdom and was obedient to your will, even to giving his life.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: take and eat; this is my body, given for you. DO this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death, until he comes.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. (LBW p. 90)

Focus Questions

1. Read through these portions of our liturgy a second time. Highlight and pay attention to the active verbs, recognizing the way that our God is the subject of those verbs.
2. Knowing that Baptism and Communion as sacraments, are incarnate grace, reflect on how these gifts to the Church call you forward in action to live your “therefore” life?
3. What goes through your mind and heart when you see a child baptized in worship?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

A huge component of Baptism is the identity that God places upon you in the storied waters. How has your baptismal identity informed the way you see yourself and the world around you? How can your baptismal identity have a greater impact on these two as well?

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Look back over the week, consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?

3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?

4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?

5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday School lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?

2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?

3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?

4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?

5. What was the gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?

6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?



Session 2: The Importance of Intentionality

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelation from the daily reflections from the prior week.

Introduction of Session Focus

Intentionality — “Done with intention or by design” (Merriam-Webster). We are looking at the importance of intentionality so we can be on the same page and move together with intention. As disciples, it is important to look at our intention and purpose.

Jesus spent a lot of time correcting the purpose of the apostles’ training so they could see his intention. We want to ask two questions for you to ponder:

1. What kind of walk are your faith practices and habits designing? (subtext, what kind of walk do you want to have?)
2. What is the intention or purpose of a discipleship guide?

Day of week start:

Time in the Word

Scripture Reading – Deuteronomy 30:14

“But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.”

The Scriptures are, in part, a story of direction and redirection. The Old Testament is about calling and shaping, and re-calling and reshaping, God’s chosen people. The New Testament is more of the same; it is about God coming to earth and calling and shaping his people - the church - us. We have the honor of continuing that work as his Church and specifically as discipleship guides, walking with friends, family, and even strangers as God continues to call and shape his chosen people. The life of discipleship is a calling and choice that takes intentionality.

Read the two scripture passages below. How does each passage encourage you to be intentional about being rooted in and following Christ?

Scripture reading – Deuteronomy 30:19-20

“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

Scripture reading – Colossians 2:6-7

“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

Watch the Video: “The Importance of Intentionality” with Pastor Jody Becker.

Large Group Discussion

1. What did you find most helpful or challenging in the video?
2. What are your intentions for this experience? (What are you hoping to gain or learn or do?)
3. What idea or topic do you feel challenged by?
4. Do you have any general questions about the course purpose, process, and tools?

Breakout sessions

Gather in groups of two or three to read and discuss the following Scriptures:

Scripture reading — Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Discussion Questions

1. What is happening in the life of the Israelites as this command is given?
2. What is the difference between listening and hearing (for you)? How do you “hear” with intentionality?
3. What does intentionality in hearing God look like for you? What do you hope it will look like? What is one small step you can take to move towards that vision?
4. What does intentionality for discipleship in your community look like for you?
5. Do you have any questions, comments, insights or inspirations to share from your personal time with the Word last week? How did God get your attention this week?

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups. Remind participants to do the daily devotions and encourage them to journal their insights and questions.

Next week: “What is a Discipleship Guide?”

Close in prayer asking, “How can we pray together?” (Pray for this new community, new practices and habits and to hear God.)

Helpful Resources

Crafting a Rule of Life by Stephen A. Macchia

Foundations of Christian Spirituality by Dr. Christopher Hall
(video series)

How to Craft a Rule of Life Based on the Six Streams by Chris Webb

Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Living Forward: A Proven Plan to Stop Drifting and Get the Life You Want by Michael Hyatt and Daniel Harkavy

Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life by Tish Harrison Warren

Ragged: Spiritual Disciplines for the Spiritually Exhausted by Gretchen Ronnevik

Spiritual Care by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Strengthening the Soul of your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry by Ruth Haley Barton

Daily Reflections for Between the Sessions

To disciple someone is to be willing to invest in the lives of others by providing them with spiritual guidance, prayerful support, and vocational accountability. Discipling is simply being willing to walk with someone as they learn to walk with Jesus. It is helping someone to see and hear God already moving in their life. Before we can make disciples we must nurture our own discipleship through prayer and meditation on God's word.





Devotions: Week Two

Weekday 1

Scripture reading – Colossians 3:12-17

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Focus Questions

1. Read through the scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. You can only speak with what you are filled with. To invite the word of Christ to dwell in you richly takes intentionality. What time and practices do you have to create space for the Word of Christ to dwell in you?

Day of week start:

4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

(Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection)

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 2

Scripture reading — Ecclesiastes 4:7-12

Again, I saw vanity under the sun: one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, “For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?” This also is vanity and an unhappy business.

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Scripture reading — Hebrews 10:19-25

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Focus Questions

1. Read through the Scriptures a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. Both these passages talk about the importance of community. What is the center of that community? What is the purpose or potential impact of that community?

4. Who do you gather with now? Where/who is your community to find encouragement and consider the stirring of the Holy Spirit together? Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you are longing for?

Weekday 3

Scripture reading — Acts 9:10-19

Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” And the Lord said to him, “Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.” But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.” But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; and taking food, he was strengthened.

Focus Questions

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Saul would not have become Paul without Jesus, but he also might not have had the grounding and encouragement without the ministry of Ananias. Who has ministered to you in a time of blindness and listening to God?
4. Who in your life is experiencing blindness or is in a season of discovering God and listening for his voice? How might you be used like Ananias to minister and guide them? Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 4

Scripture reading – 1 Samuel 3:1-9

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord in the presence of Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was.

Then the Lord called Samuel, and he said, “Here I am!” and ran to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call; lie down again.” So he went and lay down.

And the Lord called again, “Samuel!” and Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.” Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.

And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Focus Questions

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Who is/has been an Eli figure in your life? Who has helped you be aware of God speaking and invited you into a willingness to listen?
4. Who is/has been a Samuel in your life? Who is someone God is speaking to but needs help hearing, practicing listening and having a willing spirit to pause and ask the Lord to speak?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5

Scripture reading — 1 Samuel 3:10-18

And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant hears.” Then the LORD said to Samuel, “Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.”

Samuel lay until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. But Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son.” And he said, “Here I am.” And Eli said, “What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.” So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, “It is the LORD. Let him do what seems good to him.”

Scripture reading — Proverbs 27:17

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

Focus Questions

1. Read through the Scriptures a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Eli knew Samuel had a word from the Lord for him. He also could sense that it was news Samuel did not want to deliver. How did Eli respond?
4. How do you react when you are questioned or hear news you don't want to hear?
5. How are you when you have to deliver news or ask a question you don't want to ask?
6. How did God show up in Samuel and Eli's challenging conversation? How has God acted in a challenging conversation you've had to have?
7. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. If you have not yet started, when will you begin?

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Saturday Reflection *(preparing for the Sabbath)*

Saturday is a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?
4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?
5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday Reflection *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?
4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?
5. What was the Gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?
6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?



Session 3: What is a Discipleship Guide?

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections from the prior week.

Introduction to the Focus Area

There is no doubt that discipleship is something we are called to do but we must never forget that the power and authority to do so resides solely with Christ.

The Great Commission begins and ends with Him. “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me” and “behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.”

Discipleship guides are constantly mindful of this truth. It is Christ alone who designates the role of disciple, although through faith, we are invited to participate in God’s work. Like John the Baptist, we can point Jesus out to others (John 1:36). Like Andrew, we can tell others what we have found and lead them into Christ’s presence (John 1:41-42). Like Philip, we can invite others to join us on our journey with Christ (John 1:46). Like Peter, we can respond to Christ’s love by feeding his sheep (John 21:15-17). Like Paul, we can hold each other accountable for our calling (2 Timothy 4:5). All of this can only happen if we are willing to grow deeper in our relationships with Christ and with each other.



Day of week start:

Time in the Word

Our mission as Christians can be summed up in two well known Scriptures — The Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Read these two Scriptures together and discuss the ways in which they are connected and complementary.

The Great Commandment:

And [Jesus] said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” — Matthew 22

The Great Commission:

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” — Matthew 28

Watch the Video: “What is a Discipleship Guide” with Pastor David Keener.

Large Group Discussion

1. What did you find most helpful or challenging in the video?
2. What is the difference between a counselor, a mentor, and a discipleship guide? How are they similar?
How are they different?
3. Which role do you find easier? Why? Which role do you find more difficult role? Why?

Breakout sessions

Gather in groups of two or three to read and discuss the following questions and Scriptures.

4. Can you think of a time when you were called to guide someone? Did you find the experience challenging, frustrating or rewarding? Why?

Scripture reading — Hebrews 10:23-25

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Discussion Questions

5. What words stand out for you in this Scripture passage?
6. The writer of the Book of Hebrews doesn't just see meeting together as important, but sees not meeting and encouraging each other as neglect. What does this say about the importance of having and being a discipleship guide?

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups. Remind participants to do the daily devotions and encourage them to journal their insights and questions.

Next week: "How to have a discipling conversation (part 1)"

Close in prayer, remembering all of the concerns and joys mentioned in this session.

Helpful resources

The Ways of the Alongsider by Bill Mowry

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality by Peter Scazzero

Emotionally Healthy Discipleship by Peter Scazzero

Weekday 1

Scripture reading — John 1:35-42

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas' (which means Peter)."



Devotions: Week Three

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. In what ways can this Scripture serve as a model for discipleship?
4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 2

Scripture reading — 2 Timothy 1:3-7

I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Day of week start:

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
2. In his letter to his young co-worker the Apostle Paul acknowledges the spiritual guidance of Timothy's mother and grandmother. Who in your life helped strengthen your faith? What was it about them that encouraged your spiritual growth?
3. Are there people in your life who you are encouraging in the faith? Can you think of someone close to you that would benefit from having a discipleship guide?
4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What are you longing for?

Weekday 3

Scripture reading — Matthew 5:13-16

You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What does it mean for you to be salt and light? Can you think of a time when you let your light shine or a time when it remained hidden?
4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 4

Scripture reading — 1 Thessalonians 5:12-18

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Who did you relate to the most in this Scripture and why?
4. What does it mean for you to pray without ceasing?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5

Scripture reading — Romans 15:4-7

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What does “living in harmony” look like to you?
4. What does “welcoming one another as Christ has welcomed you,” mean to you?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. If you have not yet started, when will you begin?

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Saturday Reflection *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?
4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?
5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday Reflection *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only He can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?
4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?
5. What was the gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?
6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?



Session 4: How to Have a Discipling Conversation (part 1)

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections from the prior week.

Introduction to Session Focus

According to Wikipedia, small talk is “an informal type of discourse that does not cover any functional topics of conversation or any transactions that need to be addressed. In essence, it is polite conversation about unimportant things.”

If we are honest with ourselves we might have to admit that many of our conversations fall into this category. They are informal, lacking in direction and of relative unimportance. Discipling conversations, on the other hand, are conversations with purpose, focus and direction. They are conversations that help someone grow closer to God and deeper in their understanding of what it means to be baptized in Christ Jesus.

Sharing Christ is like what Tim Keller says, “It’s like a quarterback trying to find an opening to where he or she will throw the pass and reach the receiver.” We are always looking for an opening to share out faith.

Our video today will highlight one way to turn our small talk into the big talk of discipleship.

Check out the graphic on page 274 that shows “How to Have a Discipling Conversation.”



Day of week start:

Time in the Word

Scripture reading — John 4:4-15

And [Jesus] had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

Jesus was tired and thirsty after a long day of travel when he encountered the Samaritan woman. He could have easily brushed off her question about why, he as a Jewish rabbi, was asking a Samaritan for a drink. Jesus, however, used this as an opportunity to draw her into a much deeper conversation about faith.

[Watch the video: "How to Have a Discipling Conversation, Part 1\)](#) with Pastor David Keener.. See appendix for Discipling Conversation Model.

Large Group Discussion

1. What did you find most helpful or challenging in the video?
2. Can you think of any conversations you have had that challenged someone to explore their faith more deeply?
3. Can you think of any opportunities that you may have missed because it was easier to say nothing?
4. Why do you think some people are hesitant to engage others in faith conversations?
5. How might the discipling conversation model help us to overcome our hesitancy?

Breakout sessions

Gather in groups of two or three.

Scripture reading: Luke:24:13-32

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

Discussion Questions

6. What words or phrases stand out for you in this Scripture passage?

7. The irony in the road to Emmaus story is that the disciples are discussing Jesus while he is walking right beside them. It was only in retrospect that they recognized his presence. Have you ever had a time when on reflection you realized that Christ was walking with you?

8. What part did Word and Sacrament play in the disciples revelation that Christ was present with them?

Discipleship Conversation Model

The following pattern of questions will help move the conversation between the discipleship guide and the disciple as you talk about what is going on in the disciple's life (see graphic on page 274):

Where are you now? (Current Reality)

Where do you want to be? (Vision)

Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values & priorities? (Alignment)

How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)

What resources will you need?

How can I hold you accountable?

Practice Session

Over the next few weeks we will be practicing how to have discipling conversations. Assign one member of your group to play the part of a discipleship guide and another to be the one guided. Using the *Discipleship Conversation Model* work through the scenario below. This will be a new experience for many and may be uncomfortable at first. Keeping this in mind, remember that as Christ followers we are to speak the truth in love. Our evaluations of the practice sessions should be helpful and encouraging not critical or unkind.

If time allows after the discussion switch roles and repeat the scenario.

Remember

- a. A discipleship guide is not a counselor or mentor. The goal in the conversation is to help the other person discover their own solutions.
- b. Part of the discipleship guide's task is to help others see where God is already walking and working in their lives.
- c. In real life situations there will be no time constraints on the flow of your faith conversations. For these practice sessions do your best to move through the various stages of a discipling conversation.



Scenario

You are having a conversation with a friend over coffee. They remark that they have been offered a new job for more money. They are torn with accepting it because, even though they could use the extra money, they really love their current position and the people they work with.

After about 10 minutes stop and discuss:

1. What went well in the conversation?
2. What might have been done differently?
3. How challenging was it to guide rather than problem solve?
4. How well did the conversation move through the various stages of a discipling conversation?

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups. Remind participants to do the daily devotions and encourage them to journal their insights and questions.

Next week: “How to have a Discipling Conversation — Part 2”

Close in prayer, remembering the cares and concerns brought up in the session.

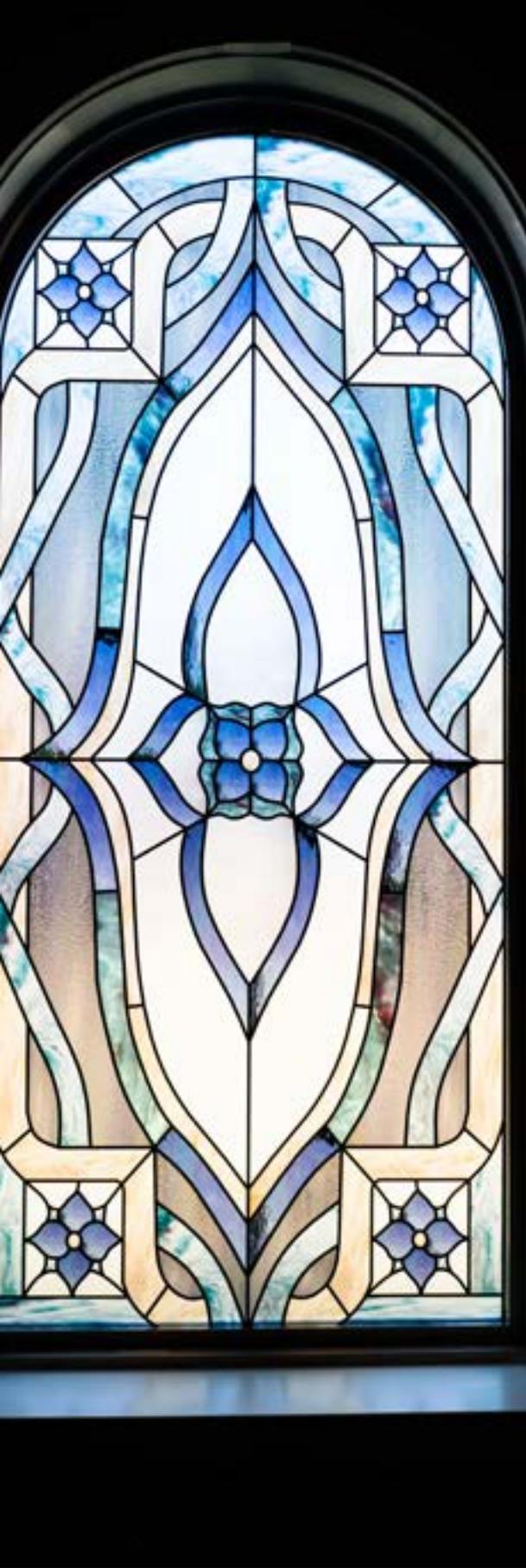
Helpful Resources

Coaching 101 by Logan & Carlton, ChurchSmart Resources, 2003

Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God by Dallas Willard

The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives by Dallas Willard





Devotions: Week Four

Weekday 1

Scripture reading — Ephesians 4:15-16

“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Do you find it challenging or easy to “speak the truth in love?”
4. In what ways are you “growing up” into Christ who is the head?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Day of week start:

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 2

Scripture reading — Colossians 4:5-6

“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. The saying, “putting salt on the wound” refers to making an unpleasant situation even worse. On the other hand, one of the reasons that salt makes food taste better is because it blocks the “bitterness” receptors in your taste buds. Take some time to think about conversations you have had recently. Did they help to relieve bitterness or rub salt in a wound?
4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you are longing for?

Weekday 3

Scripture reading — Matthew 18:19-20

“Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Jesus teaches his disciples that he is present anytime people gather in his name. It is his presence that makes things holy. His presence in the bread and wine of Holy Communion feeds our souls. His presence in the waters of Baptism makes us heirs to the kingdom of God. What difference should his presence make in our daily interactions with others?
4. There is a saying, “Do not talk to the person about God until you have talked to God about the person.” What part does prayer play in your daily conversations with others?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 4

Scripture reading — Psalm 141:1-3

O LORD, I call upon you; hasten to me!
Give ear to my voice when I call to you!
Let my prayer be counted as incense before you,
and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!
Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth;
keep watch over the door of my lips!

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. The psalmist prays that God would set a guard over his mouth. We cannot listen if we are constantly thinking about what we are going to say next. Take some time to pray about how you might be a better listener? What “guards” might you put into place to help you be more attentive to the voice of God and others? How can you keep your words sweet and gentle?

4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5

Scripture reading — Isaiah 30:20-21

“And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. In the Scripture above, Israel was facing a time of trial and tribulation, yet Isaiah assures them that they have not been abandoned by God. He is there for those who take the time to look and his voice can be heard by those who intently listen. What challenges are you facing in your life right now? Take some time in quiet meditation to look for God's hand in your life and to listen for his voice.

4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. If you have not yet started, when will you begin?

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Saturday Reflection *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturday is a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?
4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?
5. Who might I invite to journey with me?



Sunday Reflection *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?
4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?
5. What was the Gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?
6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?



Session 5: How to Have a Discipling Conversation (part 2)

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections from the prior week.

Introduction of the Session Focus

This week we will look a little more closely at the first two steps of a discipling conversation, current reality and vision. The questions, “Where are you?” and “Where would you like to be?” are critically important if we are to help others move forward in their lives in meaningful and faithful ways.

Time in the Word

Scripture reading — Genesis 3:8-13

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Day of week start:

Large Group Discussion

1. Is it significant that God's first words to Adam after the fall were, "Where are you?"
2. How might this inform our discipling conversations?

Watch the video: "How to Have a Discipling Conversations, part 2 - with Pastor David Keener."

3. What did you find most helpful or challenging in the video?
4. The first step in having a discipling conversation is trying to understand where the person is currently in regard to the topic being discussed. What questions might we ask to help clarify someone's current reality?
5. The second step is helping the person figure out where they want to be (vision). What is the danger in assuming we already know where the person wants to be? What are some questions we might ask to help someone clarify their vision?

Breakout sessions

Gather in groups of two or three to read and discuss the following Scriptures:

Scripture reading — Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4-7

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

- a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
- a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
- a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
- a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
- a time to seek, and a time to lose;
- a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
- a time to tear, and a time to sew;
- a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

Two pitfalls in discipling conversations can be either speaking too soon and cutting off conversation or not speaking when a conversation becomes confused or unfocused.

6. How astute are you at discerning when to speak and when to listen?

7. What might be some techniques for avoiding these two pitfalls?

8. What are some questions we might ask to refocus a drifting conversation?

Scripture reading — Proverbs 29:18 KJV

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

9. Why is it important to have a clear vision of where you want to be?

10. What are some questions we could ask to help someone clarify their vision?

Practice Session

Over the next few weeks we will be practicing how to have discipling conversations. Assign one member of your group to play the part of a discipleship guide and another to be the one guided. Using the Discipleship Conversation Model work through the scenario below. This will be a new experience for many and may be uncomfortable at first. Keeping this in mind, remember that as Christ followers we are to speak the truth in love. Our evaluations of the practice sessions should be helpful and encouraging not critical or unkind.

If time allows after the discussion switch roles and repeat the scenario.

Remember

- a. A discipleship guide is not a counselor or mentor. The goal in the conversation is to help the other person discover their own solutions.
- b. Part of the discipleship guides task is to help others see where God is already walking and working in their lives.
- c. In real life situations there will be no time constraints on the flow of your faith conversations. For this practice sessions focus on the current reality and vision steps of the discipling conversation model (*see graphic on page 274*).

Where are you now? (Current Reality)

Where do you want to be? (Vision)

Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values and priorities? (Alignment)

How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)

What resources will you need?

How can I hold you accountable?

Scenario

You are talking to a fellow parishioner and they tell you that they just don't seem to be getting much out of church lately and they are feeling spiritually dry.

After about 10 minutes stop and discuss:

1. What went well in the conversation?

2. What might have been done differently?

3. How well did the guide do helping the other to clarify their current reality and vision?

4. How well did the conversation move through the various stages of a discipling conversation?

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups. Remind participants to do the daily devotions and encourage them to journal their insights and questions.

Next week: “How to Have a Discipling Conversation — Part 3”

Close in prayer. Remember those who need someone to listen to them.

Helpful resources

The Lost Art of Listening: How Learning to Listen Can Improve Relationships by Michael P. Nichols

You're Not Listening: What You're Missing and Why It Matters by Kate Murphy

Listen!: The Art of Effective Communication by Dale Carnegie & Associates



Devotions: Week Five

Weekday 1

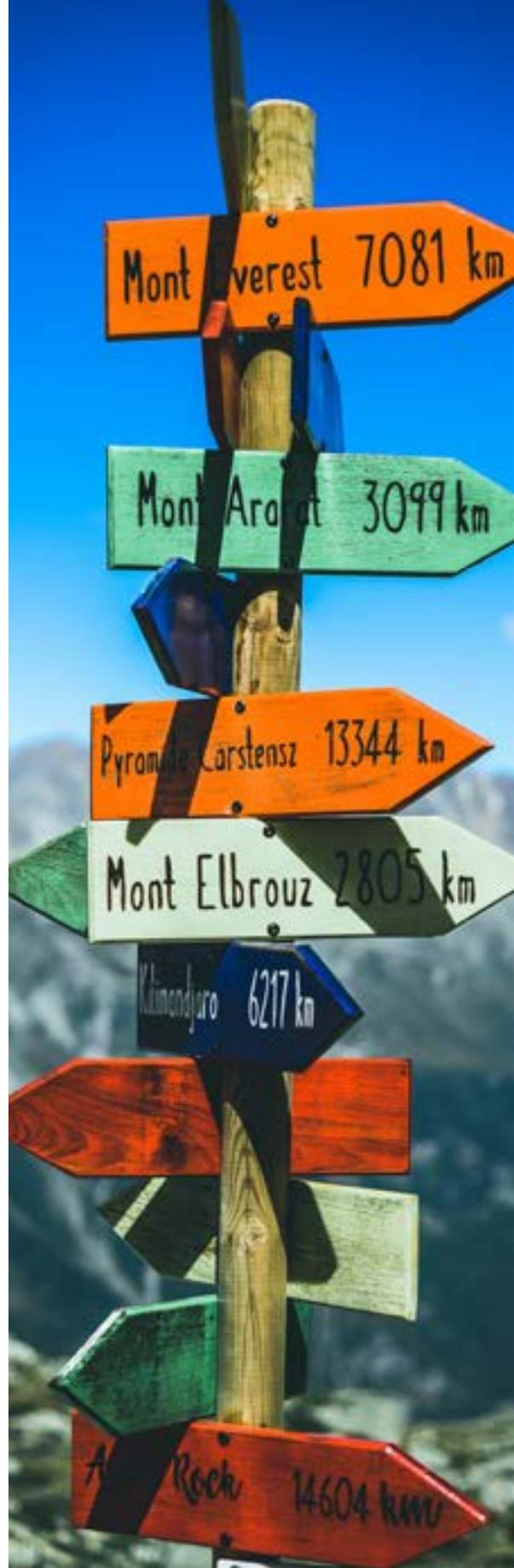
Scripture reading — Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. As you contemplate your current reality, in what ways are you conforming to the world?
4. In what areas of your life do you sense God transforming your mind?
5. Have I been open or resistant to God's transformation?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?



Day of week start:

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 2

Scripture reading — Proverbs 2:1-5

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How “attentive” is your ear in seeking God’s wisdom?”
4. What does “inclining your heart to understanding” mean to you?

5. The writer says that seeking insight and understanding is like searching for hidden treasure. What hidden treasures have been uncovered in your study of God's Word this week?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you are longing for?

Weekday 3

Scripture reading — Philippians 1:6-12

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What can this Scripture teach me about how I should enter into faith conversations with others?
4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 4

Scripture reading — Jeremiah 29:11-12

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Take a few moments to meditate and pray about the plans God may have for you and what gives you hope for the future.

4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5

Scripture reading — Ephesians 3:14-21

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. In this prayer the Apostle Paul prays for spiritual strength. Guided by this prayer take a few moments to meditate on the areas of your faith life that need strengthened.
4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. If you haven't made an action step yet, try doing it today.

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Saturday Reflection *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?
4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?

5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday Reflection *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?
4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?
5. What was the Gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?
6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?





Session 6: How to Have a Discipling Conversation (part 3)

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections from the prior week.

Introduction of Session Focus

This week we will finish up our exploration of discipling conversations by looking a little more closely at alignment, action plans, resources and accountability.

Time in the Word

Last week we explored the current reality question (Where are you?) and the vision question (Where would you like to be?). Closely tied to these is the question of “alignment.” How does a person’s current reality and vision line up with their faith and values?”

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and discuss how it might be used in a discipling conversation to help someone evaluate their current reality and develop a vision of the future in that is in alignment with their faith and values.

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Day of week start:

Watch the video, “How to Have a Discipling Conversation, Part 3 — Alignment, Action Plans, Resources & Accountability” with Pastor David Keener. (See image in appendix that goes with this session.)

Large Group Discussion

1. What did you find most helpful or challenging in the video?
2. When you consider the steps of Alignment, Action Plans, Resources and Accountability which do you imagine will be the most challenging? Why?
3. When forming action plans, why is it important for the person to set goals that are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound)?

Breakout sessions

Gather in groups of two or three to read and discuss the following passage:

Scripture reading — Matthew 4:1-4

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.’ But he answered, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’

Discussion Questions:

1. What does this passage reveal about the importance for discipleship guides to be grounded in Scripture?
2. How can knowing the Scriptures protect us from falling into temptation?
3. How would you rate your personal study of Scripture?

4. We will not always be able to recall or reference a Scripture to fit every situation in which we find ourselves. We can, however, prepare ourselves for when a similar question arises. What are some resources or tools we can use to find the answers and guidance we need?

Practice Session

Assign one member of your group to play the part of a discipleship guide and another to be the one guided. Using the discipleship conversation model below, work through the scenario below. This will be a new experience for many and may be uncomfortable at first. Keeping this in mind, remember that as Christ followers we are to speak the truth in love. Our evaluations of the practice sessions should be helpful and encouraging not critical or unkind.

If time allows after the discussion switch roles and repeat the scenario.

Remember

- a. A discipleship guide is not a counselor or mentor. The goal in the conversation is to help the other person discover their own solutions.
- b. Part of the discipleship guides task is to help others see where God is already walking and working in their lives.
- c. In real life situations there will be no time constraints on the flow of your faith conversations. For this practice sessions focus on the alignment, action plans, resources and accountability (*see graphic on page 274*).

Where are you now? (Current Reality)

Where do you want to be? (Vision)

Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values and priorities? (Alignment)

How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)

What resources will you need?

How can I hold you accountable?

Scenario

You are having a conversation with a friend from church and they share that they constantly worry about money and even though they are financially secure, they get upset when their spouse spends money on things they don't feel are necessary. When you ask them where they would like to be (vision) they say that they would either like to be rich enough to never have to worry about money, or be able to convince their spouse not to spend any without their prior approval.

Begin your discipling conversation with questions about Alignment and then move on to Action Plans, Resources and Accountability.

After about 10 minutes stop and discuss:

1. What went well in the conversation?
2. What might have been done differently? What questions might have been helpful?
3. What issues of alignment were covered (i.e alignment with Scripture, alignment with personal values, alignment with their priorities in life)?
4. How well did the guide do in helping their friend discover their own answers?
5. Was the action plan SMART? (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound)

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups.

Remind participants to do the daily devotions and encourage them to journal their insights and questions.

Next week: “The Importance of asking Questions.”

Close in prayer, remembering members of your group to the Lord.





Devotions: Week Six

Weekday 1

Scripture reading — Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. God's word is described in this text as living, active, sharp, piercing and discerning. Take a few moments to consider each of these words separately and how they inform or change your understanding of the power of God's word.
4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Day of week start:

Weekday 2

Scripture reading — Deuteronomy 8:2-3

And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Throughout Scripture, humility is seen as a major attribute for leadership. Numbers 12:3 says of Moses, “Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.” Philippians 2:8 reminds us how Jesus, “humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!” Why is it important to enter into faith conversations with a heart of humility?
4. Take a few minutes to think and pray about your own level of humility. What comes to mind?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you are longing for?

Weekday 3

Scripture reading — 1 Peter 5:6-11

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. It is easy to sometimes feel attacked and overwhelmed by the pressures of this world. Spend some time considering the things that are causing you worry or situations that may make you feel as if you are under attack. In what ways does the above Scripture speak to your worry and fear? Take a few minutes in prayer to cast your anxiety on the God who cares for you.
4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction that God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 4

Scripture reading — 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Why is it important to receive comfort from God before we attempt to comfort others?
4. How can receiving and giving God's comfort protect us from emotional and spiritual burnout?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity "in Christ" and third on my participation in the Body of Christ? How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5

Scripture reading - 1 Peter 4:8-11

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Focus Questions

Recording your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Hospitality is about more than planned dinner parties. It is about welcoming others into your life. How do you react when someone interrupts your busy schedule? Are you resentful or gracious? Welcoming or distant? Take some time to consider and pray about the role of hospitality in your life.
4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. If you haven't made an action step yet, try it today.

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's Focus Area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Saturday Reflection *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?
4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?
5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday Reflection *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later we will reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday School lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?
4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?
5. What was the Gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?
6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?



Session 7: The Importance of Asking Questions

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections for the prior week.

Introduction of Session Focus

The session is titled, “The Importance of Asking Questions,” but it’s really about intentional communication practices and building relationships. Discipleship is all about developing meaningful relationships: a relationship with the one you follow (Jesus), and a relationship with the one(s) that guides you in seeking and following Jesus.

Communication is critical in all relationships and this is also true in a discipling relationship. Learning to ask questions is the best way to get to know another person. It is less about what we tell about ourselves and far more about what we get to know about the other. Learning to ask questions that take the conversation to a deeper level is a way to keep the relationship growing and the best way to affirm the value of the other person.

Part of making disciples is being open to the opportunities that present themselves in daily life that allow us to share a moment and build a relationship with someone and guide them toward Jesus. Asking questions is vital to the discipleship journey.

Day of week start:

Time in the Word

Scripture reading — Romans 12:9-13

“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.”

1. How do you show hospitality to others?
2. Listening is part of showing hospitality. How do you create space and time to listen to others?

Watch video on “The Importance of Asking Questions” with Bishop Emeritus John Bradosky.

Large Group Discussion

1. What did you find most helpful or challenging in the video?
2. Bishop Emeritus Bradosky shared a list of a few important points regarding asking questions — not just to gather information, but to build relationships. Which items on this list were particularly helpful in expanding your insights regarding asking questions:
 - Don't try to go too deep too fast.
 - Make sure there is some level of trust and readiness for questions. Back off with a less personal question.
 - Wait for the person to answer the question before jumping in with your own answer.
 - Prepare questions in advance. Relationships take time and planning. What would I like to discover about the person?
 - Ask open ended questions that let them know you are interested in their perspective.
 - Be prepared to be open-minded about their answers. Their perspective may be radically different from yours. The goal is not to argue their perspective, but to understand it. Be ready to ask more questions that probe their perspective more deeply.
 - Be sensitive, back off if they seem offended. Try another path of questioning as needed.
 - Be aware of non-verbal clues in assessing how the communication is going.
 - Don't ask too many questions in any one setting. Save some for the next time. Let the relationship grow.

Breakout sessions

Gather in groups of two or three to read and discuss the following Scriptures:

Scripture Reading – Genesis 3:1-13

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” 2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” 4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” 10 And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” 11 He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” 12 The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Discussion Questions:

1. Genesis chapter three records the first questions asked in the bible. What do you see as the major difference between the serpent’s question and those asked by God after the fall?
2. Were you surprised by God’s questions?
3. What was the tone of the conversation?
4. How might this story inform how we ask questions?
5. A common greeting is, “How are you?” How might asking instead, “Where are you?” change the conversation?
6. In the video, Bishop Bradosky shared that Jesus used questions not just to gather information but to show how much he valued others. He noted that Jesus used questions to:
 - Engage others in a conversation.
 - Build relationships.
 - Force those he was interacting with to have to think about life differently.
 - Create conversations about the Kingdom he proclaimed.
 - Get listeners to own their own conclusions about the truth.
 - Draw people in.
7. What questions might we use in our conversations with others to show people they are valued?

Practice Scenarios

We are practicing how to have discipling conversations. Assign one member of your group to play the part of a discipleship guide and another to be the one guided. Using the discipleship conversation model work through the scenario below. Keeping this in mind, remember that as Christ followers we are to speak the truth in love. Our evaluations of the practice sessions should be helpful and encouraging not critical or unkind.

Remember

- a. A discipleship guide is not a counselor or mentor. The goal in the conversation is to help the other person discover their own solutions.
- b. Part of the discipleship guide's task is to help others see where God is already walking and working in their lives.
- c. In real life situations there will be no time constraints on the flow of your faith conversations. For this practice session focus on the current reality and vision steps of the discipling conversation model (*see graphic on page 274*).

Where are you now? (Current Reality)

Where do you want to be? (Vision)

Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values and priorities? (Alignment)

How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)

What resources will you need?

How can I hold you accountable?

Scenario:

You are having a conversation with a non-church going friend over coffee. They are having issues with balancing work and family.

After about 10 minutes stop and discuss:

1. What went well in the conversation?
2. What might have been done differently?
3. How challenging was it to guide rather than problem solve?
4. How well did the conversation move through the various stages of a discipling conversation?

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups.

Remind participants to do the daily devotions and encourage them to journal their insights and questions.

Next time — “Life to Life Experience, part 2”

Wrap-up

Close in prayer, remembering what has been shared and giving it all to God.

Helpful Resources

Coaching Questions: A Coach's Guide to Powerful Asking Skills by Tony Stoltzfus

The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way You Lead Forever by Michael Bungay Stanier

50 Powerful Coaching Questions by Dr. Keith E. Webb



Devotions: Week Seven

Weekday 1

Scripture reading — Luke 7:36-48

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."

"A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he canceled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight words or phrases that stand out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How does Jesus point to the value of relationships in this story?



Day of week start:

4. What relationships do you value? How do you show them their value?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 2

Scripture Reading — Matthew 19:13-15

Then children were brought to [Jesus] that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” And he laid his hands on them and went away.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight words or phrases that stand out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. What is being rushed away in this passage? What do you try to rush?

4. Who do you push away in that rush? What are you rushing for?

5. What are your communication patterns and priorities? What stories of failures and successes come to mind?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you are longing for?

Weekday 3

Scripture reading — 1st Samuel 1:12-18

As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. And Eli said to her, “How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you.” But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation.” Then Eli answered, “Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him.” And she said, “Let your servant find favor in your eyes.” Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight words or phrases that stand out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What assumptions did Eli enter the conversation with? How was he corrected?
4. Often in conversations we spend more time thinking about how we will respond instead of actively listening. How did Eli's actions change when he listened? When have you had to change your actions because you paused to listen?
5. Changing communication habits takes time, effort, and practice. What change(s) do you need to make to listen more actively? What could you begin to do today to make one change?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 4

Scripture reading — John 21:15-19

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight words or phrases that stand out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What can you learn about the priority of relationships for Jesus in this post-resurrection, lakeside interaction?
4. When has Jesus come to you and invited you to follow him again?
5. Where is Jesus asking you to feed and tend his lambs and sheep in this season?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus your attention first on Jesus, second on your identity “in Christ,” and third on your participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving you beyond yourself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving your family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5

Scripture readings —

Proverbs 20:5-6

The purpose in a man’s heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out. Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?

Psalm 26:2-3

Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind. For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the Gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. For we never came with words of flattery,] as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the Gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scriptures a second time and highlight words or phrases that stand out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. When we disciple others we listen with them to God. We ask questions. Our questions are guided by our training, but (hopefully) more by the Holy Spirit. What is in our hearts and minds affects our ability to be present and listen and participate fully in guiding conversations. Having self-awareness is important to our preparation to be a disciple who discipled others. How do you practice self-awareness with the attitudes you have while listening to another? With the questions you ask? With the words you share?

4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. Start today if you haven't made any action steps yet.

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?
4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?
5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday School lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?

4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?

5. What was the Gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?

6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?

We Will Take a Short Break Before Beginning Part 2.



Part 2 Going Deeper (Eight Sessions)

Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*



Introduction to Part 2 - Practicum: Going Deeper

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call — one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

— Ephesians 4:1-6

It is time to put the skills and insights gained in part 1 of this discipleship experience into practice. Through the daily study of God's Word and gathering with others for mutual conversation, encouragement and support we can be more intentional in our faith walk.

Components

There are three important components to this phase of our discipleship experience. Participants will be asked to:

1. Spend personal time with God each day in prayer and meditation on his Word.
2. Meet with one or two others between each session using the discipleship conversation model we practiced in part 1. We will be using a two week cycle for the rest of the sessions. It is preferable that the participants meet in their small group after the first week's daily reflections but before the next large group session. The purpose of these gatherings of two or three people is for mutual support and encouragement as they process their insights, questions and reflections on the focus of the week. It is also an opportunity to practice the discipling conversation skills learned in part 1.
3. Meet every two weeks with the large group to process what we have learned, share insights from our daily devotions and time together in small groups, and spend time in prayerful preparation for our next area of focus.

Large Group Meeting Session Flow

Welcome and Prayer

Sharing (insights, questions or revelations from the daily devotions from the prior week)

Introduction of Session Focus

Time in the Word

Large Group Discussion on the theme and text

Small group Breakout sessions (groups of two or three)

Discipling Conversations:

Each person will share how things are going in the focus area of the week. They will then allow their discipling conversations to arise naturally out of the sharing by following the flow of the discipling conversations (*see graphic on page 274*).

Where are you now? (Current Reality)

Where do you want to be? (Vision)

Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values & priorities? (Alignment)

How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)

What resources will you need?

How can I hold you accountable?

Participants will be asked to set a time for their small group to meet between sessions to reflect on the daily devotions.

Large group wrap-up: participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break-out groups.

Reminder

1. Continue to do the daily devotions and journal their insights and questions.
2. Set a time after the first week of devotions to meet with one or two others for a discipleship guiding session.

Close in prayer.



Session 8: Faith Life

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections for the prior week.

Introduction of Session Focus

Our faith in Christ does not originate in, nor is it centered in, ourselves. It is grounded upon, anchored in, and fed by the promises and the presence of Christ Jesus in his external Word, shared through speaking and the sacraments. The building up of faith by the Word of God is therefore another way of saying that we are Christ-centered, which in turn equips us to be stewards of his Word in carrying out the Great Commission. As those who are loved by God and sent into the world by Christ, our lives are grounded in faith. As St. Pauls said in Romans 14:8, “For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.”

Time in the Word

Scripture reading — John 15:1-5

[Jesus said,] “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”



Day of week start:

Large Group Discussion

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight words or phrases that stand out for you.
2. Why do you think these particular words and phrases caught your attention?
3. There is perhaps no better, or simpler, scriptural metaphor for the life of faith than Jesus' vine/branches illustration. What are some ways that you find this helpful with respect to discipleship?
4. What are the various ways that we abide in Jesus?
5. What does Jesus mean with the admonition, "apart from me you can do nothing?" How does this manifest in the daily exercise of our faith?

Small group break-out sessions

Gather in groups of two or three.

Discipling Conversations:

Have each person share the current reality of their faith life. Allow your discipling conversations to arise naturally out of the sharing. Try to follow the flow of discipling conversations.

- Where are you now? (Current Reality)
- Where do you want to be? (Vision)
- Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values & priorities? (Alignment)
- How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)
- What resources will you need?
- How can I hold you accountable?

Set a time for your small group to meet and reflect on the daily devotions for between the sessions.

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups.

Remind participants:

1. Continue to do the daily devotions and journal their insights and questions.
2. They should set a time during the second week of devotions to meet with one or two others for a discipleship guiding session.

Next week: Looking at “Priorities”

Close in Prayer

Helpful Resources

Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith by Kathleen Norris

Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis

The Problem of Pain by C.S. Lewis





Devotions: Weeks Eight & Nine

Weekday 1

Scripture reading — Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How well are the words “assurance” and “conviction” reflected in your faith life? Can you think of other words that you associate with faith?

Spend some time in prayer and meditation asking God to strengthen your faith.

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Day of week start:

Weekday 2

Scripture reading — 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What does it mean to regard Christ and others “according to the spirit,” as opposed to the “flesh”? How is this reality fundamental to your “ministry of reconciliation” (v. 19)?
4. In what ways do you carry out your vocation as an “ambassadors for Christ” (v. 20), and how does this relate to life-to-life discipleship?
5. Martin Luther spoke of the “Happy Exchange” of Christ’s saving work. How does verse 21 speak to this, and how does it relate to the vine/branches metaphor found in John 15?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection. What have you thought about today in this focus area that you are longing for?

Weekday 3

Scripture reading — Philippians 3:7-16

⁷But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,¹¹that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.¹²Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.¹⁵Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. In verses 8 - 9 Paul says that for Christ's sake he has "suffered the loss of all things" and now regards them as "rubbish" or garbage. How is his observation descriptive of your faith in Christ?

4. How do you “hold true to what we have attained” (v. 16)? How did you “attain” it to begin with? What does this say about your life in Christ?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God’s Word is leading you?

Weekday 4

Scripture reading —Matthew 8:5-13

⁵When [Jesus] had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, ⁶“Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.” ⁷And he said to him, “I will come and heal him.” ⁸But the centurion replied, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” ¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. ¹¹I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹²while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” ¹³And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed at that very moment.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. "...Only say the word, and my servant will be healed." Why did the centurion put so much stock in Jesus' word? What does this say to you about the Word and forgiveness?
4. The centurion discerns that Jesus is "under authority." Jesus later speaks of authority in Matthew 28:18: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore..." How are we "under authority" like the centurion? What does that mean with respect to Life-to-Life discipleship?
5. How is it that "no one in Israel" exhibited such faith? Who was the object of the centurion's faith, and what does his example mean for you?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Recording your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5

Scripture reading — Romans 6:8-14

⁸Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹²Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. Paul says we should “consider” (the KJV uses the less-introspective “reckon”) ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” What does this “reckoning” look like with respect to your recognition of Christ’s lordship?

4. We are sinners; this is most certainly true! How is it, then, that sin has no “dominion” over us? What – who – has replaced it? How do both obedience and repentance fit into our freedom from sin, as well as into the sacrament of Holy Baptism?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Reflecting on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. If you have not yet started, take time to begin.

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week’s focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?

2. What prayers will I lift up?

3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?

4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?
5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection.

We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday School lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?
4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?
5. What was the Gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?
6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?



Weekday 6

Scripture reading — 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the Gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand,² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Paul speaks of justification and salvation as the present work of the Gospel, “... by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word of truth.” What are the various ways you “hold fast” to the Word, and how are all Christians stewards and bearers of it?
4. Why does Paul consider himself “as one untimely born?” How does his “nativity” in the faith relate to that of the other apostles, both in terms of similarities and differences? How does his circumstance relate to your own baptismal regeneration? (For further clarification, see Acts 9:1-19.)
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 7

Scripture reading — Hebrews 10:19-25

¹⁹Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How do these passages point to the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion? What is the sacramental connection between “drawing near” and having “a true heart in full assurance of faith” (v. 22)?
4. What is the only basis of an unwavering hope (v. 23), and how does this guide your daily ministry to one another?

5. What is the relationship between “stirring up one another” and “meeting together” – both in the assembly of Word and Sacrament and in groups of 2 or 3 gathered in Jesus’ name (Matt. 18:20)? What or who is it that enables you to do this holy “stirring?”

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Recording your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you are longing for?

Weekday 8

Scripture reading — Matthew 14:22-33

²²Immediately [Jesus] made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. ²⁵And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” and they cried out in fear. ²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” ²⁸And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. ³⁰But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” ³¹Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” ³²And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. Jesus went up on the mountain by himself to pray. How is this prescriptive for our own prayer/worship life? How is this example only part of the picture for us? (See yesterday's devotion on Hebrews 10:19-25).
4. What does Peter's watery mishap (vs. 29-30) and Jesus' immediate response in action and speech (v. 31) say to you about faith and our baptismal calling to repentance?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 9

Scripture reading — 2 Timothy 1:5-7, 13-14; 2:1-2

⁵I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. ⁶For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

¹³Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

2 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ²and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men [persons] who will be able to teach others also.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. The introduction to this focus area said that we are equipped to be stewards of the Word. How do you see the stewardship of the Word of God played out in the above passage?
4. Who has made a “good deposit” of the Word in your life? What words and what actions did they use to make that deposit?
5. Someone once asked, “What are you going to pass on before you pass on?” What can you do to pass on the faith in a way that helps to insure the next generation passes it on?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 10

Scripture reading—1 John 1:1-3

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – ²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us – ³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. John makes a bold claim – that the first disciples experienced fellowship with God and with his Son Jesus. What are the ways they experienced fellowship with Jesus...what did they do?
4. Who can you invite into your fellowship, so that they too can experience the presence of Christ?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Reflecting on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. If you haven't made any actions steps yet, try doing it today.

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?

2. What prayers will I lift up?

3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?

4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?

5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?

2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?

3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?

4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?

5. What was the Gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?

6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?





Session 9: Priorities

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections from the prior week.

Introduction of Session Focus

Life is full of competing values and interests. There are SO MANY worthwhile things to do in life! How does one choose the order in which to work on and accomplish things? That is the question of “priorities.” Your priority in life is the thing you put first. However, it’s much more than what you talk about doing first; your priorities are shown and proven by the things you actually do. As Christian believers, we know that our priorities should align with God’s priorities. Fortunately, God reveals his priorities to us in his Word of Scripture.

Time in the Word — Matthew 6:31-33

Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (NRSV)



Day of week start:

Large Group Discussion:

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight words or phrases that stand out for you.
2. Why do you think these particular words and phrases caught your attention?

3. Jesus says here to strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness. What does it mean to “strive?” What is the “kingdom of God”? How can you strive for God’s righteousness?

4. Where do physical needs such as food, drink and clothing fit into your priorities?

Small Group break-out sessions

Gather in groups of two or three.

Discipling Conversations:

Have each person share what they see as the top priorities in their lives and how well they do in keeping them as priorities. Allow your discipling conversations to arise naturally out of the sharing. Try to follow the flow of discipling conversations.

Where are you now? (Current Reality)

Where do you want to be? (Vision)

Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values & priorities? (Alignment)

How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)

What resources will you need?

How can I hold you accountable?

Set a time for your small group to meet and reflect on the daily devotions for between the sessions.

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups.

Reminder

1. Continue to do the daily devotions and journal their insights and questions.
2. They should set a time during the second week of devotions to meet with one or two others for a discipleship guiding session.

Next week: “Family Life.”

Close in prayer remembering what’s been offered in the large group.



Devotions: Weeks Ten & Eleven

Weekday 1

Scripture reading — Psalm 119:133

Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How does having the proper priorities keep us from falling into sin?
4. Write out your top five priorities in life.
5. Take some time to pray that God would “keep you in step” with your stated priorities.



Day of week start:

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 2

Scripture reading — Proverbs 3:5-8

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. ⁷Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. ⁸It will be a healing for your flesh and a refreshment for your body. (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Read the passage again and insert your “name” every place the word “your” appears. What did you see differently in the reading?

4. How do you feel about not relying on your own insight, or not being wise in your own eyes? How does God provide proper insight and wisdom for this purpose?

5. What percentage of your heart is currently trusting in the Lord? What is a simple step the Spirit has brought to mind that you can take which will move the percentage point in the right direction?

6. What would it mean today to acknowledge the Lord in all your ways? How might this shape the priority you assign to various tasks?

7. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you longed for?

Weekday 3

Scripture reading — Romans 12:1-2

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Name a way(s) in which following God's priorities for your life might seem like a sacrifice at this time in your life.
4. What is the connection between living God's priorities in your life, and worshipping God?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's word is leading you?

Weekday 4

Scripture reading — Luke 12:22-24

[Jesus] said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. ²³For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!” (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. The word “worry” is the same word used in tomorrow’s reading about Martha. What worry is distracting you the most today? What is it distracting you from?
4. In what ways are faith and worry opposites? Where are you experiencing the tug of war?
5. How does knowing that you are valuable in God’s eyes affect your willingness to seek God’s kingdom and his righteousness?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5

Scripture reading — Luke 10:38-42

Now as they went on their way, [Jesus] entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.” ⁴¹But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; ⁴²there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.” (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How much do you relate with Martha here? How do your many tasks distract you from working on God’s priorities in your life?



4. Notice that Jesus called Mary's activity a "choice." Do you see how you are choosing to do the things you do? If so, identify your current choice. What first step can you take in choosing the better part?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal (Reflecting on this week)

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. If you have not yet started, consider beginning today.

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?

3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?

4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?

5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?

2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?

3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?

4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?

5. What was the Gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?

6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?

Weekday 6

Scripture reading — Philippians 4:6-8

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. This passage is more about thoughts than about actions. How is that relevant to setting and carrying out priorities?
4. As you consider your priorities, and putting your activities in the right order, what does this passage instruct you to do or not do?
In verse 6?
In verse 8?
5. What would having the peace of God bring to you as you work your priorities?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 7

Scripture reading — Matthew 23:23

[Jesus said,] “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others.” (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Jesus speaks about doing more important matters without neglecting the less important. What important, but less important things most often keep you from doing the most important things?
4. This passage is about actions that keep God’s law. What standard does Jesus use to compare these different actions?

5. What most often causes you to set and keep priorities? When do you set aside time to prioritize your day, week, month, or year?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you longing for?

Weekday 8

Scripture reading — Mark 12:28-31

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?”²⁹ Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one;’³⁰ you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’³¹ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. This Scripture passage is clearly about setting priorities. Jesus instructs that the first priority is to love God above all else. What are some examples of how you do that?

4. What neighbors have shown love to you and how? What gift do you have or what little act of kindness can you share with your neighbor?

5. How does this passage speak to your understanding of setting priorities?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 9

Scripture reading — James 1:5-8

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. (NIV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. This passage says that wisdom comes from God. Wisdom is about choices. In what ways does wisdom play a role in establishing your priorities?
4. In 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 Paul speaks about the foolishness of God being wiser than human wisdom and centers God's display of divine wisdom in the cross. How does the way of the cross guide you to act wisely and to set priorities?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How has God granted you wisdom?

Weekday 10

Scripture reading — Ephesians 5:15-17

¹⁵Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How can you learn what God's will is? What is God's will, his design, for your life?

4. If you are playing golf, the target is the little hole on the green. No person's golf ball always lands exactly where they intend with every shot. Where you are walking right now, how specifically does your aim need to change to be able to hit the target of God's will?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal (Reflecting on this week)

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take.

Review and update the statement you wrote last week. What are several steps you could take to move in the direction God is leading you? To get started, which one do you choose?

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?

2. What prayers will I lift up?

3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?

4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?

5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?

2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?

3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?

4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?

5. What was the Gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?

6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?

Session 10: Family Life

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections for the prior week.

Introduction of Session Focus

The most basic expression of the Church, the Body of Christ, is the family. Martin Luther reminds us of Jesus' words, "Wherever two or more are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them." Family is the most fundamental building block of our society and culture as well. We plan strategically, manage intentionally, and manifest our commitment in many other areas of our life that are far less important than our families. Yet without intentional care, life in our families can easily suffer from neglect resulting in broken relationships, stress, and chaos that compromises our witness to the world.

No family is perfect but in family life, we learn how to love and care for others. We learn the value of community for which we were created. We experience all that it means to be accepted, valued, and cherished. In family life our faith is nurtured, and we become resilient in our capacity to face all that life will bring in both joys and sorrows. This session is designed to assist you in focusing on ways to increase your love, intimacy, purity, and connection with those who are your closest "neighbor," your family, your spouse, children, extended family, blended family, as well as living single.



Day of week start:

Time in the Word

Scripture reading — Genesis 2:7-8; 18-25

(T)hen the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

Large Group Discussion

1. In the context of the entire creation narrative what is unique about the creation of men and women?
2. What does this Scripture say about our need to be in relationships?
3. What does this text say about the nature of marriage and God’s original plans for marriage?
4. In a culture that values “rugged individualism” how have we manifested our need to relate? Are the methods employed today creating true human community or an artificial expression of community?
5. What does true community require?

Small Group break-out sessions

Gather in groups of two or three.

Discipling Conversations:

Have each person share how things are going in their family life. Allow your discipling conversations to arise naturally out of the sharing. Try to follow the flow of discipling conversations.

Where are you now? (Current Reality)

Where do you want to be? (Vision)

Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values & priorities? (Alignment)

How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)

What resources will you need?

How can I hold you accountable?

Set a time for your small group to meet and reflect on the daily devotions for between the sessions.

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups.

Remind participants:

1. Continue to do the daily devotions and journal their insights and questions.
2. They should set a time during the second week of devotions to meet with one or two others for a discipleship guiding session.

Next session: "Finances."

Wrap-up

Close in prayer remembering the needs of the group and giving thanks for God's work in our lives.

Helpful Resources

Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer





Devotions: Weeks Twelve & Thirteen

Weekday 1

Scripture reading — Psalm 133:1-3

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!
It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard,
on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!
It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion!
For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What does this Scripture say about the importance of our relationships?
4. What does this text say about family relations?
5. What does true community require?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Day of week start:

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 2

Scripture reading — Matthew 19:3-8

“And Pharisees came up to [Jesus] and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?”⁴He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,⁵and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?⁶So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”⁷They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?”⁸He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How does Jesus view the relationship between husband and wife?
4. When has your heart ever grown hardened in your marriage or other significant relationships?
5. What is the solution to “hard-heartedness?” How can you proactively prevent it?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you are longing for?

Weekday 3

Scripture reading — 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. ⁴Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. ⁷Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

In Chapter 12 of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians he describes the unity and diversity in the Body of Christ and how each part or person is valued and essential. He introduces the 13th chapter with these words, "And yet I will show you the most excellent way."

4. How is the nature of the love described in this text different from the way the world defines love?

5. What happens to relationships when love is reduced to feelings?

6. How does this description reflect the way you love your family? What weakness did you notice in the way you manifest your love?

7. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 4

Scripture reading — Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4

²¹submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²²Wives submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. ²⁵Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰because we are members of his body. ³¹“Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³²This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

¹Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” ⁴Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What do you see as the connection between love and mutual submission?
4. How does this relate to our relationship with Christ and his Body, the Church?
5. What exactly could you do to improve your relationships with your spouse, children, parents, extended family? In what ways could you engage in greater submission expressing your love?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5

Scripture reading — Ephesians 4:25- 5:2

“Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger ²⁷and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ²And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Focus Questions

Recording your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

Daily Journal

Reflect on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. If you haven't started yet, try doing that today!

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?
4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?
5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?
4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?
5. What was the Gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?
6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?

Weekday 6

Scripture reading — Galatians 5:22-26

But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law. ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, or irritate one another, or be jealous of one another. (TLB)

Focus Questions

Recording your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Where do you see the Holy Spirit producing the fruit of the Spirit in your life?
4. Which fruit of the Spirit needs the most attention in your life at the moment?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 7

Scripture reading — 1 Corinthians 7:17

“Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them.”

“And don’t be wishing you were someplace else or with someone else. Where you are right now is God’s place for you. Live and obey and love and believe right there. God, not your marital status, defines your life.” (MSG)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Living a single life, as well as living life in a marriage, can be a blessing. Each has its challenges and rewards. It is easy for us to develop relationships with those who have a similar calling, but what about involving those in our life with a different calling? Who could you invite into a closer relationship who is in “another” calling (single or married)?
4. Where is God’s place for you right now and how is he calling you to “live, and obey and love and believe” right there?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you longing for?

Weekday 8

Scripture readings — Song of Solomon 1:2, 4:3, 4:16 (or all 8 chapters)

²Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine;

³Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.

¹⁶Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Intimacy in marriage is a thing of beauty to be enjoyed and cherished. What words will you compose to express all your spouse means to you?
4. What can you do to improve the romance and intimacy of your marriage?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 9

Scripture reading — James 4:1-3; 7-10

“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. In every relationship there are sure to be fights and quarrels. This text reminds us to begin resolving them by looking internally. Think of a problem or issue in your family. How have you contributed to the problem? What will you do, or stop doing, to make a positive impact on that situation?
4. What new ways of conflict resolution did you find helpful in this text? How can you implement them in your family? In other relationships?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ.

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 10

Scripture reading — Deuteronomy 6:6-7

⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. What practices enrich your spiritual life and keep God’s work on your heart?

4. What practices are in place, or could be, to ensure children around you or in your church receive positive spiritual direction?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Reflect on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. Begin today if you've been putting it off.

Review and update the statement you wrote last week. What are several steps you could take to move in the direction God is leading you? To get started, which one do you choose?

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?

4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?

5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?

2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?

3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?

4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?

5. What was the Gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?

6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?





Session 11: Finances

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections from the prior week.

Introduction of Session Focus

Money and possessions are one of the most referenced topics in the Bible. The most likely reason for this is, next to the devil himself, money is the greatest tempter. As the Apostle Paul warned his young charge Timothy, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.” (1 Timothy 6:10) The love of money can erode our trust in God. Money itself isn’t evil; it is simply a tool that can be used for good or ill. We can use it to feed our families, care for the poor, and in support of the Gospel. On the other hand, obsession with money can erode our trust in God. The hoarding of money can impede our generosity and the frivolous use of money can drown us in debt and worry.

Over the next two weeks, we will be focusing on the topic of personal finance and investigating how our attitude toward money impacts our attitude toward God.



Day of week start:

Time in the Word

Scripture reading — Matthew 6:19-24

[Jesus taught,] “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

Large Group Discussion

1. Read through the Scripture passage a second time and highlight any words or phrases that stand out for you.
2. Why do you think these particular words and phrases caught your attention?
3. How would you describe your relationship with money and possessions?
4. How can debt cause us to be slaves, as in “slaves to debt”?
5. Do you tend to be a spender or a saver? What drives your spending or saving habits?
6. Have concerns over money ever negatively impacted your life or faith?

Small Group Breakout sessions

Gather in groups of two or three.

Discipling Conversations:

Have each person share how things are going in the area of finance in their lives.

Do you worry about finances? Do you find it easy to discuss finances with family? Are you a joyful giver? Do you pray before making big financial decisions? Do you tithe? How is giving an expression of worship?

Allow your discipling conversations to arise naturally out of the sharing. Try to follow the flow of discipling conversations.

Where are you now? (Current Reality)

Where do you want to be? (Vision)

Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values & priorities? (Alignment)

How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)

What resources will you need?

How can I hold you accountable?

Set a time for your small group to meet and reflect on the daily devotions for between the sessions.

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break-out groups.

Reminder

1. Continue to do the daily devotions and journal their insights and questions.
2. They should set a time during the second week of devotions to meet with one or two others for a discipleship guiding session.

Next session: "Health and Wellness."

Close in prayer asking God to help you be a cheerful giver.

Helpful Resources

The Total Money Makeover by Dave Ramsey



Weekday 1

Scripture reading — Luke 21:1-4

As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. “Truly I tell you,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Do you suppose the widow in the story worried about money?
4. Why do you think she gave the last two coins she had to the offering?
5. Does the thought of giving everything you have to the Lord scare you? Why or why not?
7. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?



Day of week start:

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 2

Scripture reading — Matthew 6:25-34

[Jesus said,] “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Right now, in what area of life are you most anxious?

4. What would it mean for you today to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness?

5. Regarding finances, what is a step of faith God is calling you take?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you are longing for?

Weekday 3

Scripture reading - 1 Timothy 6:6-10

“But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. What are some of the underlying factors that contribute to discontentment in our culture and personal lives?
4. How would you know if you've reached the proper balance of having enough — just the right amount?
5. What about your current financial situation troubles you? What gives you joy?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 4

Scripture reading - Malachi 3:6-11

“For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. ⁷From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, ‘How shall we return?’ ⁸Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. ⁹You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. ¹⁰Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. ¹¹I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the LORD of hosts.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. The Bible is clear (here and in Psalm 24:1) that God owns everything, yet our text says that when we withhold the tithe we are stealing from God. What happens to God's work and our lives when we rob God?
4. What did you learn about giving from your family?
5. God challenges us to put him to the test (whether or not we will trust him to take care of all our needs). What might be holding you back?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity "in Christ," and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5

Scripture reading — 1 Timothy 6:17-19

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. In light of the above Scripture, define what it means for a Christian to be rich?
4. What obligations come with riches?
5. Read verse 19 again. What is the treasure that you may take hold of which is truly life?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Reflecting on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take.

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?
4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?
5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?
4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?
5. What was the Gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?
6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?

Weekday 6

Scripture reading — 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ⁹As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”

¹⁰He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. ¹²For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. ¹³By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the Gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ¹⁴while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Take time right now to list some of the many things God has supplied you with? Then, write a prayer of thanks.
4. Where have you seen God provide your needs in some unexpected way?
5. "Sowing" is an investment in the future. In what areas of life are you sowing sparingly? Bountifully? What impact is each having on you and your family?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 7

Scripture reading — Luke 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to [Jesus], “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”¹⁴ But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?”¹⁵ And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully,¹⁷ and he thought to himself, What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?”¹⁸ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.’¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”²⁰ But God said to him, Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. When have money issues been a source of tension in your home?
4. Jesus says, “Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” What do you think are the values or treasures God would have you aim for?
5. How is God calling me to be rich toward him?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you are longing for?

Weekday 8

Scripture reading — Mark 10:17-25

And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.¹⁹ You know the commandments: “Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.”²⁰ And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.”²¹ And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”²² Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.²³ And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”²⁴ And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God!²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Much of our culture has been built on the premise that, the more money and possessions we have, the safer and happier we will be. The holy Scriptures declare that the opposite is true. Both the desire for more possessions and the financial debt we accrue in pursuit of more stuff can hinder our call to discipleship. Why do you suppose Jesus asked this man to give away all he had?

4. What is hindering your call to follow Jesus? What steps might you begin to take in order to “unburden” yourself?

5. Proverbs 22:7 says, “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.” Debt can become a burden and source of conflict for faith and family. How do you feel about your level of debt and what is your plan for reducing it?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God’s Word is leading you?

Weekday 9

Scripture reading — Luke 12: 32-34

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. It has been said that to find a person's top priorities you simply need to look at how they spend their time and money. Take some time to consider whether or not your personal financial stewardship of time and money reflects your stated priorities in life. Reflect on what comes to mind.

4. We see the action words "sell" and "give" in verse 33. What is cluttering your life that needs to be passed on to others or thrown away?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity "in Christ," and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 10

Scripture reading—Proverbs 6:6-8; 21:20; 30:7-9

^{6,6-8}Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. ⁷Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, ⁸she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest

^{21,20}Precious treasure and oil are in a wise man's dwelling, but a foolish man devours it.

^{30,7}Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: ⁸Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, ⁹lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the Lord?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How do you currently split up your financial pie? What percentage goes to giving, retirement, savings, household spending, etc?
4. At the end of these two weeks how do you sense God inviting you to adjust those percentages?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. If you have not yet started, when will you begin?

Review and update the statement you wrote last week. What are several steps you could take to move in the direction God is leading you? To get started, which one do you choose?

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?
4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?
5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?

4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?

5. What was the Gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?

6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?



Session 12: Health and Wellness

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections from the prior week.

Introduction of Session Focus

One of our greatest challenges is our busyness. It can rob us of our health spiritually, emotionally, relationally, and physically.

Spiritually, we can be so busy that there is little time spent with Jesus in his Word and in prayer. Emotionally, we can become depressed, skeptical, and negative in our approach to life. Relationally, we distance ourselves from others and our relationships become a source of stress and conflict. Physically, we struggle to maintain a healthy weight, fail to exercise, and resist visiting with professionals to monitor our health.

Healthy living requires us to attend to all four of these important areas of our life: Spiritual, Emotional, Relational, and Physical. They work together to provide us with the abundant life Jesus intends for us to experience. Without this holistic approach to our health, we become increasingly vulnerable to sin that leads to self-destruction. Some may believe that it is self-centered to focus on our health, but living a healthy life is one of the most powerful ways we witness to others about the gift and joy of the life God has given us.



Day of week start:

Time in the Word

Scripture reading — 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24

12 We ask you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. 14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. 15 See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

23 Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

Large Group Discussion

1. How are the Apostle Paul's instructions in the first paragraph tied to his blessing in the second paragraph?
2. In what ways do our physical, emotional, and spiritual lives interact and affect each other?

Small Group Break-out sessions

Gather in groups of two or three.

Discipling Conversations:

Ask if anyone is comfortable sharing where they are in regard to their health and wellness. This may include spiritual and emotional health, as well as physical. Discuss together daily/weekly habits of exercise, diet, recreation, and sabbath time that you have or would like to start.

Allow your discipling conversations to arise naturally out of the sharing. Try to follow the flow of discipling conversations.

Where are you now? (Current Reality)

Where do you want to be? (Vision)

Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values & priorities? (Alignment)

How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)

What resources will you need?

How can I hold you accountable?

Set a time for your small group to meet and reflect on the daily devotions for between the sessions.

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups.

Reminder

1. Continue to do the daily devotions and journal their insights and questions.
2. Set a time during the second week of devotions to meet with one or two others for a discipleship guiding session.

Next week: “Boundaries.”

Close in prayer, asking for God’s guidance and encouragement in your lives.

Helpful Resources

The Road Less Traveled by M. Scott Peck

Praying the Psalms by Thomas Merton





Devotions: Weeks Sixteen & Seventeen

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. In what ways is our spiritual life tied to our physical, emotional and relational health?
4. What area needs the most attention right now?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

As you begin this devotional focus area and reflect on this text, take time to rate each area of your health using a scale of 1-10 for each line. Without condemnation, what did you learn?

Day of week start:

Spiritual Health:

- Enjoy reading the Word
- Applying the Word to my life
- Time in prayer
- Accountable to others

Emotional Health:

- Internal peace
- Optimistic outlook
- Ability to concentrate
- Problem-solving/decision-making skills

Relational Health:

- Relationship with spouse
- Relationships with children
- Relationships with friends
- Relationships with other Christian peers

Physical Health:

- Exercise
- Eating Habits
- Energy
- Check-ups and medical testing

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 2

Scripture reading — 1 Corinthians 6: 19-20

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰but were bought with a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies. (NIV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How is it contrary to our culture to assert that, "You are not your own?"
4. Considering the price that was paid, what is your value in the eyes of the Father?
5. What does this Scripture say about all four areas of your health?
 - Spiritual -
 - Emotional -
 - Relational -
 - Physical -
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you longing for?

Weekday 3

Scripture reading — 1 Corinthians 9: 25-27

[St. Paul writes,] Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we imperishable. ²⁶So, I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Why does an athlete have to exercise self-control in all things?
4. How do you engage in “disciplining” your body or keep it under control? How could you do better at this?
5. Where in your life do you most seem to be running aimlessly or just beating the air? What are the root causes?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 4

Scripture reading — Romans 12:1-2

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What does it mean to offer your body as a “living sacrifice?”
4. How can you deal with and use your body as a form of worship?
5. How would you describe the “pattern of this world” in verse 2?

6. How does transformation in the life of a disciple of Jesus happen?

7. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5

Scripture reading — Romans 8: 9-14

“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. ¹²So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. When you think about the truth that the same Spirit who raised Jesus is at work in you, how does this impact the challenges you are facing in the four health areas spiritual, emotional, relational and physical? What are those challenges?
4. When you think of the four health areas, where can you celebrate the Spirit leading you? Where is the flesh still struggling?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Reflect on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take.

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?
4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?
5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught your attention? What exactly touched your heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?

3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?

4. What strength or comfort did you receive as you participated in worship today?

5. What was the Gospel message you heard today and who did you share it with?

6. Who did you speak with that you can remember in prayer this week?

Weekday 6

Scripture reading — Ephesians 4:17-24

¹⁷Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰But that is not the way you learned Christ!— ²¹assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²²to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. We can see the old sinful nature at work when we have closed minds and we harden our hearts. How can you “throw off” the old nature?

4. How does Christ making you a new person provide for spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes in each health area?

Spiritual —

Emotional —

Relational —

Physical —

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 7

Scripture reading — James 1:12-16

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. ¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. How might you encourage someone who is facing temptation?

4. What does James contend is the root cause of temptation? What area of your life would benefit most by going through a realignment of desire?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you are longing for?

Weekday 8

Scripture reading — Luke 9:28-36

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³⁰Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. ³¹They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³²Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" - not knowing what he said. ³⁴While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. ³⁵Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" ³⁶When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and, in those days, told no one any of the things they had seen." (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. As you look at this transfiguration text, reflect on what might be key to transformation in your own life.

4. What is the place of solitude, silence, and prayer in this text? What place do you make for them in your life?

5. What area of your health you would like to see transformed but have been unwilling for it to be changed?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 9

Scripture reading — John 4: 19-26

The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” ²¹Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” ²⁵The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” ²⁶Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What are your patterns for worship? For study?
4. When was a recent time when your participation in worship moved you spiritually or gave you a deeper awareness of truth? Describe when and how you were moved.
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 10

Scripture reading — 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. The steps of faith are often small, one degree at a time. Think of a time a small change happened which had a long lasting influence in your life.
4. How do you see God at work in your life, transforming you into the image of Christ?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Reflect on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take.

Review and update the statement you wrote last week. What are several steps you could take to move in the direction God is leading you? Which step do you choose?

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?
4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?
5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday School lesson most caught your attention? What exactly touched your heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making you confession and hearing the absolution affect how you live this week?
4. What strength or comfort did you receive as you participated in worship today?
5. What was the Gospel message you heard today and who did you share it with?
6. Who did you speak with that you can remember in prayer this week?





Session 13: Boundaries

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections from the prior week.

Introduction of Session Focus

In the next few days we will be looking at the issue of setting and keeping boundaries. As Christians we are called to care for one another but without proper boundaries, ministering to others can be a source of stress and burnout.

In every community, we have our own space and property. The boundaries which define what belongs to us need to be permeable enough to allow others in, and strong enough to keep out unwanted danger.

Boundaries in ministry are the limits or borders we place on relationships, which enable us to have a balance between closeness and freedom. They are a safeguard to what is acceptable and what is not. When we minister to one another, it is imperative that we respect the boundaries of others, as well as understand our own boundaries in a relationship.

The story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) models good boundaries in many ways. It demonstrates when and how they should be observed. We know that the Samaritan took care of the injured man, by bandaging his wounds, bringing him to an inn to rest and heal, and paying for his time there. But what if he had no boundaries?

Day of week start:

What if the injured man awoke and said, “You can’t leave me, I’m frightened and all alone. I need you to stay with me.” We know the Samaritan had business to attend to in Jericho, but suppose he postponed going there because of this injured man? Whatever business he had would be unattended, resulting in a failure for him.

Sound familiar? We may be moved with compassion to give to someone in need, but then this person manipulates us into giving more than we intended, perhaps even more than we can afford. We end up resentful and angry in our giving. Knowing what falls within our own boundaries, helps to avoid these scenarios. And while setting boundaries can be difficult work, it helps us to avoid the pitfalls that a lack of boundaries can create.

Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend have been pioneers in this field and offer many insights in their excellent book on boundaries entitled, “Boundaries: When to Say YES, When to Say NO, To Take Control of Your Life.”

Watch Video

Before beginning this session please watch this short YouTube video on *Boundaries* presented by Dr. Henry Cloud:

[How To Set Boundaries](#)

Large Group Discussion

1. Were there any insights or ideas that stood out for you in the video?
2. How intentional are you in setting boundaries on your time, energy, and availability?
3. How would you evaluate your ability to set firm boundaries with your co-workers, parishioners, family and friends?
4. How comfortable are you at setting limits for yourself and others?

Small Group break-out sessions

Gather in groups of two or three.

Discipling Conversations:

Given the insights gained from the video have each person share if they have any issues setting or keeping boundaries. A possible question might be “how comfortable am I at saying ‘no’ to people?”

Allow your discipling conversations to arise naturally out of the sharing. Try to follow the flow of discipling conversations.

Where are you now? (Current Reality)

Where do you want to be? (Vision)

Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values & priorities? (Alignment)

How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)

What resources will you need?

How can I hold you accountable?

Set a time for your small group to meet and reflect on the daily devotions for between the sessions.

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups.

Reminder

1. Continue to do the daily devotions and journal their insights and questions.
2. They should set a time during the second week of devotions to meet with one or two others for a discipleship guiding session.

Next week: “Servant Leadership.”

Close in prayer.

Helpful Resources

Boundaries, When to Say YES, When to Say NO, To Take Control of Your Life by Cloud & Townsend, (2017)
Zondervan, Grand Rapids.

The Power of the Other: The startling effect other people have on you, from the boardroom to the bedroom and beyond—and what to do about it by Henry Cloud

Weekday 1

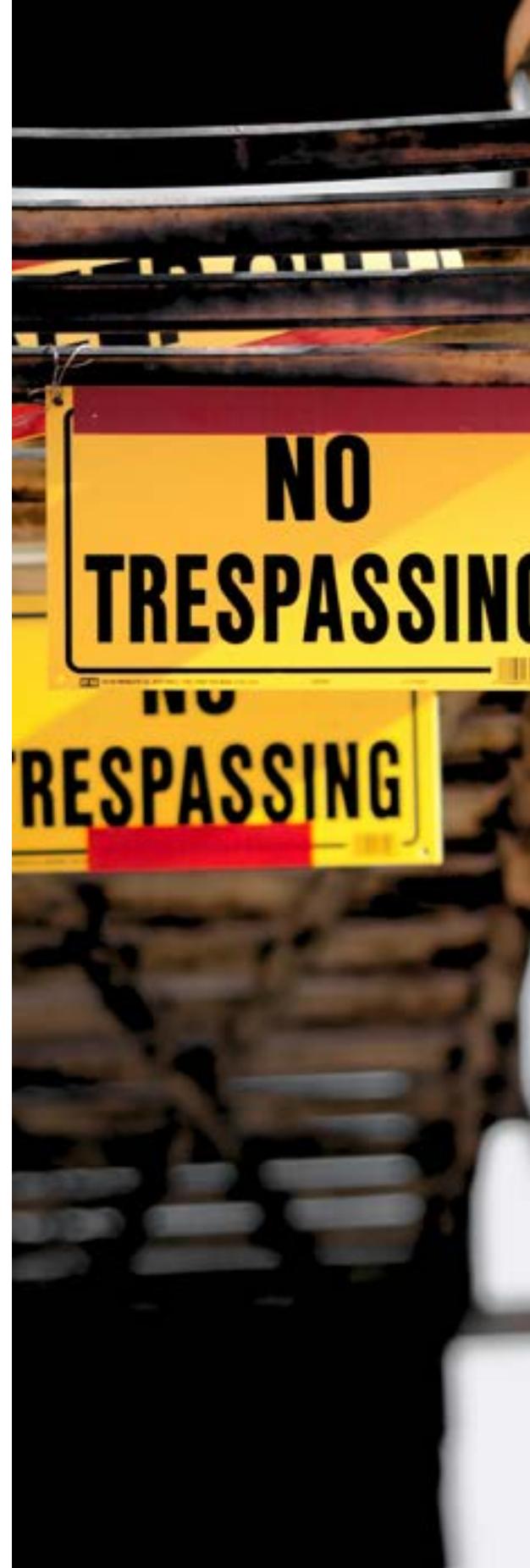
Scripture reading — 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How can we walk the line between assuming the best in others and not being naive?
4. How astute are you at "testing the spirit?"
5. What people or processes do you use in evaluating the intentions of others?



Day of week start:

6. The keyword in boundary-setting is “no.” How comfortable are you in saying “no” to people? If you have difficulty saying “no” to others what might be the underlying factors?

7. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 2

Scripture reading — Mark 1:35-39

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, ³⁷and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.” ³⁸And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” ³⁹And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. In the above Scripture passage Jesus needed to prioritize where he was going to focus his attention. His heart was calling him to spend time in prayer with his heavenly Father. The disciples were trying to focus him on the present demands of the crowd. His mission as the Son of God was calling him to move on to the next town to preach the coming of the Kingdom of God. Take some time to reflect on how Jesus balanced his life, set boundaries with others, and stayed faithful to his mission.
4. We often get caught up doing what is urgent, instead of focusing on and accomplishing what is important. How do you see the “tyranny of the urgent” battling against what is important in your life?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Setting Priorities

When we know who we are and what we are called to do, setting boundaries becomes easier. We are called to be many things to many people. You may be a pastor, medical professional, parent, spouse, co-worker, disciple, etc. Make a list of how you currently prioritize your various vocations. Spend some time evaluating how well you keep these priorities. For instance, someone may put family at the top of the list but in reality, let the responsibilities of work or requests of others take precedent.

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you are longing for?

Weekday 3

Scripture reading — James 1:19-27

¹⁹Know this, my beloved brothers and sisters: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. ²²But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. ²⁶If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. Saint James writes that when we do not live in accord with our identity as children of God, we are like a person who forgets what he or she looks like. We are like a physician who refuses to heal or a rabbi who refuses to teach. Describe a time when remembering that you are a baptized Christian would have helped your Christian walk?

4. How do you actually deal with people who invade your physical, emotional, spiritual, comfort zone? How can this passage help you respond?

5. What strategies might you develop to help you maintain your boundaries?

6. In what ways do you concentrate on “bridling your tongue?” Why is this an important skill to learn?

7. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God’s Word is leading you?

Weekday 4

Scripture reading—Ephesians 4:1-16

[Paul wrote,] I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”

⁹(In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What does it mean to you to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling” that Christ has put on your life?
4. What does “speaking the truth in love” look like to you?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5

Scripture reading — Galatians 6:1-5

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load. (NIV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. In verse 2, Paul indicates that we have an obligation to “Bear one another’s burdens.” But, in verse 5 he says that each one will have to bear his own load. How can we justify these two statements?

4. Where does your responsibility begin and end in regard to bearing someone else's burdens?

5. What does having a "spirit of gentleness" look like to you?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Reflect on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. If you have not yet started, when will you begin?

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?

2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?
4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?
5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later we will reflect on such questions as:

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2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making your confession and hearing the absolution affect how you live this week?
4. What strength or comfort did you receive as you participated in worship today?
5. What was the Gospel message you heard today and who did you share it with?
6. Who did you speak with that you can remember in prayer this week?

Weekday 6

Scripture reading — Philippians 3:17-21

[St. Paul wrote,] ¹⁷Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What precedes this passage (found in Philippians 3:12-16), that Paul wants us to join in imitating?
4. Many people believe that boundaries are about setting limits on others. In their book, “Boundaries,” Cloud and Townsend point out that setting limits on others is a misnomer. We can’t set limits on others but we can limit our exposure to people who behave inappropriately. They go on to write how God, as our model, does not so much set limits as he does standards. What standards do you hold yourself and others to?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 7

Scripture reading — Galatians 5:16-26

[Paul writes,] But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. As you read through Paul's list of the "Fruit of the Spirit," where would you place yourself on a scale of 1 to 10 in each fruit?

LOVE—

PEACE—

PATIENCE—

KINDNESS—

GOODNESS—

FAITHFULNESS—

GENTLENESS—

SELF-CONTROL—

In the areas you scored highest and lowest, what has contributed to those scores?

4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you longing for?

Weekday 8

Scripture reading — 1 Timothy 5:1-2

[Paul writes,] “Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. St. Paul was clear that we need to set boundaries in our dealings with people of different ages and genders. What boundaries do you set when interacting with members of the opposite sex?

4. What do you do when someone intrudes on your personal comfort zone?

5. Develop a simple strategy to help you keep a personal boundary with someone you are thinking of right now.

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 9

Scripture reading — 1 John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Focus Questions

Recording your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How can we walk the line between assuming the best in others and not being naive?
4. What people or processes do you use in evaluating the intentions of others?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus your attention first on Jesus, second on your identity “in Christ,” and third on your participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving you beyond yourself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving your family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 10

Scripture reading — Matthew 18:15-20

¹⁵“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. In this passage, what are the three things God values for us that are at risk if we do not deal appropriately with a boundary violation? (hint: vs. 15, 19, 20)

4. Boundaries help us take responsibility for our own lives. They protect us from harm and are essential for every kind of relationship with people and activities. What keeps you from addressing boundary issues?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Reflect on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. If you haven't made any, create at least one today.

Review and update the statement you wrote last week. What are several steps you could take to move in the direction God is leading you? To get started, which one do you choose?

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?

4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?

5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later we will reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught your attention? What exactly touched your heart?

2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?

3. How will making your confession and hearing the absolution affect how you live this week?

4. What strength or comfort did you receive as you participated in worship today?

5. What was the Gospel message you heard today and who did you share it with?

6. Who did you speak with that you can remember in prayer this week?





Session 14: Servant Leadership

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections for the prior week.

Introduction of Session Focus

The values of our culture and world emphasize greatness, fame, and stature. Believers are tempted to import these values into the varied groups which they lead. However, these values are opposed to the leadership values that Jesus taught. Leadership is done in many areas: the church, family, workplace, and neighborhood. Jesus taught us that the best leaders are servants to those whom they lead.

Time in the Word

Scripture reading — John 3:22-30

After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized. (This was before John was put in prison.) An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."

To this John replied, "A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.' The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less." (NIV)

Day of week start:

Large Group Discussion

1. Read through the above Scripture again and highlight any word or phrases that stand out.
2. What can we learn from John the Baptist about servant leadership?
3. John told his disciples that “[Jesus] must become greater: I (John the Baptist) must become less.” How does this model of leadership differ from the secular understanding of leadership?
4. When leading, is your tendency to lead from the front or from the back?

Small Group break-out sessions

Gather in groups of two or three.

Discipling Conversations:

We are all leaders, in some respect, due to the influence we have on others. Parents influence their children. Teachers influence their students. We influence and lead our co-workers, family and friends through our words and actions.

Have each person share about their leadership roles and style. Allow your discipling conversations to arise naturally out of the sharing. Try to follow the flow of discipling conversations.

Where are you now? (Current Reality)

Where do you want to be? (Vision)

Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values & priorities? (Alignment)

How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)

What resources will you need?

How can I hold you accountable?

Set a time for your small group to meet and reflect on the daily devotions for between the sessions.

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups.

Reminder

1. Continue to do the daily devotions and journal their insights and questions.
2. They should set a time during the second week of devotions to meet with one or two others for a discipleship guiding session.

Next week: “Life Planning”

Close in prayer.

Helpful Resources

The Servant As Leader by Robert Greenleaf

Servant Leader by Ken Blanchard



Weekday 1

Scripture reading — John 13:12-17

After [Jesus] had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.” (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How does this text tie together the two words servant and leadership?
4. In verse 15 Jesus notes that he is giving an example to his followers. How can you apply the foot-washing task in everyday life?



Day of week start:

5. How has Jesus recently served you?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 2

Scripture reading — Mark 10:42-45

So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ⁴³But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. Jesus tells the disciples that they are not to act like Gentiles, treating people badly. Recall a time when you were treated badly. How did you react and what did you learn?

4. Jesus is the ultimate example of servanthood and leadership. How does the extent of his service teach you about both?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you longing for?

Weekday 3

Scripture reading — Mark 9:35-37

[Jesus] sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” ³⁶Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.” (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What is Jesus teaching you by using a child?
4. Jesus uses the phrase “servant of all.” Who are you being called to serve?
5. How do leadership and service go together in Jesus’ life? In your life?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God’s word is leading you?

Weekday 4

Scripture reading — 1 Peter 5:1-4

Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you ²to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. ³Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. ⁴And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away. (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Peter holds the sufferings of Christ in contrast to the glory to be revealed. How do you, as a servant leader, interpret this in your life?
4. Note that Peter compares leadership to shepherding a flock. Then he makes reference to the “chief shepherd” (verse 4). What does this teach you about God’s expectations of servant leadership?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?



Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5

Scripture reading — Luke 22:24-27

A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. ²⁵But [Jesus] said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. ²⁷For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.” (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. In our world and in all ages, the servant is considered the lesser person. How is Jesus’ kingdom different?
4. Who are you leading? How are you serving, helping, assisting, and training them?

5. What does doing your best Jesus imitation look like in your vocation?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Reflect on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take.

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?

2. What prayers will I lift up?

3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?

4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?

5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught your attention? What exactly touched your heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making your confession and hearing the absolution affect how you live this week?
4. What strength or comfort did you receive as you participated in worship today?
5. What was the Gospel message you heard today and who did you share it with?
6. Who did you speak with that you can remember in prayer this week?



Weekday 6

Scripture reading — Philippians 2:1-11

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, ⁸he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How does verse 5 inform your thinking about servant leadership?
4. How does this passage say your mindset needs to change when you are being tested?
5. When Jesus emptied himself, what was he filled with? What does this tell you about leadership and service?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 7

Scripture reading — Romans 12:3-21

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

⁹Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. What does it mean to serve out of your giftedness?

4. Regarding people who you work or live with, what are some specific ways you can encourage them to use their gifts?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you longing for?

Weekday 8

Scripture reading — Acts 20:34-35

You know for yourselves that I worked with my own hands to support myself and my companions. ³⁵In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How did Paul demonstrate servant leadership here?
3. Paul considered himself to be an example to rising leaders among the believers. How does this apply to you?
4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's word is leading you?

Weekday 9

Scripture reading — Colossians 3:23-24

²³Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, ²⁴knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. Consider your various relationships at work, home, church and neighborhood. How would you serve each?
Keeping in mind boundary issues, how would you serve as though the other people were Christ?

4. In your work in any area, what does it mean to “work heartily”?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 10

Scripture reading — Matthew 25:34-40

[Jesus taught,] ³⁴“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? ⁴⁰And the King will answer them, Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How does Jesus expand your vision of who you are called to serve?
4. If you are practicing servant leadership, how can you lead the people you are serving?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Reflect on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. How is it going?

Review and update the statement you wrote last week. What are several steps you could take to move in the direction God is leading you?

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

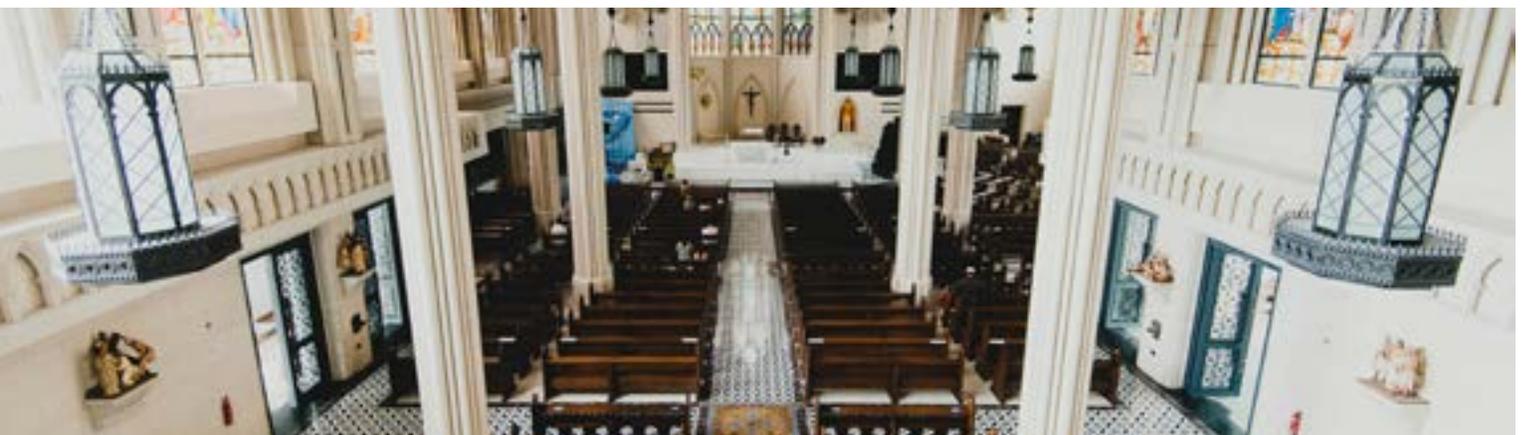
Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?
4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?
5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making your confession and hearing the absolution affect how you live this week?
4. What strength or comfort did you receive as you participated in worship today?
5. What was the Gospel message you heard today and who did you share it with?
6. Who did you speak with that you can remember in prayer this week?



Session 15: Moving Forward with Intentional Discipleship

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

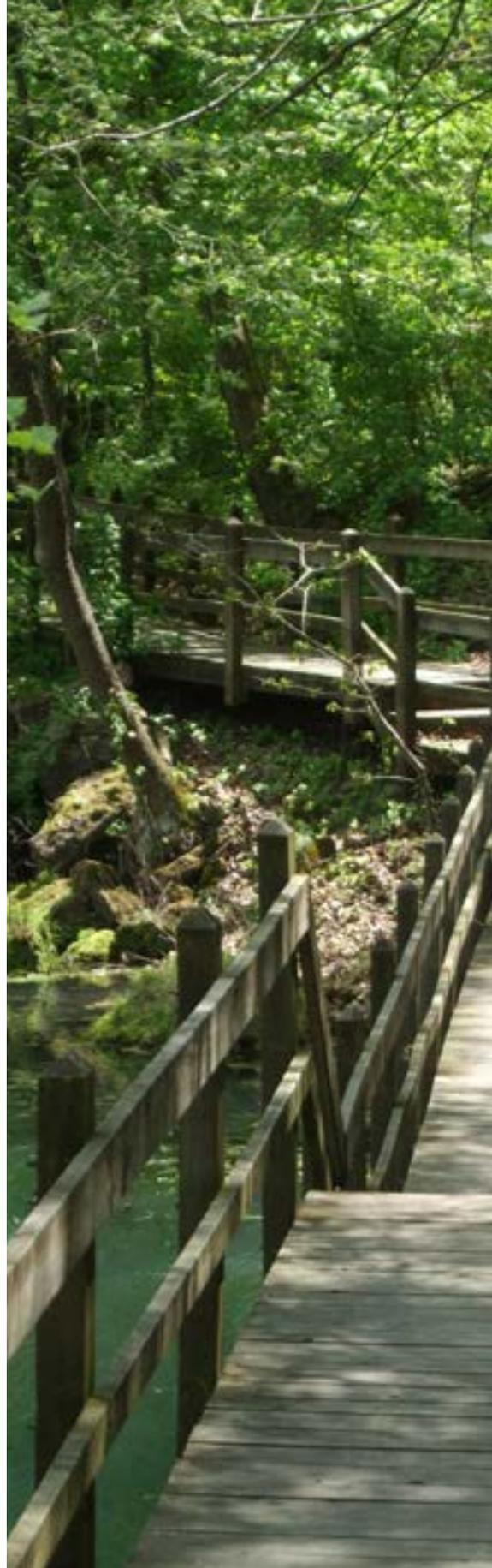
Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections from the prior week.

Introduction of Session Focus

This entire process, of growing as a follower of Jesus and becoming a disciple-maker, is completely dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit. As we spend time with Jesus through his Word in Holy Scripture, reading, meditating, reflecting, praying, and listening to his voice, we come to know him in a deeper way. It is that same Holy Spirit that reveals the gap between our current reality and his intended future for our life. It is the same Holy Spirit who guides our steps, moving us forward in living a life of faith, following Jesus. This is precisely where faith and obedience meet!

In session two we looked at the importance of intentionality in discipleship. If we are not intentional about our personal walk with Jesus, we risk drifting away from him. If we are not intentional about having faith conversations with others, they probably will not happen. If we are not intentional about setting times for worship, prayer, and personal devotions, our faith lives will begin to stagnate. As we wrap up this NALC Life-to-Life Experience, it is time to be intentional and begin to plan where we will go from here, as individuals, as a group, and as a congregation.



Day of week start:

Life Planning

Life Planning is simply being intentional in living out the priorities of your life. Over the past eight sessions we began the process of developing a life plan by looking various aspects of our lives such as:

- **How we set and keep our priorities**
- **Our faith lives**
- **Our family lives**
- **Our financial lives**
- **Health and Wellness**
- **Setting healthy boundaries**
- **Servant leadership**

This is just the beginning of the process. Our suggestion is that over the next few weeks you revisit these areas and ask yourself what you must keep doing, stop doing and start doing in each of these areas to be in alignment with your stated priorities, the holy scriptures and your understanding of the Christian walk. Once you have answered these questions write out your action steps and make a commitment to review your life plan on a regular basis. You may also want to incorporate other areas of your life or relationships into your life plan.

Time in the Word

Scripture reading — Ephesians 2:4-10

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

1. What words or phrases stand out for you in this scripture passage?
2. What does this scripture reveal about God's intention for you?
3. How does knowing God's intention for you help you to be more intentional in your life?

[Watch Video: Life Planning for Individuals and Congregations by Rev. David Keener](#)

Large Group Discussion

1. What did you find most helpful or challenging in the video?
2. How do you feel about the idea of having a Life Plan?
3. Where has God shown up during our NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience for you?
4. Are we willing and ready to make a commitment to see NALC Life-to-Life discipleship become a part of our personal and parish lives?

Small Group Break-out sessions

Gather in groups of two or three.

Discipling Conversations:

A key emphasis of this NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience is intentionality. Having a life plan is an excellent tool for keeping ourselves focused on our priorities. As a group, discuss the idea of developing a life plan. An excellent resource for developing a life plan is Michael Hyatt and Daniel Harkavy's book, *Living Forward*.

As a group discuss what your next step(s) will be as individuals, a group and as a congregation. Use the flow of discipling conversations to help focus and plan (*see graphic on page 274*).

Where are you/we now? (Current Reality)

Where do you/we want to be? (Vision)

Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values & priorities? (Alignment)

How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)

What resources will you need?

How can I hold you accountable?

Set a time for your small group to meet and reflect on the daily devotions between the sessions.

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups and their time with the NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience.

Suggestion: You may want to add more time to this final session and set time aside for extra prayer and discussion of next steps as individuals, small groups, and as a congregation. Focus on SMART goals to keep

the momentum going. Continue to seek and make opportunities for discipling conversations in the church and out in the world.

Close in prayer. Remember to lift up to the Lord all you've seen and heard in this time together.

Helpful Resources

Living Forward: A Proven Plan to Stop Drifting and Get the Life You Want by Michael Hyatt and Daniel Harkavy

Living Forward assessment: www.livingforwardassessment.com

Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster

Prayer: Finding the Hearts True Home by Richard Foster

Joining Jesus: Show Me How by Rev. Greg Finke

The Hammer of God by Bo Giertz

Practical Information

This last session of daily devotions follows the same format, and can be used as a daily devotion like the previous fourteen. However, it can also be used in other applications as well. It can be used as a guide for having your personal retreat day to craft a life plan. It could also be used over the course of a longer period of time that you set aside for the purpose of reflection to prepare for writing your life plan or as a guide to review your life plan.



Weekday 1

Scripture readings — Isaiah 43:1-3a

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, 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 Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

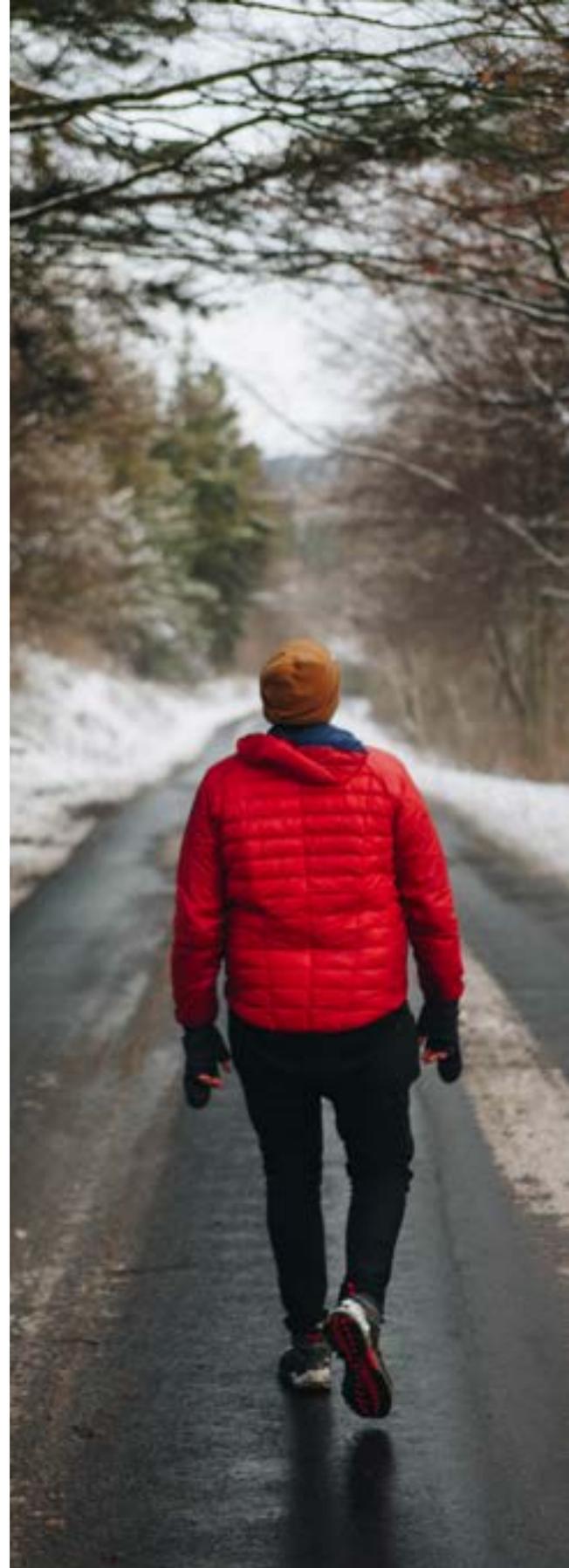
Galatians 5:5-6

For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture passages a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What do you learn of God’s character in these passages?



Day of week start:



4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Wrap Up Review

In our very first video (session 1) we were challenged to examine our disciple walk as a response to living as “therefore” people. What does that mean to you now, after all the time and energy you’ve put into this experience?

Life Planning Reflection #1: Foundation

Identity roots our planning. What words, images or Scriptures root you and give you a foundation as you begin life planning?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 2

Scripture readings — Psalm 42:1-2

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, or the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

Matthew 7:7-11

[Jesus taught,] “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”

Jeremiah 29:11-14

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scriptures a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What are you seeking?
4. What are you seeking from God?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Wrap Up Review

Review your action steps from all the sessions and daily meditations.

Which are completed? Which are still works in progress?

Offer a prayer to God for the completions, change of plans, and those still in progress.

Life Planning Reflection #2: What do I need?

When you put pencil to paper to begin to make a life plan, first you need to identify your needs.

What do you need for your health, emotional well-being, spiritual well-being, meaningful work, healthy family, finances, setting priorities, keeping healthy boundaries etc.?

Who can you share it with to help encourage and support you?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today that you are longing for?

Weekday 3

Scripture readings — Psalm 119:10-18

With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!

I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes!

With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth.

In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.

I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.

I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

Isaiah 42:6-9

I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols. Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scriptures a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. How does the Lord speak to you? What opportunities have you intentionally created to listen?

4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Wrap Up Review

What questions, skills, or habits were new to you before you began this experience?

What challenges did you experience in this process?

What benefits did you experience?

Which do you plan to keep doing, even though they are no longer “homework”?

Life Planning Reflection #3: God’s Word and My Life Plan

You identified your needs (p. 246), now before you start crafting a plan for each area of need, pause, reflect, and pray through the question, “What does God’s Word have to say about this area of my Life Plan?”

Health:

Emotional well-being:

Spiritual well-being (faith):

Meaningful work:

Family life:

Finances:

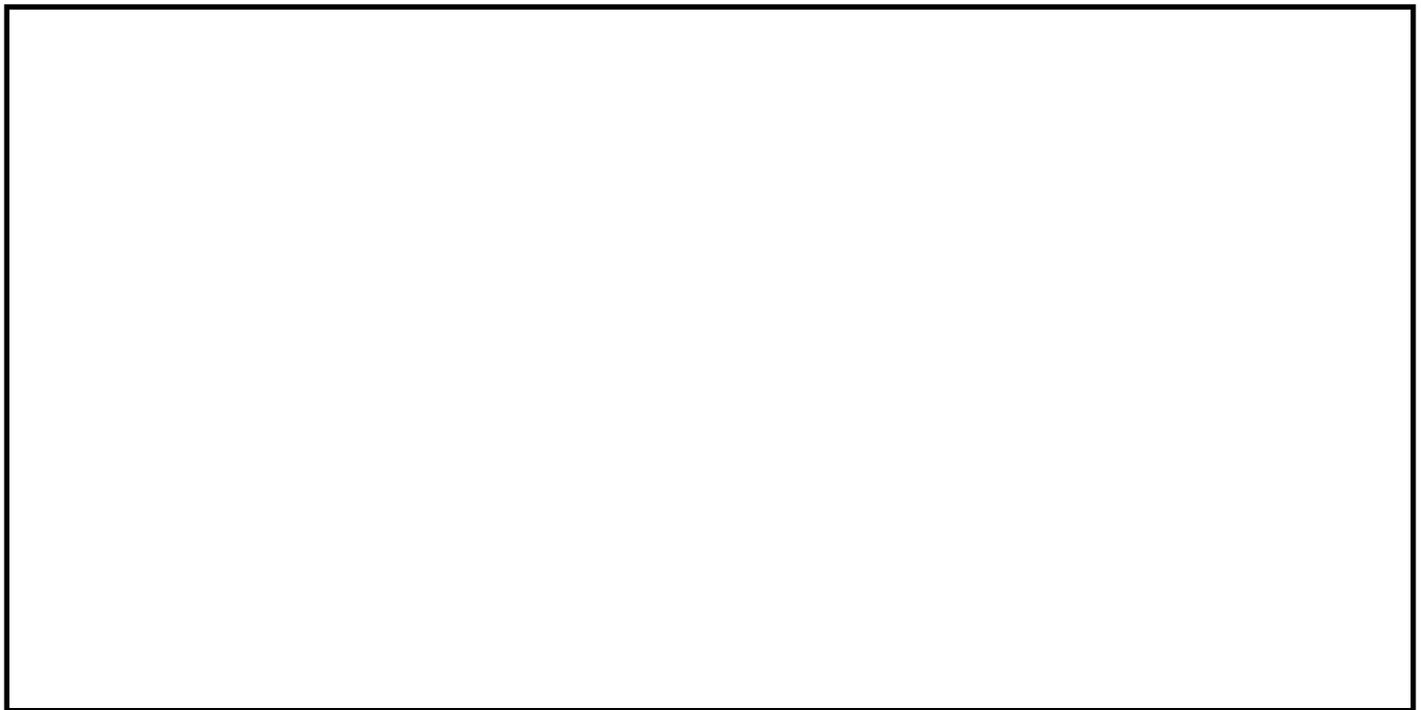
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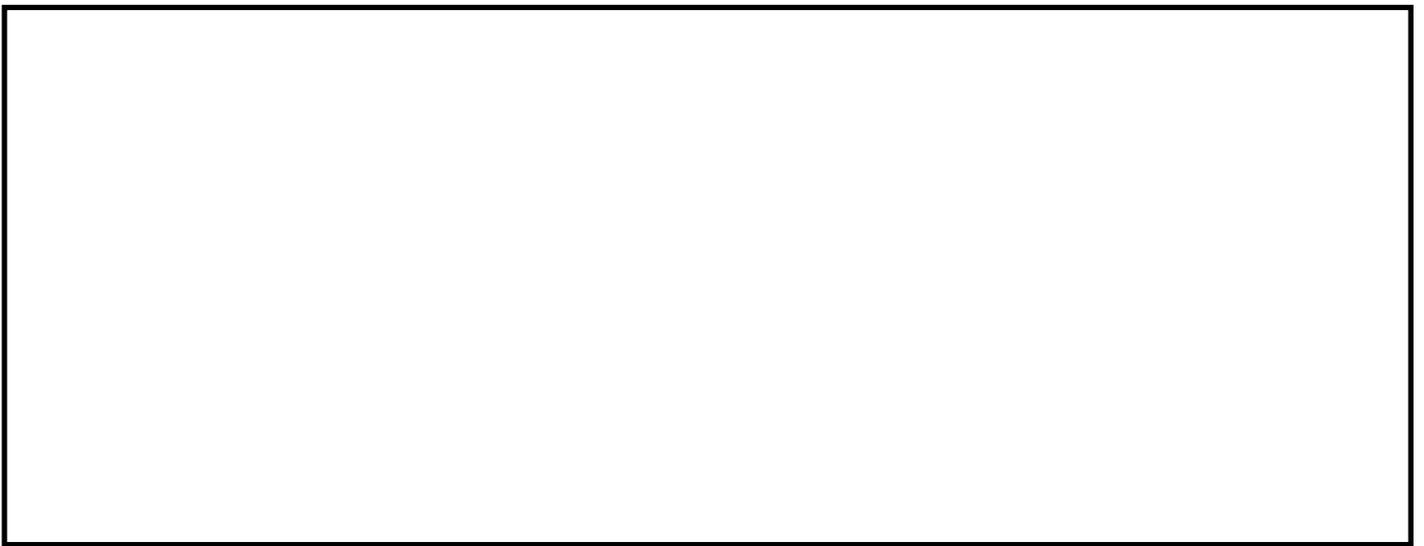
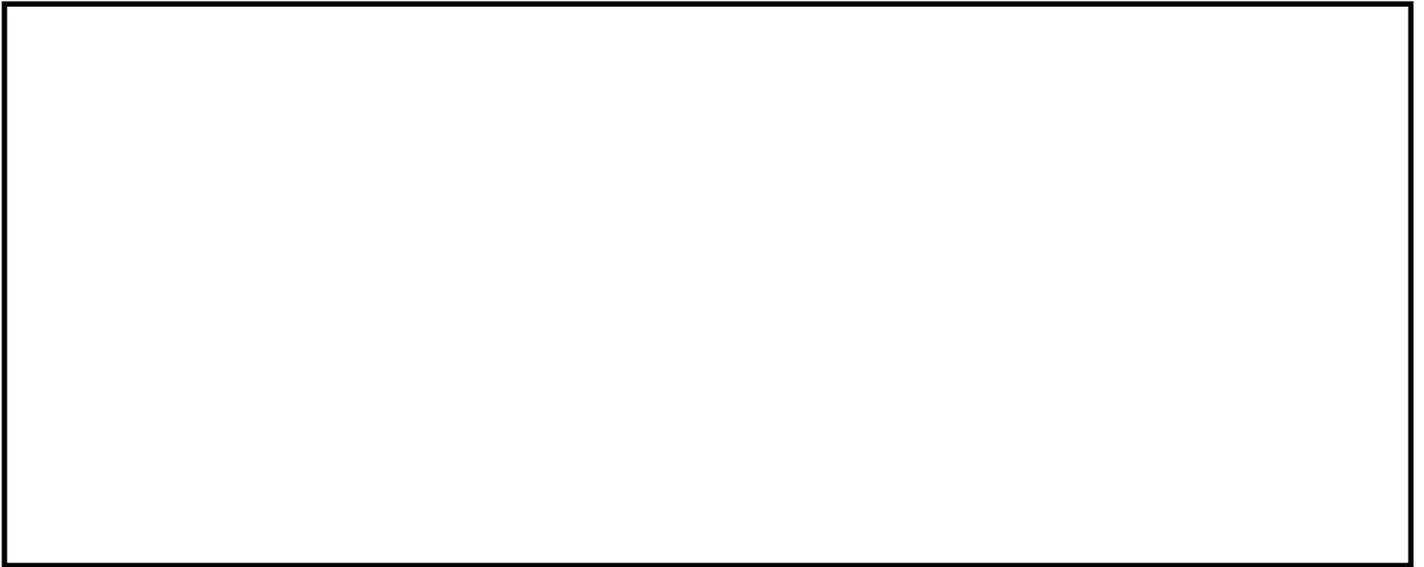
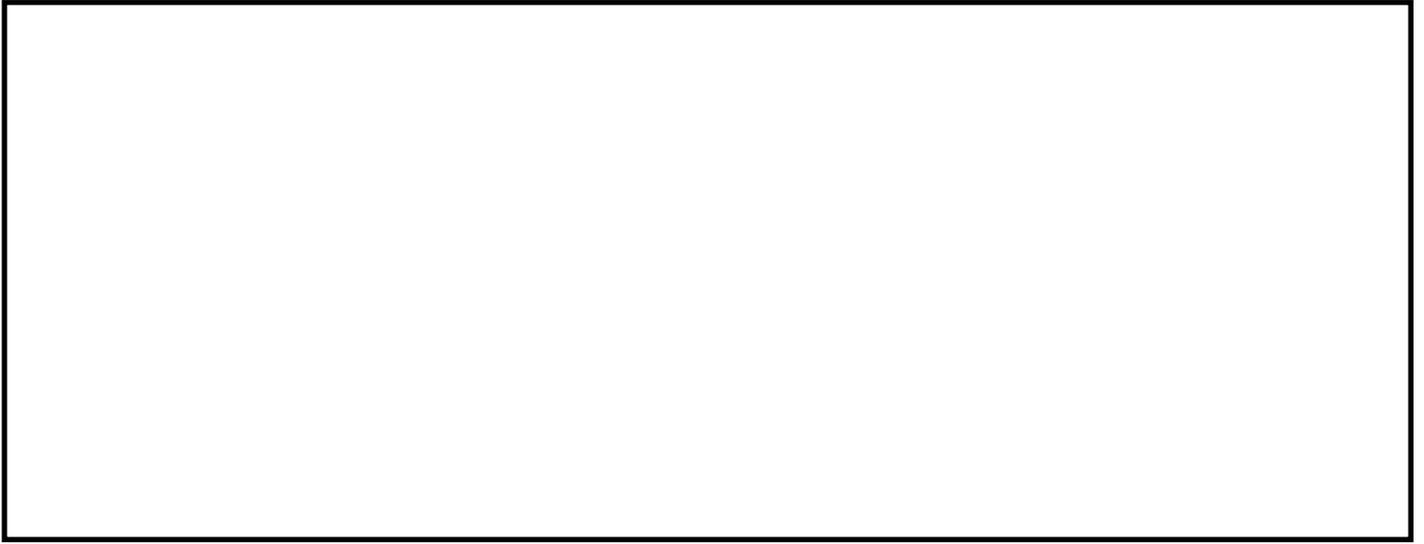
Healthy boundaries:

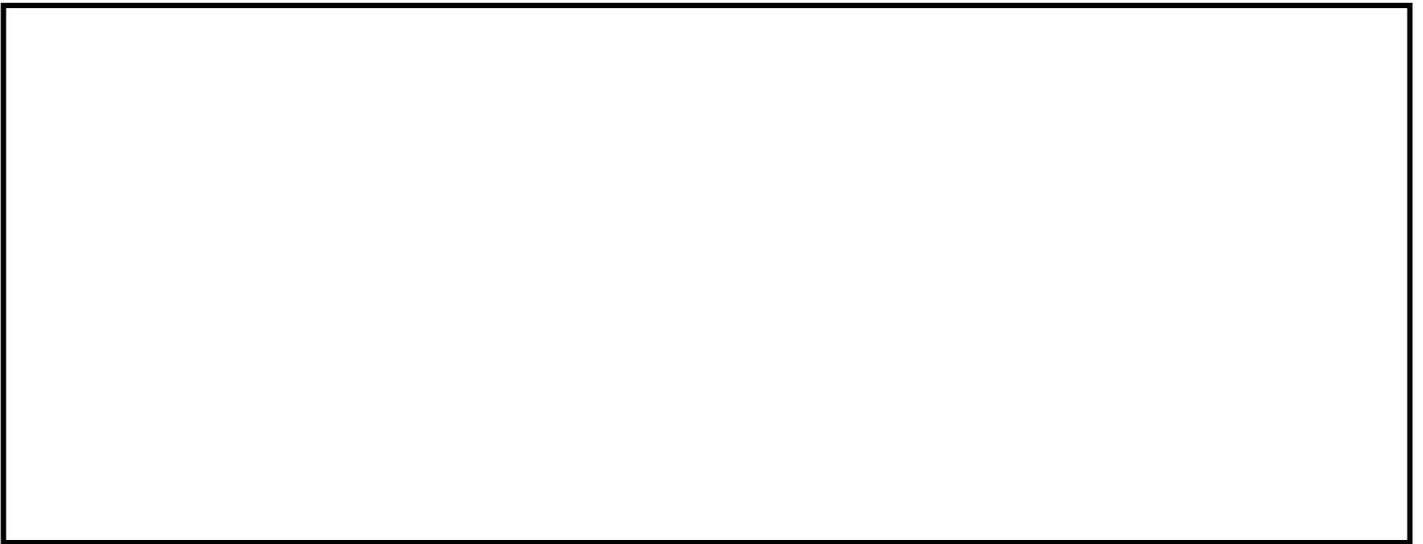
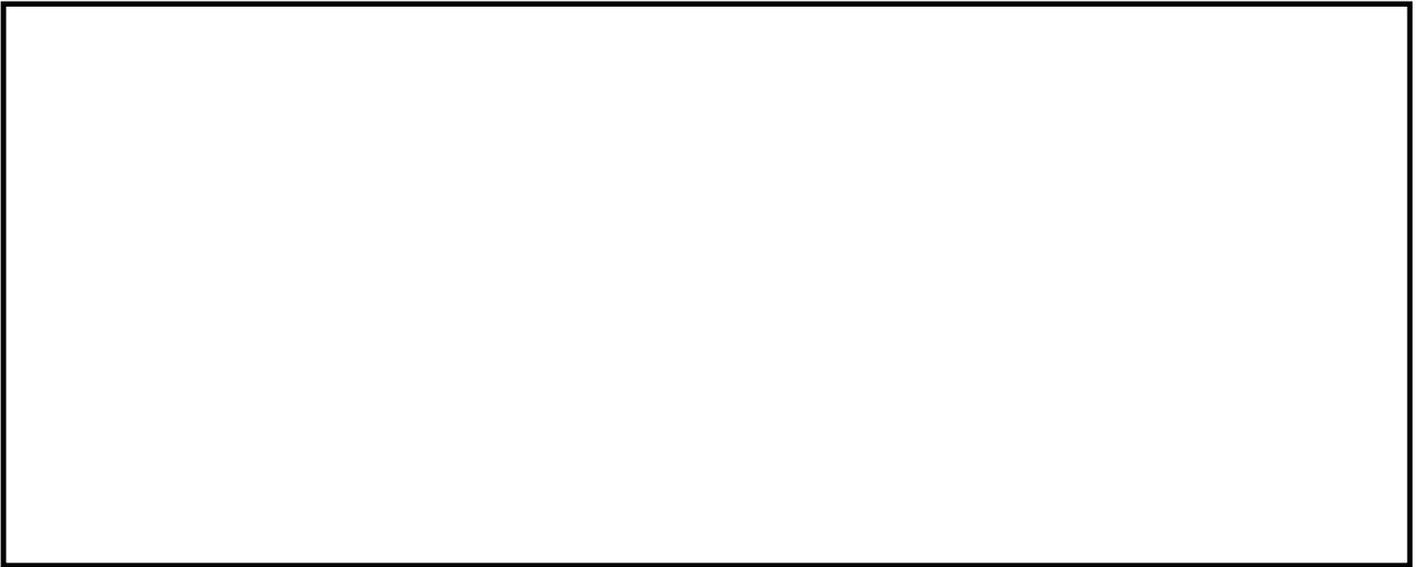
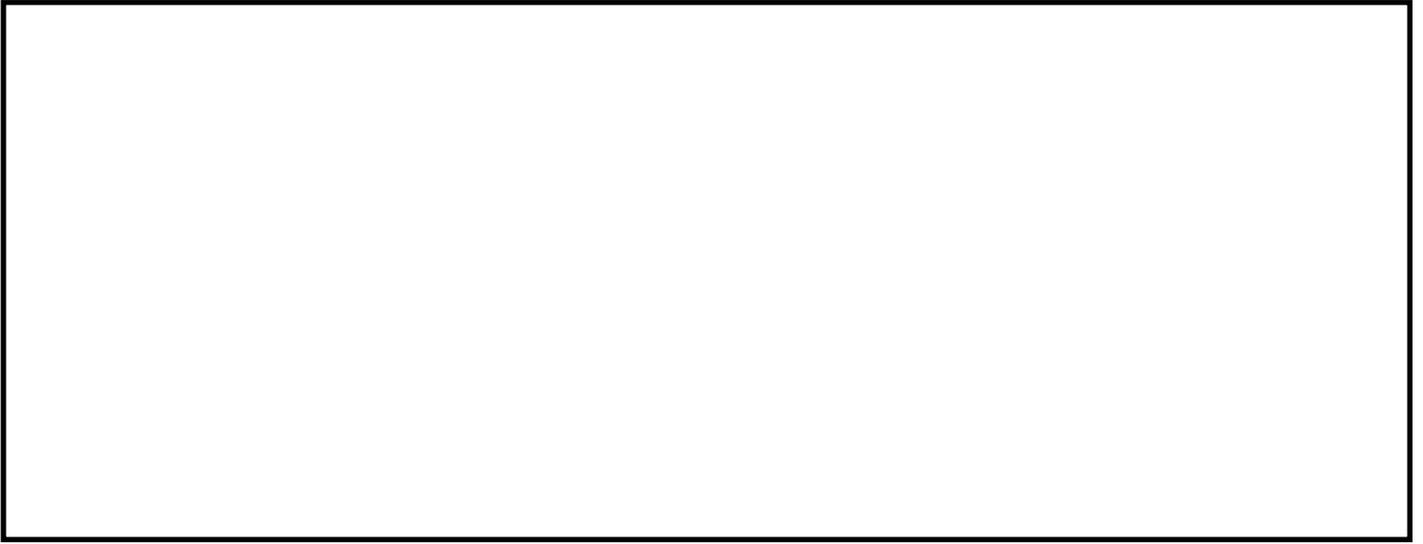
Servant leadership:

Other:

Once you've filled in thoughts from God's Word about each part of your life plan, begin sketching out your plan. You can always come back and tweak it! Remember to use SMART Goals for your action steps. Use a different box for each area of your life plan.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for sketching out a life plan. The box is currently blank.





Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 4

Scripture Readings — 1 John 3:18-24

Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

Matthew 5:13-16

[Jesus said,] "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scriptures a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. How is God reflected in your actions and interactions and the choices you make?

4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Wrap Up Review

How did the NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience challenge you?

How did it encourage you?

How were you changed by this experience?

Life Planning Reflection #4: Reflection of My Identity and Faith

Let's get specific: Go back and look at your plan. How does it reflect your identity and faith?

How do your plans make God visible to others around you?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How do these passages focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How are these passages moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5

Scripture readings — Psalm 37:23-24

The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Zephaniah 3:14-17

Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: “Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How do you respond to obstacles?
4. What promises or wisdom do you see in the Scriptures above? What other Scriptures help you move through obstacles?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Wrap Up Review

1. What obstacles did you experience during the NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience? How were they worked through?
2. What obstacles do you see now for the next steps you have planned? What Scriptures might you turn to for encouragement?
3. Pray to God about these worries. Who else can you ask to pray with you?

Life Planning Reflection #5: Obstacles in My Way

What obstacles do you see in completing your action steps for your Life Plan?

How will you manage them?

How will you address these obstacle in prayer? Who can you ask to pray with you?

Daily Journal

Reflecting on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take.

Do you need to go back to your life plan and tweak anything? (pages 249-251)

Saturday (before worship...preparing)

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?

2. What prayers will I lift up?

3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?

4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?

5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?

2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?

3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?

4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?

5. What was the Gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?

6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?

Weekday 6

Scripture readings — 2 Corinthians 4:5-6

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Psalm 139:13-18

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scriptures a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. How do these Scriptures shape how you see yourself?

4. How do these passages inform your actions?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Wrap Up Review

Spending time with the word daily changes your self-view. How has this habit of intentional time with the Word and in reflection shaped or reshaped how you see yourself and others?

Life Planning Reflection #6: Review Your Foundation

Are there any words, images or Scriptures that you want to add to your list on page 244 that root you and give you a foundation?

Are there any you want to let go?

Take time to find a tool and conversation partner to explore your God-given giftedness. A few to explore are: a spiritual gifts inventory, DISC, Strengthsfinder, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or Enneagram.

What did you discover? How are you using them now? How could you use these gifts to bring others to walk with Jesus?

Pray and thank God for the identity he is forming in you and the gifts he has and continue to develop in you.

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?



Weekday 7

Scripture readings — Psalm 130:1-6

O Lord, you have searched me and known me!

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

James 2:14-22

What good is it, my brothers (and sisters), if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scriptures a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How does being known by God shape how you share your faith through words and actions?
4. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Wrap Up Review

How has your attitude and thinking about what being a disciple is changed throughout your NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience?

How does your life help model a life with Jesus?

Life Planning Reflection #7: Modeling Faith for Others

How do your action steps and life plan model your faith for others? Be specific.

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you longing for?

Weekday 8

Scripture readings — Ephesians 4:1-7

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

2 Corinthians 4:7-15

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, “I believed, and so I spoke,” we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scriptures a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What treasure do you have (according to these passages)?
4. In what ways does your life reflect the treasure you have? How do you share it with others?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Wrap Up Review

How have your ideas and thoughts about sharing your faith with others changed throughout your NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience?

How do you hope to invite others to a life of following Jesus?

Life Planning Reflection #8: Don't Forget to Bring Others Along

How do your action steps and plan help lead other people in the direction of following Jesus? Be specific.

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 9

Scripture reading — 1 Kings 19:4-19

While [Elijah] himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.

All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.

And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by."

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him."

So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. (NIV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How does God address Elijah's weariness?

4. What are you weary about? How is God caring for you?

5. What does God send Elijah to do at the end?

6. Who might God be sending to walk with you?

7. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Wrap Up Review

How have your opinions, attitudes, and ideas around community changed throughout your NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience?

What experiences were challenging? What experiences were blessings?



Life Planning Reflection #9: Time Away

It is very important at some point to be able to get away from the daily grind so you can focus on your life plan without distraction. Consider scheduling a time away to reflect on God's Word and refine your plan.

Who can you ask to pray for you and encourage you?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity "in Christ," and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 10

Scripture Readings — Acts 1:8

[Jesus said,] "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Matthew 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Psalm 105:1-6

Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!
Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works!
Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice!
Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!
Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,
O offspring of Abraham, his servant, children of Jacob, his chosen ones!

Romans 15: 7, 13

Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.
May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scriptures a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. What power is promised to you?
4. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit working in and through you?
5. What does the Great Commission mean to you?
6. How can you live out the Great Commission in your daily interactions?

7. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Wrap Up Review

What are your plans to keep practicing discipling conversations?

Who will you talk with as you continue walking with Jesus?

Who will you ask to talk to as they walk with Jesus?

What opportunities do you have to look for conversations to point others to a walk with Jesus?

Life Planning Reflection #10: Review Your Plan

Review your plan with trusted people. Ask them if it reflects you well.

Use page 272 to create an updated life plan from all of your edits you've made so far.

Schedule a time to review your Life Plan in three months, six months, and one year from now.

Who can you ask to encourage and pray for you while you try to move from a plan to a way of life?

Daily Journal

Reflect on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take.

Review and update the statement you wrote last week. What are several steps you could take to move in the direction God is leading you?

Saturday *(before worship...preparing)*

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Looking back over the week, we consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?

4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?

5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday *(after worship...pondering)*

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday school lesson most caught your attention? What exactly touched your heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how you live this week?
4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?
5. What was the Gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?
6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?

My Life Plan

Appendix

Covenant of Discipleship

I, _____ am covenanting with a discipleship group to embark on a journey together where we will study the Scriptures, pray together and reflect daily on the focus areas of the NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience.

I promise to participate fully, even when it might be a struggle.

I promise to support my fellow group members in an environment of encouragement, trust, and faith.

I promise to hold what is said in the group in strict confidence, respecting my fellow disciples' dignity, integrity, and personal stories.

Signed: _____ Date: _____



Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Timely
 goals

Luther's Explanation to the Lord's Prayer (Small Catechism)

Introduction: Our Father, Who art in heaven.

What does this mean? With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.

God would hereby tenderly invite us to believe that He is our true Father, and that we are His true children, so that we may ask Him with all boldness and confidence, as children ask their dear father. (Related Bible verses: 1 John 3:1, Romans 8:15, Ephesians 4:6, Galatians 3:26)

The First Petition: Hallowed be Thy name.

What does this mean? God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also.

How is God's name kept holy? God's name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God's Word profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father! (Related Bible verses: John 17:1, Jeremiah 23:28, Ezekiel 22:26, Romans 2:23-24)

The Second Petition: Thy Kingdom come.

What does this mean? The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

How does God's kingdom come? God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity. (Related Bible verses: Mark 1:15, Colossians 2:6, Matthew 9:38, 2 Thessalonians 3:1, Acts 4:24-30, Luke 12:32, Revelation 22:20)

The Third Petition: Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

What does this mean? The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

How is God's will done? God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die. This is His good and gracious will.

(Related Bible verses: 1 Timothy 2:4, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Acts 14:22, Matthew 16:24, Hebrews 12:6,11, 1 Peter 5:8, 1 John 2:15-17, Romans 7:8, Romans 16:20, 1 Peter 1:5, Psalm 119:35, 2 Corinthians 12:9)

The Fourth Petition: Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean? God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread? Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like. (Related Bible verses: Psalm 145:15-16, Matthew 5:45, Ephesians 5:20, Luke 5:1-7, 1 Timothy 6:8, Matthew 6:33-34)

The Fifth Petition: And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us. (Related Bible verses: Psalm 19:12, Luke 18:13, Genesis 32:10, Luke 15:21, Matthew 18:21-22, Genesis 50:15-21, Mark 11:25-26, Matthew 18:23-35)

The Sixth Petition: And lead us not into temptation.

What does this mean? God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory. (Related Bible verses: James 1:13-14, 1 Peter 5:8-9, Matthew 18:7, Proverbs 1:10, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Ephesians 6:13)

The Seventh Petition: But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven. (Related Bible verses: Psalm 91:10, Acts 14:22, Hebrews 12:6, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Job 5:19, 2 Timothy 4:18, Luke 2:29-30, Philippians 1:23)

Conclusion: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

What does this mean? This means that I should be certain that these petitions are pleasing to our Father in heaven, and are heard by Him; for He Himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us. Amen, amen means “yes, yes, it shall be so.”



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