



Small Group Resource:

Living As Disciples From Worship to Discipleship

4 Weeks

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Introduction to the Format

There is a pattern for each week. The times are suggestions and are loosely based on an hour timeframe. The times should be modified, as needed. Each session will consist of the following elements:

Fellowship – Snacks or a Meal (10 minutes with snacks; longer, obviously, if there is a meal)

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). Each session will begin with an opening question to foster dialogue and help the participants settle in to the theme for the week. These questions are meant to be done in micro groups of two or three people.

Optional Exercises. Weeks 2 through 4 contain an optional exercise that bridges the ending exercises from the week prior. If the group chooses to use these exercises, which will help the ideas from the lessons become more practical, the facilitator will need to adjust the time accordingly, as they are not figured into the timeline.

Group Dialogue (Approximately 30 minutes). This guide does not include a lot of questions. The intent is for group dialogue and not merely giving the correct answer. During the dialogue sections, you will see guidance and possible answers to the given questions with brackets []. These are only possible answers and are not meant to be exhaustive of other answers. It is a helpful practice to allow participants plenty of time to process these questions internally. Don't be afraid of silence.

Prayer (10 minutes). Allow each participant who would like to do so to lift up a person or situation he or she would like the group to be in prayer over. Following each request, the leader will pray, "Lord, in your mercy..." and the participants will respond, "Hear our prayers." If the situation is warranted and if the participant is willing, surround the participant and lay hands on him/her and allow those who are willing to do so to pray for this person and/or situation.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). Ask for a volunteer to send the group out with the printed blessing; or read the prayer in unison.

Week 1: Living as Disciples – How to Be a Neighbor

[Luke 10:25:37](#)

Fellowship – Snacks (10 minutes)

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, discuss the following question, “When was a time you were in need? Who helped you?”

Group Dialogue (Approximately 30 minutes)

Read [Luke 10:25:37](#)

- The legal expert quotes Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 6:5. Read Leviticus 19:17-18. Who is the “neighbor” in this context? [A fellow Israelite.] Now, read Leviticus 19:33-34. According to these verses, who should also qualify as a “neighbor”? [Anyone among them in need.]
- Why do you think the legal expert was not satisfied with Jesus’ initial answer (vv. 25-29)? [It was not a matter of understanding who qualifies as a neighbor for the legal scholar (he knew the answer), but of how he would have to live out and apply the law.]
- In what way might the priest and Levite’s actions been justifiable? [Merely touching the beaten man, who could have been mistaken for a corpse, would have resulted in becoming unclean and being unable to have social interactions or minister to the community. Yet, they are headed home, so these would not have been as justifiable as if they were headed to Jerusalem.]
- What do you already know about the relationship between Jews and Samaritans? [Jews looked down on Samaritans. Jews would not eat with Samaritans.] Why would Jesus’ use of a Samaritan have been surprising, if not shocking, to his audience? [They would have expected the priest or Levite to be the hero of the story, and their actions were to some extent justifiable. To use a Samaritan as the hero of the story would have not just been surprising, but unthinkable to a Jewish audience.]
- Who might be modern-day “Samaritans”? [Undocumented residents, AIDS patients, etc.] Who are the modern-day Samaritans in your community?
- What might Jesus be implying by making the Samaritan the hero of this story? What might that mean for us?
- List all the ways the Samaritan “did mercy.” [He came near, was moved to compassion, went to the beaten man, bandaged his wounds, poured oil and wine on the wounds, put the man on his animal, brought him to an inn, gave money for the innkeeper to continue his care.]
- In groups of two or three, have participants name one person they will seek to extend mercy to this week.

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

Creator God, who has created all people in God’s image, we give you thanks for the rich diversity of this world. Give us the eyes to see each person we come in contact with; give us ears of compassion and eyes of faith. Help us to see our own areas of need and where you are calling us to be in ministry with those who are vulnerable and in need. Amen.

Week 2: Living as Disciples – Love by Listening

[Luke 10:38-42](#)

Fellowship – Snacks (10 minutes)

Gathering and Opening (10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, discuss the following: “Do you find periods of silence and stillness welcome or anxiety producing? Why do you think you feel the way you do?”

Optional exercise: Break into the groups from the end of last week’s session. Give a report regarding the people to whom you attempted to extend mercy. Discuss: “What went well? What did you learn?”

Group Dialogue (Approximately 30 minutes). Before reading the passage, take two minutes of silence. Read: [Luke 10:38-42](#). Following the passage, take another two minutes of silence.

- In John’s Gospel we read of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. Lazarus has no part in this story. Since it takes place in Galilee and not Bethany, the siblings likely are not the same. It is interesting and important that Mary and Martha are named outside of their relationship with any male counterpart and that this meeting takes place in “her home” (v. 38). It displays female leadership during the ministry of Jesus. What is the church’s role in listening to and lifting up female leadership?
- What is Martha’s assumption in verse 40 about Mary’s behavior (or lack thereof)? [That Jesus will agree with her about Mary’s behavior.]
- What is Martha busy doing (v. 40)? [Luke doesn’t tell us. Perhaps the ambiguity points to the numerous “important” kinds of work we choose over the importance of developing our relationship with Christ, as Mary was doing.]
- In a two-minute period, work as a group to name as many activities as you can that can become a hinderance to seeking God.
- What activities can we do to put us at the feet of Christ? [Prayer, Bible study, fasting (can be from social media, television, food, drinks, etc.), worship, acts of compassion, etc.].
- Choose one (or more) activities that you will commit to this week that will help you intentionally be at the feet of Christ.

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). Before ending in prayer, spend at least one minute in silence:

Almighty God, while we are often looking for you in the activity and in the miraculous, you often seek us in the quiet and still places. Good Shepherd of our souls, guide us into green pastures that provide needed rest and nurture. Heal us from our obsession with efficiency and productivity that we might be available to be used by you for the building of the kingdom. Amen.

Week 3: Living as Disciples – Letting God Love You

[Luke 11:1-13](#)

Fellowship – Snacks (10 minutes)

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, discuss the following: “Are you afraid to pray in public? Why do you think so many people are afraid to pray in public?”

Optional exercise: Break into the groups from the end of last week’s session. Give a report regarding the activity each participant chose. Discuss: “What went well? What did you learn?”

Read: [Luke 11:1-13](#)

- How did you learn to pray? Who were your role models?
- Why do you think Jesus follows up his instructions with what to pray with the encouragement to persevere in prayer? What might that say about the nature of prayer? [Prayer is not transactional, but is about developing an ongoing, trust-filled, dependent relationship with God.]
- What does the second illustration that Jesus gives (vv.11-3) tell us about the attitude of how we should pray and the One who is listening to our prayers? [We pray as beloved children to a God who is eager to hear, knows what we need better than we do, and desires to respond.]
- What do we learn about God, ourselves, and our relationship with God and the world through the Lord’s Prayer?
- If God already knows what we need, knows the best response better than we could imagine, why do you think we are still commanded to pray? [God responds to prayer; develop an ongoing, sanctifying relationship with God.]
- If there is uncertainty of how to pray among the group, share the A.C.T.S. outline for prayer:
 - Acknowledge – acknowledge who God is
 - Confess – confess our unworthiness and God’s assurance
 - Thanksgiving – give thanks for the many blessings we have received
 - Supplication – offer request to God, boldly, for loved ones, for the church, and for yourself.
- In groups of two or three, allow participants to share prayer requests and take turns praying for one another’s request.
- In groups of two or three, have participants name one person they will seek to be in prayer for this week. (It can be a member of the group or someone outside the group.)

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). End by praying the following or similar prayer:

“Our Father, in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.”

Week 4: Living as Disciples – The Love Never Stops Here

[Luke 12:13-32](#)

Fellowship – Snacks (10 minutes)

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, discuss: “What do you collect and why?”

Optional exercise: Break into the groups from the end of last week’s session. Give a report regarding the people whom participants prayed for during the week. Discuss: “What went well? What did you learn?”

Group Dialogue (Approximately 30 minutes)

Read: [Luke 12:13-32](#)

- Who does the man in the parable address in verse 17? [Himself.] Who, then, does the man not consider? [God and God’s guidance.]
- What difference, if at all, does it make if we read verses 29 and 30 more literally? That is to say, read those verses, making each of the second person pronouns (you) to read “you all” (or y’all)? Read the verse again and discuss.
- Read the following passages: Matthew 6:19-25; Mark 10:21-26; Luke 12:15. What do we learn from these passages (and others) about wealth and trusting God? [Wealth is not a sign of success and, in fact, it can be a hinderance to living an abundant life.]
- When is something merely a possession and when is a possession a thing that possesses us? Can our religiosity become a thing that possesses us? [We can live for God or merely be satisfied by the things about God.]
- In groups of two or three, discuss options for the group or individuals to practice generous stewardship. What are mission opportunities that are in need of funds locally? Across the United Methodist connection? (If unsure, check the resources below – The Advance.)

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). End by praying the following together:

You have created us to be more than recipients of your love. Rather, we have been created in your self-giving image. Work your grace in us, so that we might be vessels of your love, mercy, and grace that we might be disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Amen.