

Practice Discipleship Learning Curriculum

2012 ELCA Youth Gathering

Learning Outcome:

Participants will demonstrate the capacity to articulate their unique witness.

That witness will include....

- *Claiming and valuing their baptismal identity
- *The ability to talk about the grace that Jesus offers
- *Allowing themselves to wrestle with the questions of faith
- *Demonstrating openings to the movement of the spirit in their life

Introduction

Using the 7 Faith Practices as a guide, we will reach the goals of the Discipleship Day through both large and small group interactions. Discipleship is being called to walk with Christ, equipped to live like Christ, and to be sent by Christ to love and serve others in the world. Youth will connect with a community of disciples in their synods. They will practice expressing their faith within small groups. During the Discipleship Tour, youth will share their faith stories, what they learned, and take pictures to share with their faith communities back home as well as post on the Discipleship Day Facebook Page and (need more info from Tech team- Gathering Twitter Feed/or website)

Definitions of the Faith Practices

(Adapted from the "Faith Practices Assessment Tool" found at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Discipleship/Christian-Education/Discipleship.aspx>)

Worship is the practice of "stepping away" from our daily lives to intentionally love God. When we worship, we gain a deeper understanding and experience the majesty, mercy and mystery of God. In worship, we praise God for being God, for being our God. Our worship includes joining together regularly in a community; because in Christian community, we collectively bring our talents, gifts, struggles, and joys and offer them to God; we do this as a part of God's mission, sent to bring love to a broken world.

The regular **STUDY** of the Bible as well as books that help to enliven its message is a key way a disciple practices loving and following God. There are many ways to study. Sometimes it happens sometimes privately through personal Bible study and a regular devotional time but it can also happen publically as a family, in a small group, or even in a larger gathering like your youth group. Through reading and studying the scriptures, God's word becomes active in our lives. For thousands of years the words of

Jesus, the teachings of the prophets and apostles, and the stories of God's people have revealed God's heart and hope for us and for our world.

Jesus invited, so as disciples we must **INVITE**. The practice of invitation is when we share what God has done for us and others. And we can't wait to tell them about it. And the best part, who did Jesus invite: Zaccheus, the short dude, tax collector, who didn't fit in, the woman at the well who had many husbands, he invited young fisherman, Jesus invites young and old, the good, and the not so good, all to join him. And Jesus invites each of us. The greatest thing about being a disciple and inviting others to come and see Jesus is that when we invite, the Holy Spirit takes over and works miracles and plants seeds, and the heart of those we invite are touched.

PRAYER is the way a disciple enjoys being in an intimate relationship with God. Prayer may be public or private. It may be a conversation with God or a ritual. It may be silent, loud, spoken or sung or even an action like dance. It may be simple or profound. Prayer is powerful. Prayer is speaking to God, and listening to God's purpose for us. Jesus modeled the importance of prayer. Throughout the Gospels, we read how Jesus prayed. Whatever the opportunity or challenge, Jesus turned to God first and sought guidance. As his disciples we should do the same.

Jesus walked alongside his disciples and showed them the way. His attitude and actions, taught them how to live faithfully in the world. Jesus expects us to follow his example. This faith practice calls for us to **ENCOURAGE** each other. We are called to encourage, console, and inspire one another to live like a follower of Jesus. The most powerful message we can give our neighbors and others we meet is that Jesus loves them; he forgives them, and is generous and gracious to them.

As Disciples, we have no other choice than to love Jesus by loving others. How do we do this? **SERVE**. Jesus served others on numerous occasions in the Bible, his actions not only benefited those in need, but also served to inspire and motivate his disciples to do the same. By our actions, we can serve our neighbors. We can put our faith into action. We can help those in need by listening to those who need to be heard, we can serve the hungry, we can rebuild lives as well as address the spiritual needs of the people we meet.

God is generous and blesses us abundantly. Everything we have belongs to God. Jesus taught us to **GIVE** with our heart, our spirit, and our possessions. This faith practice is hard to understand. Often times in our world today, we are taught that fulfillment comes from getting more, consuming more, and centering our lives on one's self. Yet Jesus teaches us to give everything to others. At baptism, God gives us spiritual gifts and abilities and he entrusts us to use them to make a difference in this world. As disciples when we learn to give of ourselves we will experience joy like never before.

Practice Discipleship Coach and Small Group Leader Notes

This is your curriculum and this is your synod's day. You know your synod and its youth. Make adjustments to this curriculum to fit your synod's context. The transitions and language should be your own. The content is what we are after. You might consider adding your synod's favorite icebreakers and mixers or songs. Some mixers are included in the curriculum.

One of the sub-goals of this day is to connect participants with the mission of their synod, and how they might get involved. We strongly encourage you to become familiar with your synod's strategic initiatives so the work done here can be a compliment. We have allowed 15 minutes in the curriculum to do this in the way that is best for you. Some examples of how you might share the mission of the synod:

- Add PowerPoint slides of ministries and upcoming events in your synod.
- After small groups finish their activity and discussion for each faith practice, take 1-2 minutes to lift up ministries and events in the synod that connect with that faith practice. You can say, "In our synod you have the opportunity to SERVE by...*(list different ministries that connect with that faith practice)*"
- Focus on one special initiative that is coming up, or celebrate a ministry of significance that captures the essence of your synod's personality and ministry.
- Introduce the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission, and give them a "short" time to affirm and encourage the faith work they are doing at the Gathering, and invite them to deeper involvement in the synod.
- You are encouraged to use youth voices to lift up the synod's mission and invite participation by the young people in the room.

Be creative and consider different people to lead each faith practice or parts of it. For example, during the "Encouragement" practice, two leaders of your team could lead the exercise with the whole synod, or the small group leaders could lead the entire exercise. Ask someone to lead the synod in the Lord's Prayer during the beginning of the faith practice, "Prayer".

There will be a few adjustments in the future. As well as we are waiting on answers from some other teams. Tech Team re: where to post tour pictures and Dome Team re: invitations of grace. Coach's you should be able to download everything you need in April.

Why Small Groups?

Research shows that people remember less than 10% of what they hear, but remember over 80% of what they experience. Positive interaction and discussion will help move teens from just reading and listening to a deeper faith conversation with each other as they share their thoughts about a topic or scripture passage. It is important that everyone be encouraged to participate.

The questions are essential. Jesus frequently posed questions to get people thinking. In this curriculum we do the same. As a coach and small group leader, take the time to read and study the verses as well as look over the questions in advance so that you understand the concept. But remember, it is okay to leave space for silence in your small group. Teens sometimes need time to think about the passage or question before expressing their thoughts out loud. Avoid answering all the questions. If necessary, rephrase the questions until your group understands. A group will quickly become passive and silent if they think the small group leader will do all the talking. Don't be content with just one answer; ask others in the group what they think. Be affirming of all answers. When the group starts talking with each

other and not just answering you, that is a sign of a healthy discussion. If you need to stop and pray, do. Enjoy the conversation, learn from each other, be authentic, and have fun!

Small Group leaders need to be recruited. We recommend one small group leader for every 10 youth. Please send a copy of the curriculum in advance to each small group leader so they can become familiar with the material. We will have copies for each small group leader in a paper gift bag with all their supplies to be picked up as they enter the ballroom before worship. An important note: one of the items in the bags will be a box of markers which the small group leaders will pass out to be used during a portion of worship. The markers must be re-collected by the small group leaders so they can use them during the learning curriculum.

Coaches:

- Encourage your congregations to discuss where they will gather after the discipleship day before they begin their tour.
- Congregations should be reminded that each person should bring their bible with them.
- Consider having music playing pre- and post- the Practice Discipleship day's activities.
- It is critical that you pass out the colored bands during Holy Communion.
- Remind small group leaders at the end of the day to bring their bags with the supplies up to the supply table so they can be repackaged for the next day.
- There is an app called "Group Text" that you might consider using to send a text to all of your congregations with reminders (bring your Bible, ballroom and time). We are looking into the possibility of doing this from the Gathering as well.
- Note that the PowerPoint slides have been inserted in the curriculum script so you'll know when to click to the next slide.
- Consider bringing decorations/banners from your synod

Coaches and Small Group Leaders:

- Encourage all adults to participate in a small group. Intergenerational conversation should be welcomed.
- Encourage everyone to stay in the ballroom. If youth need to go to the bathroom, let them, just ask them to come right back.
- All Supplies will be furnished and delivered to your ballroom:
 - Banners with 7 Faith Practices
 - Nooma Video
 - Colored Bands for each person in your Synod (Worship)
 - Paper Tubs to hold the bands (Worship)
 - Cardboard Sheet for each person in your Synod (Invite)
 - Markers for each small group (Invite-Serve)
 - Blank sheets of paper – 2 for each small group (Serve)
 - Kraft Paper Gift Bags to keep small group leader supplies in.

Practice Discipleship Script: Coach

Set up Faith Practice Banners ahead of time in room.



Start time 9:00 AM

Coach/Emcee: Hello everyone from _____ (Synod). I am _____ your Gathering Coach. Welcome to the Day of Practice Discipleship at the 2012 ELCA Youth Gathering. We are so happy you are here!

Look around this room, today you are with fellow disciples from all across your synod. Let's have a show of hands: How many of you know that you're a part of a synod? (Leaders: please keep a rough estimate of how many kids raise their hands) The word synod comes from a Greek word that means "walking together." Congregations make up the synod. There are 65 synods in the ELCA who are all represented at this gathering. Today is about walking together as the _____ Synod.

Maybe you see some old friends in this room from your synod, but by the end of our time together, we promise you'll make some new friends as well. Let me introduce you to your Synod's Practice Discipleship team. (Introduce your team – musicians, worship leaders, bishop, small group leaders, and Faith Practice Leaders - if there are too many to introduce by name, just ask them to stand and give them a round of applause for everyone helping in the day)

So what is discipleship? Discipleship is being called to walk with Jesus, equipped to live like Jesus, and sent by Jesus to love and serve others in the world! It's something we do every day. Today, we are going to look at seven faith practices that will help us live as disciples. You've already experienced these in the *Getting Ready* materials. Today we are going to devote ourselves again to these practices. Our hope is that you will make these practices part of your daily lives. By practicing our faith we will be better equipped to fulfill God's mission in the world of fixing broken relationship between God and His people, caring for His creating, and loving our neighbors. Bishop Hanson says we do this for the "healing of the world."



Let's begin with worship, our first faith practice. Worship is the practice of "stepping away" from our daily lives to intentionally love God so that we can "step back" into the world refreshed, renewed and ready to do God's work in Jesus' name for the healing of the world. In worship, we experience God's Word, and are fed at the Lord's table with the bread and wine of communion. God's full grace comes to us and restores us, so that we can go out to be God's hands, working to restore the world.

9:15-10:15 Worship During Communion there will be a 3rd station with a paper bucket full of bands for an usher to give out to each participant.

Discipleship Learning Activities

Coach/Emcee Script

10:15 am

Wow! That was awesome! Thank you to our musicians and worship team! Look for times each day that you can step away to love and praise God, and receive the love of God. But remember, worship isn't a private practice. It is also important that you worship with your community regularly when you get back home, in your own congregation or when you are away at college. Through worship, you are equipped and inspired to do God's mission in the world. And... if you are really inspired consider serving on your congregation's or synod's worship team.

So I said there were seven faith practices! You just encountered one, worship. There are six more we are going to encounter today. But first, Jesus not only called the men and women in the Bible whom we call disciples, Jesus called you. Take a look.



Watch Nooma Video "Dust" video length 15.28 minutes.

So what did you think?

Remember: You are called! You are a disciple! Remember I said earlier this morning that discipleship is being called to walk with Jesus, equipped to live like Jesus, and sent by Jesus to love and serve others in the world! The rest of the morning we are going to look at other faith practices that will help us grow as disciples of Jesus.

MIXER: "Example Rounds"

Let's get started by getting to know each other better.

Round 1: Everyone wearing shorts or skirts get into groups of 3 and everyone wearing jeans, long pants, or capris get into groups of 4. Introduce yourself to everyone in your group and then share the funniest thing that happened to you this week.

Round 2: Everyone get into groups according to your eye color. The groups can be no larger than 5. Introduce yourself to everyone and share your favorite food.

Round 3: Everyone get into groups of 7 according to your age and introduce yourself and demonstrate your favorite dance move.

Round 4: Each of you was given a colored band. Get into a group of 10 youth and wait for a small group leader to join you. Sit down with your new found small group in a circle and introduce yourself to the group, sharing your name, where you are from, the biggest "God" moment so far from your trip to New Orleans and what did you find most surprising in the video? You have 15 minutes for introductions (1 minute per person). If you didn't get a band during worship, meet me here at the mic, I have some extras.

Please stay here in the ballroom. Small Group Leaders, our team will be helping you keep time throughout the morning through breaks and power point changes so watch up front.



11:00 am

We hope everyone got to know each other a little better. Let's move on to the next faith practice, study!

Regular study of the Bible, as well as other resources and books that help to enliven its message, is a key way a disciple practices loving and following God. Study happens sometimes privately through personal

bible study during a regular devotional time, but it can also happen corporately with your family, in a small group conversation like today, or even in a larger gathering like your youth group. Through reading and studying the scriptures, God’s Word becomes active in our lives. For thousands of years the words of Jesus, the teachings of the prophets and apostles, and the stories of God’s people have revealed God’s heart and hope for us and for our world. So when we do this faith practice “study” we learn about God’s vision for our world and are inspired to do His mission.

Today we are going to read the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in the Gospel of Mark. Go ahead and open your bibles to Mark, chapter 1. Mark was written after Jesus died, probably around 75 to 100 AD. Can you remember back to your world history class, what was happening back then? Jews revolted against Rome. Jerusalem was destroyed and the Romans began to persecute followers of Jesus Christ. This is also when the Coliseum was built in Rome. Looking at what was happening when a book of the Bible was written helps us understand the writings as well as ask questions like who wrote the book. Why was the text written? Is this text similar to other stories in the Bible? This method is called historical reading. Another way to look at the book is through literary reading. Think about your literature classes. When we look at how it’s written, the story line, the characters, the plot we can learn a lot as well. For example, in the book of Mark, action is emphasized. If you were to read it just looking for the action verbs you’d find: “See, I am sending,” “Prepare the way,” “As Jesus passed,” “He got up!” Lots of action language. The other thing about Mark is that he strung the stories together from one to another. In the original Greek version of Mark, the word “and” is used to start 410 of the 678 verses.



Your Gathering backpack included a bible as well as a bookmark from the Book of Faith Initiative. It looks like this [raise up bookmark] and includes questions to help you as you approach the bible when you get back home. The other two Book of Faith methods are called Devotional Reading and Lutheran Theological Reading. We’re going to practice a little of both this morning in your small group.



11:20 am

How are we doing? Are you ready for another faith practice?

Small Group Leaders, if you don't have your markers or cardboard pieces, send someone to pick up your supplies at the supply table.

Our next Faith Practice is: invite! Invitations mean a great deal in our society whether you are young or old. How many times have you been invited to be someone's friend on Facebook? Or received an invitation to a party or wedding? Or friends invite you to go to a movie or the mall? Or you get invited to get coffee or ice cream? Jesus's invitation to come along was different. We usually receive invitations from friends or family members or at least someone we know or someone with whom we have something in common. Jesus invites everyone, and Jesus keeps inviting: disciples, the poor, the sick, the young, the old, the tax collectors, the widows, the rich, the poor, farmers, businesspersons, fishermen, and prostitutes.

Think about the most recent baptism you have witnessed in your congregation or if you can remember, your own baptism. The Holy Spirit calls, invites and makes it possible for us to receive God's grace. Sponsors present the person(s) to be baptized and we promise our support. What else do we do? We invite them! Remember what we say at the very end of the rite of Holy Baptism?



Let's say this together: "We welcome you into the body of Christ and into the mission we share: join us in giving thanks and praise to God and bearing God's creative and redeeming word to all the world." (ELW, Holy Baptism, pg. 231) When we say "join us" that is an invitation, right? An invitation to everyone.

Let's spend some time in our small group talking about inviting, as well as creating an invitation of grace that you can share with others.



11:40

Wow! I see lots of beautiful invitations of grace. Take your invitations tonight with you to the Dome and raise them up when you are invited to do so. Never underestimate the power of God's invitation to grace, especially when we make it personal and share what God has done for us.

Are you ready for our next Practice? Serve! Small Group leaders, make sure you have at least 2 sheets of paper for your small groups. As Disciples, we have no other choice than to love Jesus by loving others. How do we do this? We serve others. Jesus served others on numerous occasions in the bible. Jesus's actions not only benefited those in need, but also served to inspire and motivate his disciples to do the same. By our actions, we can serve our neighbors and put our faith into action. Let's look more closely at the faith practice, serve.



Intentional Break: This might be a good time for a game or song like A La La La also known as Shake a Friends Hand by David Graham, or if you have extra youth "stuff" maybe throw out some "freebies" like t-shirts from past events.

Game idea: Would you rather?

Ask everyone to stand. Explain that you are going to read a statement. Would you rather A.... or B.... A must move to the Left side of the room and B must move to the right side of the room. Use your own questions or use the ones in the list below.

- Would you rather?**
- 1) Eat Ice cream in A in a cone or B in a cup?**
 - 2) Have A a dog or B a fish?**
 - 3) Live A without A TV for a year or B be homeless for one month?**
 - 4) Be A an only child or B have brothers and sisters?**
 - 5) Have A a radio in your room or B a TV in your room?**
 - 6) Win A a million bucks and get it all today or B get \$1000 a week for the rest of your life?**
 - 7) Pray A Out Loud or B Silently?**

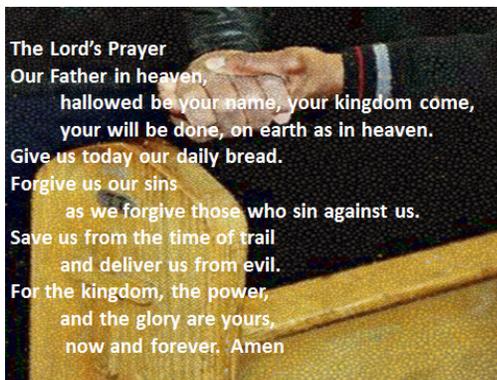
12:00

Good Job! Let's move on to our next faith practice, prayer. Prayer is the way a disciple enjoys being in an intimate relationship with God. Prayer can be public and private. It can be a conversation with God or a ritual. It can be silent, loud, spoken or sung or even an action like dance. Prayer can be simple or profound. No matter, prayer is powerful. Prayer involves listening: listening to God, listening to others, and listening for God's purpose for us.

Jesus modeled the importance of prayer. Throughout the Gospels, we read how Jesus prayed. Whatever the opportunity or challenge, Jesus turned to God first and sought guidance. As his disciples, we should too. Let's begin this faith practice together by standing and praying the Lord's Prayer. This prayer has everything, it's the one that Jesus gave to the disciples, and it's the one he gave to us.

There is no official posture for prayer. We have learned postures from different faith traditions as well postures from our parents and our congregation. Like kneeling, sitting, and even lying down. I'd like to try a posture here that you will be invited to use in worship in the dome on Sunday. When we pray in a group setting, like in worship, we want to avoid bowing our heads, folding our hands close to our hearts and, in essence, collapsing in upon ourselves. [demonstrate the posture you are describing.] It isn't just you and God in a setting like this. We are praying as a community – that is why we call them the "prayers of the church" – and so we open ourselves to the community and together we call upon God. You might put your arms out in front of you as if reaching for another person. Go ahead; give it a try. Now turn that reach heavenward and you have what is called the *orans* position. [demonstrate the posture with arms outstretched at your sides and slightly raised heavenward.] I invite you to practice this new posture as together we pray The Lord's Prayer.

Our Father....



Remain standing for your next activity in your small group! Okay, small group leaders.



12:20

God is generous and blesses us abundantly. We know that everything we have belongs to God. Jesus taught us to give with our heart, spirit, and possessions. At baptism, God gives us spiritual gifts and abilities; things that we will need as we participate in God's mission; the healing of the world. As disciples, when we learn to give of ourselves we will experience joy like never before. Often this faith practice is hard to understand, especially in our country where we are taught that fulfillment comes from having more stuff, and living a life centered on our own desires. Yet Jesus taught us to give everything away and follow him. Let's spend a few minutes talking about giving.



12:40

Coach/Emcee: What a great morning! What a great time to be a disciple! We have one final faith practice, encourage, before we send you on your Discipleship Tour. Small groups get us started.



After 10 minutes, and you see everyone writing on each other interrupt with this. Read Slowly and Purposefully.

(Adapted from "I don't need to know Your Name to be Your Friend," written by Conrad Weiser and published by Fortress Press 1974 ISBN 0-8006—0124-6)

Say: Disciples please stand in your small group circle.

Voice 1

1 Thessalonians 5:11 says: Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Stand in a circle in your small group, not too close to each other, only close enough so that if you stretched out your arms you could touch another person's hand. Stand so that you can see all the other members of your group. Now, take a deep breath. Breathe in slowly and intentionally as if filling your lungs with the goodness of God. Relax and close your eyes if you're comfortable with that. Imagine the breath of the spirit reaching your heart at the center of your chest. It might even feel warm as you imagine God's breath encircling your heart. Now take another breath through your nose and imagine it entering your skull and circling throughout your brain. [Pause long enough to give everyone the chance to get in touch with their imagination.] How do you feel?..... Are you happy?..... Are you sad?..... Do you like what you see inside?..... Are there things that you can see that no one else knows?..... Are there happy things that you can recall that make you want to smile?..... Are there sad things that make you want to cry?

Voice 2 (God)

What you see inside yourself is you. No one else knows you as completely as I do. I created you. I know your name. I gave you gifts at your baptism, and I want you to share them in the world.

Voice 1

Now open your eyes and bring your hands up in front of you.... Palms facing you.... Just look at your hands.....Look at their shape. Do you have long fingers or short fingers?.... Are they old hands or young hands?..... Are they hard, calloused hands or soft hands?..... These hands are different from everyone else's hands.

Voice 2 (God)

Look at your thumb. Notice your thumbprint. I created that. No one else has or will have the same thumbprint as you, not even your twin, if you are one. Your thumbprint has stayed the same since you were a toddler. Just like your thumbprint, you are unique. Your hands are an extension of yourself and of me.

Voice 1

Where have your hands left their marks? What have your hands done? Have they loved? Have they hurt? Have they worked? Have they played? Your hands are you. What they do and what they do not do, reveals who you are. Your hands are part of you. Your hands can reach out to others. Now, if you are comfortable, reach out to the person on either side of you and take their hands. Hold these hands tightly, feel each other's strength and encouragement. This is an example of God's people being stronger in community than alone. Now look around at each member of your group. Together these hands holding each other are hands of people reaching out, reaching to one another.

Voice 2 (God)

May these hands love and not strike down, heal more than hurt, forgive and be forgiven. You are a child of God. You belong to me. You belong to each other. I'm counting on you to be my disciples and my hands in the world! If you are feeling it, share a group hug! If you don't feel comfortable hugging each other, lean into the center, like a huddle formation, and share in a spontaneous prayer that will be led by your small group leader.

What a wonderful morning! Thanks to all of our small group leaders and to each of you for making this day so memorable! The rest of the afternoon, we are going to be sending on a discipleship tour with your congregation! Instructions for the tour are available for the leaders as you leave the ballroom.

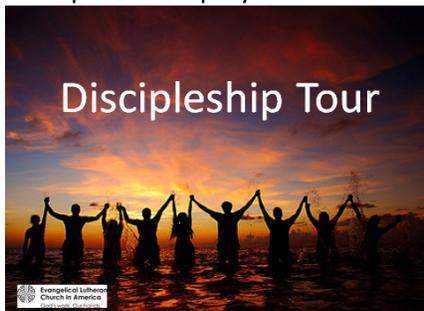
[Invite the bishop to lead the blessing that follows.]

Bishop Says:

Find a partner. And redraw the cross with your finger on their hand and repeat this blessing after me.

“Child and gift of God. You are a disciple of Jesus,
May God bless you and keep you through the rest of the day with your congregation,
May God bless your time in New Orleans,
And may God bless you as you are Jesus' hands in the world.”

Bishop closes in prayer.



12:55

Final instructions pertinent to your synod. If your synod has a website, or facebook page, you might encourage your pictures from the Tour to be sent to that page as well.

Say: There is a tour information sheet for you to take with you as you depart with your congregation! Thanks for coming! Small group leaders please bring your bags up front! Have a wonderful day and see you tonight at the dome. Remember to raise your Invitations of Grace.

Small Group Leader Materials

Why Small Groups? Research shows that people remember less than 10% of what they hear but remember over 80% of what they experience. Positive interaction and discussion will help move teens from just reading and listening to a deeper faith conversation with each other as they share their thoughts about a topic or scripture passage. So it is important that everyone is encouraged to participate.

Questions are essential. Jesus frequently posed questions to get people thinking. In this curriculum we do the same. As a coach and small group leader, take the time to read and study the verses as well as look over the questions in advance, so that you understand the concept. Remember that it is okay to leave space for silence in your small group. Teens sometimes need time to think about the passage or question before expressing their thoughts out loud. Avoid answering all the questions. If necessary, rephrase the questions until your group understands. A group will quickly become passive and silent if they think the small group leader will do all the talking. Don't be content with just one answer; ask others in the group what they think. Acknowledge all answers. When the group starts talking with each other and not just answering you, that is a sign of a healthy discussion. If you need to stop and pray, do. Enjoy the conversation, learn from each other, be authentic, and have fun!

All of your supplies will be ready in a gift bag for you to pick up as you enter the ballroom. When you finish the day, please put all the markers back in the box and any unused cardboard pieces. Return the bags to where you got them so they can repackaged for the next discipleship day.

You've been given this script but of course you do not need to follow it word-for-word. The one word/concept that is very important to use verbatim is "mission." Otherwise, use your own words and be yourself.

Small Group Leader Script

Introduction

Hi everybody. I am _____, the leader of our group. Leader just means that I am here to help keep us on course, but I am super anxious to hear your thoughts. This is our group; you are the ones who will truly guide our discussion. I am sure you have already noticed this is a big room, a crowded space. Slide in close to each other. Personal space is at a minimum here.

In order for this to work, we need to function as a group that holds respect at its very core. Be respectful of other groups in the room by not talking super loud. Be respectful of your group members by being an active, careful listener. Be respectful of others by not hogging the conversation. Everyone needs a chance to be heard.

So our first question is:

- What is your name and where are you from?
- What is your name and what is the biggest "God moment" so far from your trip to New Orleans?
- What is your name and what did you find most surprising in the video?

(Give each person about 1 minute.)

Say: Thanks everyone for sharing. Let's Pray... Heavenly Creator, thank you for bringing us to this moment and to this space together. You created us and call us your own. Be with our group this morning. Equip us through these faith practices to grow as disciples. Open our hearts to the experiences of the Gathering so that our faith might become deeper. Amen

Faith Practice – STUDY

Would someone read? Mark 1:14-20. [Invite the group to take a deep breath together and count backward slowly from 5 so that their attention is focused on the moment by the time they get to 1.] As _____ reads, I want you to listen for words or phrases that jump out at you or grab your attention. After the first reading, _____ will read it again.

Ask: Are any of you willing to share with our group the words or phrases that jumped out at you?

Ask: Can you think of other passages in the bible with a similar text?

Ask: In what ways does this passage point us to Jesus?

We've got another exercise we are going to do with this same scripture. I'm going to read it from a devotional book which is another way to study the bible. You can close your eyes if that helps you see and hear the story. Try and put yourself in the scripture.

(Read this passage SLOWLY)

An excerpt from a Friendship with Jesus: A way to pray the Gospel of Mark by David L Miller. 1999 Augsburg Fortress isbn 9780806638942

Jesus walks along a road that curves around a tiny cove on the lakeshore. To his right, grassy hills rise quickly. The afternoon sun forces travelers to seek shade and rest. Sit among them as Jesus joins the group and begins to teach. "The time is here," he begins. "God's kingdom is close to you. The Father's holy dream for you and all creation draws near. Repent and believe the good news. Change the way you see. Look not with your fears but trust that God's loving dream is coming true." Turning, he looks directly at you, speaking earnestly and directly to your heart and mind. What does his message stir in you? Speak with him about the deep needs in your soul that you want him to touch. Leaving that place, Jesus walks along the lake. Smoke rises from cooking fires; men repair nets; others haul fish and gear from their boats. Jesus watches silently, then walks up to Simon and Andres. "Follow me," he says, "and I will make you fish for people." What do you see in their faces as they look at each other? Do you understand why they go with Jesus? Walking farther, Jesus sees James and John working with their father. He calls, and they, too, follow. From the corner of his eye, Jesus sees you, watching. He already knows you want to speak with him and he asks "What do you want?" Talk with him about what you want. Finally, Jesus says, "Come along," waving an arm toward you. Ask him why he wants you. Walk down the road with Jesus and the others. What are they saying? Talk with Jesus about what it's like to be with him and included among his disciples. As you stop for the evening, you serve the others, bringing them food and drink. You bring the sick to be healed to Jesus' feet. You feel Jesus' eyes on you. What do those eyes say to you? He says "thank you, my disciple." What are you feeling?

(give them 30 seconds of quietness to rest in the word).

Then ask: What was the most vivid image that appeared in the story?

Ask: How did it feel to be asked to “come along?”

Faith Practice – INVITE

Grace is the unearned and undeserved gift given by God of forgiveness and eternal life. The Holy Spirit enables us to receive grace by faith. Grace is given to all. Grace is free. It's already been given to us through God's son, Jesus, in his suffering, dying and rising from death.

Ask: So what does grace mean to you?

Ask: Have any of you received an invitation recently you're willing to share?

Ask: Here's an example of an invitation to a not-so-perfect person. Will someone read John 4: 7-15?

Ask: What is the invitation of grace that Jesus gave the Samaritan woman? (living water)

Say: The story continues.

Ask: Will someone read John 4:27-30?

Ask: Where's the invitation in this passage? (the woman sharing "Come and See" to everyone she meets)

Ask: Will someone read John 4:39-42

What was the people's response?

Say: The woman invited others to listen to what Jesus had done for her and she told them about the grace she had received. Because of this woman, many people came to know Jesus.

Ask: Why is it hard for us to invite others to "come and see" as the woman did in verse 29?

Just like this woman, we have been given an invitation because of what Jesus did and does in our lives. We are invited to share God's grace and invite others too.

Ask: Can you think of other stories in the bible where there was an invitation?

(Jesus invited the Disciples to follow him, Sheep & the Goats, Holy Communion, Great Dinner Invitation)

Say: Here's another invitation from Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Say: What we'd like you to do today is create an invitation of grace. One way to get at it is to think about where you have experienced the love of Jesus in your life. You might extend an invitation to another to have a similar experience. Using these markers and pieces of cardboard, simply share on one side of the cardboard your first name and on the other side share how you've been touched by God's grace. Spend about 2 minutes making your invitation of grace. The simple message you are creating is an invitation to others as well as a way to share the grace that has been given to you. Never underestimate the power of your simple invitation.

Faith Practice –SERVE

Ask for two volunteers to read these two different verses: Luke 22:24-27 and 1 Peter 4:7-11

Thanks _____ for reading Luke 22:24-27

Ask: What do you think Jesus meant for his disciples back then?

Ask: Is the message the same for us today?

Thanks _____ for reading 1 Peter 4: 7-11

Ask: What jumps out at you in these verses?

Ask: Is the message the same for us today?

Say: I'm guessing every day we experience servants in our lives. Or someone else has experience you as a servant. I like to say it a different way, every day we experience someone who has been Jesus in our life, or we've been Jesus to someone else.

Ask: Would someone be willing to share who's been a servant/Jesus in their life?

[You might have to start with a story of your own, like mom doing laundry, friend helping me clean up after a party, mom bringing me the homework I left at home, visiting a nursing home, shoveling snow for my neighbor like in the movie.]

Say: Okay, I need to move around, how about you? So let's play charades! Here's the idea! We are going to divide into two teams and come up with as many ideas as possible for serving and being the hands of Christ in the world. You have two minutes to come up with as many serving ideas as possible. Use the markers and paper. Then we will act them out. The same idea cannot be used twice, so if one team uses feeding the poor, then the other team can't use it. Give each team three minutes to come up with service ideas before starting to play charades.

(Divide the group into two teams using one of these methods: 1) either half and half in the circle, or 2) number 1,2,1,2 around the circle. Ask: How many of you know how to play charades? If they have never played charades, here are some directions. If they have played charades, move on.

- 1) Indicate how many words are in the action by holding up that number of fingers.
- 2) Next, indicate which word you want to start acting; hold up 3 fingers for "Third Word", and so on.
- 3) In order to indicate a word that sounds similar to the word you are trying to enact, hold your earlobe and lightly tug on it.
- 4) Indicate a chopping action to show that you are breaking the word down into syllables. Indicate the number of syllables by placing that many fingers on your forearm.
- 5) To depict the extension of a word, for instance, 'feeding' instead of 'feed', make an action like you are stretching a rubber band.
- 6) To depict a shorter word, put your hands close together as though pressing something.
- 7) To describe articles or pronouns or any other smaller words, indicate small by bringing close your index finger and thumb.
- 8) If someone calls out the correct answer, point to the person and nod your head.
- 9) If someone is close to giving the right answer, or guessing the correct word, wave your hands as if showing 'next'. This will give the team members an idea of how close they are to the actual answer.
- 10) Once the correct answer is guessed, the other team gets their turn.

Play until the Coach/Emcee stops the game. Make sure you affirm all the ideas of each team!

Faith Practice - PRAYER

Small Group Leader Says: Prayer is the way a disciple nourishes an intimate relationship with God. Prayer can be public or private. It can be a conversation with God or a ritual. It can be silent, spoken aloud, sung, chanted or even an action like dance. Prayer can be simple or profound. Prayer is powerful. Prayer involves listening to God, to others, and listening for God's purpose for us. Jesus modeled the importance of prayer. Throughout the gospels, we read how Jesus prayed. Whatever the opportunity or challenge, Jesus turned to God first and sought guidance. As his disciples we should too.

Say: So we are going learn some different ways to pray.

Say: Okay, first an easy one! Say you're stuck in a situation, and you and your friends know you need to pray, but no one wants to offer a long prayer. This is a great way for friends who aren't used to praying to join in with you. Let's stand up for this:

One word prayers: All you do is say one word that represents a prayer request. It could be a person's name. It could be a situation. It could be your church. Just one word. Let's try it.

Say: God hears us and knows our hearts! Even if we just speak one word or think one word, God knows it all. God knows our prayer. That was easy huh?

Say: Let's try another. This one is called palms up-palms down. This one is done silently but I'm going to lead you through it the first time. Get in your favorite prayer position, whatever that might be, kneeling, standing, eyes closed, whatever is most comfortable. Begin by placing your palms down as a symbolic indication of your desire to turn over any concerns you may have to God. Inwardly you may pray, "Lord, I give you my anger toward my sister." "I release my fear about the upcoming test." Whatever it is that weighs on your mind or is a concern to you, just say silently with your palms down. [Give them one minute for this part of the prayer.] Now release your concerns. Shake out your hands/fingers. Now turn your palms up as a symbol of your desire to receive from the Lord. Perhaps you will pray silently, "Lord I would like to be more patient." "Lord, I beg for the grace to be more peaceful when I get home." "Give me joy so that I can share it with others." Whatever you need, you say, with your palms up silently. Now take your hands and wrap them around yourself. Spend a few seconds in God's embrace. Listen as God reminds you of how much you are loved.

[Invite the group to reform a circle where all can hear and see each other equally.]

Ask: When do you pray most?

Ask: What do you think should be included in prayers?

Ask: What are things that distract you from praying?

Ask: What are other ways you've found to pray?

(Journaling. Write your praises or requests and draw images of your praises. Write names on a piece of paper and post it to the refrigerator so that every time you open the fridge door, you pray for that person or request. Pray every time you hear the siren of an ambulance. Create a poem, or write a story. Pray as you get in the car before you go somewhere. Prayer beads. Walk a Labyrinth.

Can I have 3 volunteers to read: Mark 1:35, Mark 6:45-46, and Luke 9:18

What do these three passages have in common?

Say: Another idea might be to go on a hike or a walk alone and just talk to God about everything!

Ask: Why do you think it was important for Jesus to go away and pray?

Say: Praying for each other is important too. Have you noticed in many of the openings of Paul's letters in the New Testament, he mentions that he is praying for the church and its people? The apostle Paul writes in Romans 1:9: "It is my witness that without ceasing I remember you always in my prayers." In 1 Corinthians 4 he writes: "I give thanks to my God always for you." And in Ephesians 1:16 he writes: "I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of Glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him." Philippians 1:3, Paul writes: "I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now." Paul was a real pray-er!

Say: Turn to the person to your left and discuss an experience you've had when praying. Then share with each other something that you need prayers for. Then pray for each other remembering first to thank God for the other person.

[There may be some resistance to this activity, especially if your group hasn't established trust. Don't force anyone to do this activity, but encourage them to try it when they are with someone with whom they feel safe.]

Faith Practice - GIVE

Say: God is generous and blesses us abundantly. Everything we have belongs to God. Jesus taught us to give with our heart, our spirit, and our possessions. This faith practice is hard to understand. [Put your gift bag in the center of the circle as a focal point.]

Say: Often times in our world today, we are taught that fulfillment comes from getting more, consuming more, and centering our lives on ourselves. Yet Jesus teaches us to give everything to others. At baptism, God gives us spiritual gifts and abilities and he entrusts us to use them to make a difference in this world. As disciples when we learn to give of ourselves we will experience joy like never before.

Ask: What was a favorite gift you received for Christmas one year or on a birthday?

Ask: Share a time when you received joy by giving to someone else.

Say: There are over 1200 verses in the Bible that mention give, giving, or gift. So giving must be pretty important to God. Let's read a few places where it is mentioned in the bible.

Will someone read Mark 12:41-44, Acts 20:32-35, Ephesians 2:4-10?

What do these verses have in common?

What is most surprising or striking to you?

Say: Turn to the person to your right and discuss what gifts you enjoy because of God? Discuss ways we can respond as disciples with what we've been given.

Faith Practice – ENCOURAGE

Say: Jesus walked alongside his disciples. He showed them the way, and by his attitude and actions he modeled for them how to live faithfully in the world. Jesus expects us to do the same way within the many communities of faith in which we live, such as our families [although don't assume every young person comes from a family that practices their faith in Christ], our congregations, and our youth group. This faith practice calls for us to encourage each other, to motivate, console, and inspire each other to live like a follower of Jesus. The most powerful message we can give our neighbors and those we meet in life is the knowledge that Jesus loves them; Jesus forgives them, Jesus accepts them as they are, and Jesus is always generous and gracious. Everyone needs an encourager because everyone at some point or another will need encouragement. We need each other to walk along side each other.

In the book of Acts there was a man named Joseph. His name was changed to Barnabas which means "son of encouragement." It was an appropriate name because he encouraged all who knew him. There were thousands of Jews in Jerusalem who were converted on the day of Pentecost and the days following. They had given their money to be used for the poor and needy. This is where we are first introduced to Barnabas. Will someone read Act 4:32-37.

Ask: Why was selling his land and giving his money to the church an act of encouragement?

Later in Acts, Paul arrives in Jerusalem and finds that many are afraid of him, especially the disciples. It is Barnabas who believes in Paul and tells the people to listen to Paul who's been changed and converted and to trust that he is preaching about Jesus. Then Paul and Barnabas travel together to Antioch and preach for a whole year. Will someone read Acts 11:23-24?

Then the Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas to many cities preaching the good news of Jesus. Barnabas was also a friend to John Mark, who was a cousin, and not the most dependable person. Yet, Barnabas believed in him and was always willing to give him a second chance. Barnabas left Paul for a while to go with John Mark as he, too, preached about Jesus.

Ask: Is it possible that encouragement sometimes means taking risks? How?

God used the relationship he had with both Paul and John Mark to keep the church going as they travelled. He was by their side encouraging them and walking the journey with them.

Ask: When have you been encouraged by another person? What did it feel like? Were you surprised, uncomfortable? Grateful for what they had to say?

Ask: Who is the biggest encourager in your life?

Ask: What are some ways you can encourage others in your church? How about your family? Or your community? What about the world?

Say: Take a marker and write on each person in your group a word of encouragement somewhere near the cross they were marked with earlier in worship.