



## “If Necessary, Use Words”

This companion study guide and related resources connects the seven faith practices of *Pray, Study, Worship, Invite, Encourage, Serve and Give* to the Practice Discipleship webinar session, “If Necessary, Use Words.” To view the original webinar and for more information on Practice Discipleship, visit [www.practicediscipleship.org](http://www.practicediscipleship.org).

### For group discussion:

#### Pray

Opening prayer: Holy God, as we dig into what it means to “preach the gospel at all time and if necessary, use words,” help us to sense your presence, your peace, and be open to your guidance. Amen.

In order to preach the gospel—with or without words—we need to be grounded in prayer.

- What would God have us say?
- What would God have us do?

Romans 8:26-27 promises us “If we don’t know what to pray, it doesn’t matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs” (*The Message*). I invite you to breathe deeply, close your eyes, to be silent, to give space to allow God to speak to you.

#### Study

Read John 9:1-41. In this story, the healed man’s presence—even before he speaks—is a witness and a proclamation of the Gospel.

- How can we preach the Gospel without words?

Read Romans 10:14-17. In this passage, we are reminded that sometimes we need words to share the message of Christ.

- What does that look like in our daily lives?
- What are our hesitations against preaching with words?
- Who are Biblical models of those afraid to preach and witness? (Moses in Exodus 4:11, Book of Jonah)

## Worship

The word *proskuneo* (pros kuhn ay oh) is one of the most common words used for worship in the New Testament. It means “to bow down or to humble oneself before God.” In the Christian tradition, we often worship in community.

- How can we worship—with and without words? Alone? In community?
  - Examples of worship with words: prayer, confession, reaching out to those on the margins.
  - Examples of worship without words: laying of hands, being present in times of grief, tithing or other forms of financial giving.

## Invite

- How can we invite others to the good news of the gospel with words? Without words?
  - Examples of invitation with words: telling our faith stories, inviting others to worship or other church events, engaging in Bible study or faith conversations with friends and family, prayer.
  - Examples of invitation without words: wordless prayers, nonverbal cues or invitations to join.

## Encourage

Our encouragement can be one way to live our faith, with and without words.

- What could that look like in our lives?
- What might encouragement with words look like? Examples: Written cards or in-person affirmations (nice work, you can do it, don’t give up, etc.), cheering.
- What might encouragement without words look like? Examples: Presence. Being at the finish line at a race, smiling at someone, attending a recital or concert or performance, being at a sports game or event, attending a funeral.

## Serve

- How can we serve with words? Examples: teaching, writing, serving communion, babysitting.
- How can we serve without words? Examples: physical work (raking leaves, shoveling snow), sorting donations, graphic design, music, dance

## Give

- How can we give with words? Examples: Verbal prayers, blessings, speaking for a charity or cause.
- How can we give without words? Examples financial contributions, affection (smiles, hugs, fist bumps), wiping tears

**Closing prayer:** Holy God, you have blessed us with many ways to preach the Gospel—both with and without words. As we go forth to live in your name, we pray for your strength and guidance to preach your love as you can us to do. Amen.

# Related Resources for congregations

## Pray

God understands our prayers even when we have no words. Listen to the hymn “My Wordless Prayer” by Craig Courtney :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouLgCRP-U-I>

Learn about St. Francis, ways he prayed, and ways prayer sustained him:

<http://www.thefranciscanfriars.org/book/export/html/100>

Read about the ELCA’s views on prayers, receive daily prayer ideas, and watch a video about prayer:

<http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Prayer-Center.aspx>

## Study

Dig further into Biblical interpretation and meaning. Many commentaries and resources are available. The ELCA outlines and recommends several:

<http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Vocation/Ministry-in-Daily-Life/Biblical-Insights/Other-Bible-Links.aspx>

Sometimes reading different translations of the Bible can give us different words and understandings. See Bible Gateway to read several:

<http://www.biblegateway.com/>

## Worship

The order of confession and forgiveness is a powerful way to worship with and without words, alone and in community. It is found on pages 238-244 in the *ELW*.

Learn more about the practice of laying of hands and ways to incorporate it into worship: <http://www.livinglutheran.com/seeds/laying-on-of-hands-a-sign-of-healing-absolving-and-blessing.html>

## Invite

Learn to write your faith statement, giving you words to share the gospel and invite others to the Good News: <http://commissiononministry.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Preparing-to-Tell-Your-Faith-Story1.pdf>

Sometimes we use the word “evangelism” to talk about ways we share the good news. Read stories of and strategies for evangelism from the ELCA: <http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Stories-of-Faith-in-Action/Outreach/Making-Evangelism-Personal.aspx> and

<http://www.livinglutheran.com/categories/evangelism/>

## Encourage

One way you can give encouragement is by writing to those who are feeling discouraged. “The World Needs More Love Letters” is a non-profit organization that collects names and stories of people who could use encouragement and invites others to write them letters and cards. Learn more: <http://www.moreloveletters.com/>

Consider a Bible study rooted on the practice of encouragement:  
[http://www.elca.org/~media/Files/What%20We%20Believe/The%20Bible/fp5\\_encourage.pdf](http://www.elca.org/~media/Files/What%20We%20Believe/The%20Bible/fp5_encourage.pdf)

## Serve

Every community has organizations in need. Check for a local community organization directory in your area or call your local public library for a list.

Write letters encouraging leaders to take steps to end hunger in the U.S. Learn more about Bread for the World: <http://www.bread.org/>

The ELCA has a strong commitment to service. Read more about their efforts and ways to get involved: <http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Poverty-Ministries/HIV-and-AIDS/Serve.aspx>

## Give

Barbara Brown Taylor talks about the practice of giving blessings to others in her book *An Altar in the World* (<http://www.barbarabrowntaylor.com/>). You can read a brief excerpt here: [http://www.oprah.com/spirit/An-Altar-in-the-World-Excerpt-Barbara-Brown-Taylor\\_1](http://www.oprah.com/spirit/An-Altar-in-the-World-Excerpt-Barbara-Brown-Taylor_1)

What does it mean to give? Read what the ELCA says on the topic and learn to get involved: <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Treasurer/Funding-the-Mission/Why-Give.aspx>

*The Practice Discipleship Initiative is a ministry of the ELCA Youth Ministry Network ([www.elcaymnet.org](http://www.elcaymnet.org)), in partnership with the ELCA, ELCA Seminaries and ELCA Colleges. The purpose of Practice Discipleship is to foster faithful, thoughtful and intentional leaders in congregations who follow Jesus in their daily lives. For more information, visit [www.practicediscipleship.org](http://www.practicediscipleship.org).*