

DISCIPLE II
Into the Word; Into the World
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION
Orientation Meeting

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Opening Prayer

INTO THE WORD; INTO THE WORLD

Our Journey for the next 32 weeks will be

A continued call to study.....to serve.....to have a heart for Christ
A journey to be more Christ-like

GETTING ACQUAINTED

Share this *fascinating* information about yourself:

What led to you *intentional* Bible Study?

BOOKS, MATERIALS, SCHEDULE, ROSTER

Manual – Study Bible

Bible Dictionary

Bible Commentaries

Schedule

Roster: name, address, phone, e-mail

EXPECTATIONS FOR DISCIPLE BIBLE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Be faithful to weekly class attendance

Be faithful to weekly study.....reading.....praying for one another and others

Attend weekend service unless sick or out of town

Seek to use Spiritual Gift(s) in a ministry

Seek God's will with *head.....heart.....hands*

CLOSING PRAYER

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Week 1: God Speaks

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 6)

Opening Prayer
Theme: **Respect**
Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

We will have a DVD presentation which relates to the lesson during many of our classes. The DVDs are intended to expand and add to the knowledge gained through reading and discussion

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Using your Bible, look at the introduction to each of the following books and the outlines of major events:

Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

Deuteronomy

On page 10 of the Study Manual, review the section The Testimony of the Universe. In what ways does all of creation serve as a witness to the reality of God?

On page 11 of the Study Manual, what points are made for man to respect God's creation?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Isaiah 40:12-31 (see next page)

After reading the attached printing of this passage aloud, look for the following ideas:

1. rhetorical questions* used to persuade
(*to ask only to cause pondering; no answer expected from the receiver)
2. evidence of God's power
3. promises of hope

Finish this statement, and then share ideas with the group:

The Creator God is _____

INTO THE WORLD

As we study the Bible together, one theme to keep in mind is how this message can be taken into our world today. With that in mind, together read

HUMAN CONDITION

The world and all that is in it was created for human beings. So I make the most of it, enjoy life, and use everything available to me.

How do the Creation accounts call us from *indifference* to *passionate care* for the earth? Review the environmental issues raised in the Study Manual (page 12). What responsibilities as a child of God and a public citizen do we have in today's society?

Each week we will celebrate a Spiritual Discipline. These disciplines are virtues to be viewed as “works in progress.” With each one, we will discuss how we can incorporate this virtue in our lives.

Together read the **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE**

Celebration: As we learn to trust God to provide, we begin to see ourselves in proper relationship to God's total creation, which frees us for obedience experienced as joy.

The last phrase “obedience experienced as joy” may seem contradictory. What does this phrase mean to you?

CLOSING AND PRAYER

Isaiah 40:12-31
From *The Message*

Who has scooped up the ocean in his two hands,
Or measured the sky between his thumb and little finger,
Who has put all the earth's dirt in one of his baskets,
Weighed each mountain and hill?
Who could ever have told God what to do
Or taught him his business?
What expert would he have gone to for advice,
What school would he attend to learn justice?
What god do you suppose might have taught him what he knows,
Showed him how things work?
Why, the nations are but a drop in a bucket,
A mere smudge on a window.
Watch him sweep up the islands
Like so much dust off the floor!
There aren't enough trees in Lebanon
Not enough animals in those vast forests
To furnish adequate fuel and offerings for his worship.
All the nations add up to simply nothing before him---
Less than nothing is more like it. A minus.
So who even comes close to being like God?
To whom or what can you compare him?
Some no-god idol? Ridiculous!
It's made in a workshop, cast in bronze,
Given a thin veneer of gold.
And draped with silver filigree.
Or, perhaps someone will select a fine wood—
Olive wood, say – that won't rot,
Then hire a woodcarver to make a no-god,
Giving special care to its base so it won't tip over!
Have you not been paying attention?
Have you not been listening?
Haven't you heard these stories all your life?
Don't you understand the foundation of all things?
God sits high above the round ball of earth
The people look like mere ants.
He stretches out the skies like a canvas---
Yes, like a tent canvas to live under.
He ignores what all the princes say and do.
The rulers of the earth count for nothing.
Princes and rulers don't amount to much.
Like seeds barely rooted, just sprouted,
They shrivel when God blows on them.
Like flecks of chaff, they're gone with the wind.

“So---who is like me?
Who holds a candle to me?” says The Holy.
Look at the night skies;
Who do you think made all this?
Who marches this army of stars out each night,
Counts them off, calls each by name
---so magnificent! So powerful! –
and never overlooks a single one?
Why would you ever complain, O Jacob,
Or, whine, Israel, saying,
“God has lost track of me.
He doesn’t care what happens to me”?
Don’t you know anything? Haven’t you been listening?
God doesn’t come and go. God *lasts*.
He’s Creator of all you can see or imagine
He doesn’t get tired out, doesn’t pause to catch his breath,
And he knows *everything*, inside and out.
He energizes those who get tired,
Gives fresh strength to dropouts.
For even young people tire and drop out,
Young folk in their prime stumble and fall.
But those who wait upon GOD get fresh strength
They spread their wings and soar like eagles,
They run and don’t get tired,
They walk and don’t lag behind.

DISCIPLE II
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Week 2: God Scatters the Proud

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 14)

Opening Prayer
Theme: **Pride**
Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

Discussion: Why do persons seek meaning without God? What are the results? In Disciple I, the theme of the “calling of the least” was discussed. Why would God choose ordinary people to carry out His purposes?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

In small groups, read and review the assigned Scriptures. Look for the following ideas in each story:

1. Look for the sin of pride or alienation or acting against the will of God.
2. How is humankind reflected in the event?

Genesis 3

Eve Deceived by the Serpent

Why should this story be called “Pointing fingers....”?

Genesis 4:1-16

Cain and Abel

Note carefully how the quality of the sacrifices were described

Genesis 11:1-9

Tower of Babel

How does pride takeover honor of God?

I Kings 6:37-7:12

King Solomon’s Palace and Temple

Where does pride overtake love for God?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Genesis 9:1-17

How long did Noah spend in the Ark? Noah went into the ark 7 days before it began to rain; it rained for 40 days. The waters flooded the earth for 150 days. The ark came to rest on the 17th day of the 7th month. Noah and his family went out of the ark on the 27th day of the 2nd month. They were in the ark for 1 year and 17 days (5 months floating, 7 months on the mountain).

1. Review the definition of the word “**covenant**” on the attached sheet from a Bible dictionary:

2. What was God’s covenant with Noah?
3. God has made many covenants with his people. Can you name others? Why are there so many?

INTO THE WORLD

As we study the Bible together, one theme to keep in mind is how this message can be taken into our world today. With that in mind, together read

HUMAN CONDITION

We want to feel important, to be in charge, to make a name for ourselves. We don’t need anyone else. We’ll create our own meaning and take credit for it. We cannot understand why we feel alienated from others.

In what ways does today’s society send this message to us? Make suggestions for positive changes to this statement.

Together read the **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE** (Review previous discipline)

Confession: When we face ourselves and give up our pretenses, we recognize that our sin hurts others as well as us and we experience confession as forgiveness and healing.

How can the sin of pride or alienation hurt us as individuals? What steps must we take to remain true to our Covenant with God?

CLOSING AND PRAYER

FROM NELSON'S NEW ILLUSTRATED BIBLE DICTIONARY:

COVENANT -- an agreement between two people or two groups that involves promises on the part of each to the other. The Hebrew word for "covenant" probably means "betweenness," emphasizing the relational element that lies at the basis of all covenants. Human covenants or treaties were either between equals or between a superior and an inferior. Divine covenants, however, are always of the latter type, and the concept of covenant between God and His people is one of the most important theological truths of the Bible. Indeed, the word itself has come to denote the two main divisions of Christian Scripture: Old Covenant and New Covenant (traditionally – Old Testament and New Testament).

A covenant, in the biblical sense, implies much more than a contract or simple agreement. A contract always has an end date, while a covenant is a permanent arrangement. Another difference is that a contract generally involves only one part of a person, such as a skill, while a covenant covers a person's total being.

The New Testament makes a clear distinction between covenants of Law (Old Testament) and the covenants of promise (New Testament). Jesus' sacrificial death served as the oath, or pledge, that God made to us to seal this New Covenant. God is determined to give us eternal life and fellowship with Him, in spite of our unworthiness.

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Week 3: God Welcomes

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 22)

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Hospitality**

Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Read the assigned Scripture and make notes for group discussion. In each story, a breaking of bread and of hospitality extended is depicted, but the meaning goes much deeper:

1. Hospitality is an ancient mid-eastern virtue. In what ways is hospitality extended or not extended in these stories?
3. As believers, what is our responsibility in extending hospitality?
4. How might “bread” be interpreted other than the literal sharing of food?

Genesis 12

God Makes Covenant with Abram/Abraham

Genesis 16

Hagar & Ishmael

Genesis 17

Covenant of Circumcision

Genesis 18:1-8

Abraham and Three Visitors

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Genesis 21:1-21

When Sarah thought she would not have a child, she willingly gave her servant to her husband in order to have an heir. Conflict developed between Hagar and Sarah once Hagar was pregnant. Then Sarah had Isaac in her old age.

1. Is this simply a story of a three-sided affair? Of a jealous wife? Of a demanding servant?
2. What are your impressions of Abraham and Sarah who were chosen of God?

INTO THE WORLD

As we study the Bible together, one theme to keep in mind is how this message can be taken into our world today. With that in mind, together read

HUMAN CONDITION

The invitation comes, but it is scary. It comes as promise without guarantee. We are on guard, afraid to accept hospitality because it puts us in someone else's hands. We are afraid to extend hospitality for fear they might accept.

How *do* we feel about accepting a “free lunch” or hospitality extended for an unknown reason? Do we extend hospitality freely without expecting return?

Together read the **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE**

Service: At the prompting of the Holy Spirit, we choose to live as servant, carrying out our ministry in quiet, ordinary ways, whoever the needy, whatever the need.

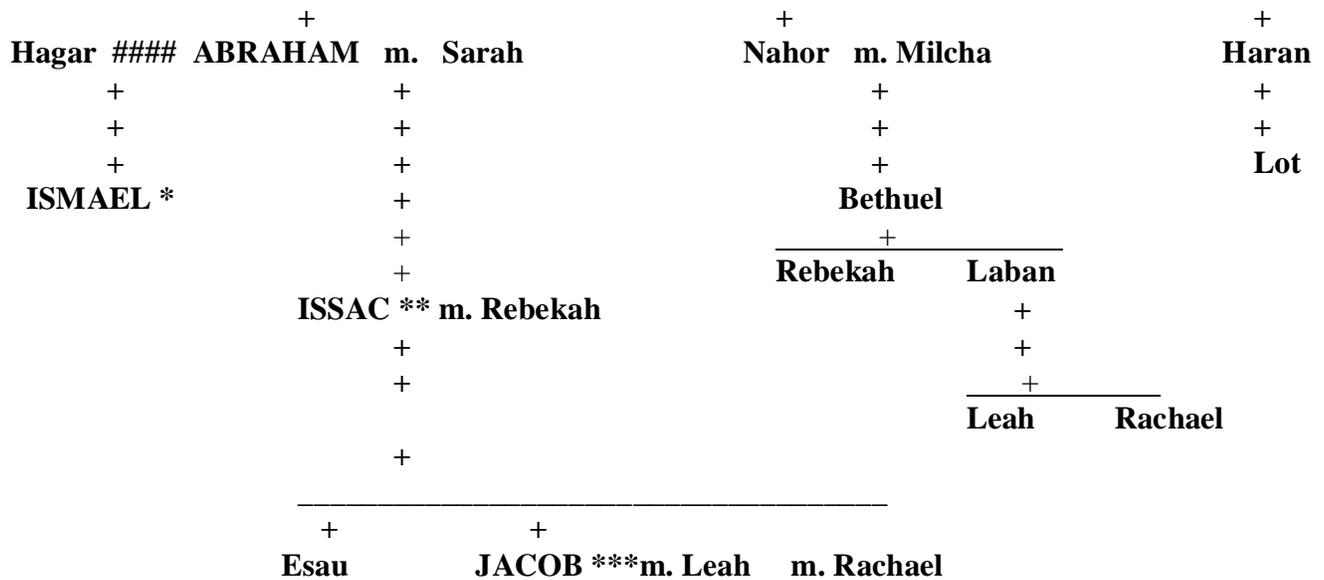
In the servant role, we are called to exercise our Spiritual Gifts. Assess your servanthood and the use of your Spiritual Gift(s):

CLOSING AND PRAYER

ABRAHAM'S FAMILY TREE

TERAH

+
+
+
+
+



Concubine of Abraham, maid servant to Sarah

***Ancestor of the Arabs**

**** Ancestor of the 12 Tribes of Israel**

***** Father of the 12 Tribes of Israel**

Rebekah was a cousin of Issac

Lot was a nephew of Abraham

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Week 4: Carrying the Covenant

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 30)

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Continuity**

Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL: Scan Genesis 23

1. Upon Sarah's death, Abraham becomes an owner of land in Canaan (vs 709; 10-12). Why is this significant?

2. Consider how Abraham bargained with Ephron (vs. 14-16; 17-18). In what ways was Abraham shrewd about his approach? (*Into the Word*, bottom of page 33 and top of page 34 in the Study Manual)

Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9

1. It is said that "**faith is one generation away from extinction.**" As faithful as the parent may be in loving and serving God, they cannot *believe for their children*.
2. What effect do you feel Abraham's demonstration of faith had on Isaac?
3. How did you come to your faith? Is it an inherited faith or one you came to on your own? What steps can we take to lead our children and grandchildren to a faith of their own?
4. In a sermon, Adam Hamilton included a checklist for "hands-on" parenting. Respond to this evaluation, and then check your score at the bottom:
_____Parents expect to be told where their children are going at all times

- _____ Parents communicate that they will be “extremely upset” by use of any drugs
- _____ There are no periods of an hour or more after school or on the weekend when the parent does not know where the youth is
- _____ Parents monitor what the child is watching on TV
- _____ Parents impose restrictions on the kind of music CDs children buy
- _____ Parents are very aware of how the teen is doing in school
- _____ Parents monitor children’s Internet usage
- _____ Family typically has dinner together six to seven nights a week
- _____ Teen has a weekend curfew
- _____ An adult is always at home when the children return from school
- _____ Children are responsible for completing regular chores
- _____ TV is not on during dinner

EVALUATION: “Hands on” households satisfy at least 10 of the 12. “Half-Hearted” households were between 6 and 9. “Hands-off” households had 5 or fewer. Hands-off households were 4 times more likely to have a risk for substance abuse than hands-on families. Half-hearted households were 2 times as likely to have a risk. (Source: National Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse www.drugfreeamerica.org).

DISCUSSION: How do you feel about this list? What other restrictions you would add? Why do you feel this approach seems to be effective according to the statistics?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Genesis 24

Read the following verses in Genesis 24: 1-4; 12-21; 47-51; 64-66

Why was it important for Isaac to marry within his own family?

What are some of the risks to a person’s faith in an interfaith marriage? What are positives?

INTO THE WORLD

As we study the Bible together, one theme to keep in mind is how this message can be taken into our world today. With that in mind, together read

HUMAN CONDITION

Things go well for a time. Then comes a crisis when we seemed trapped. Everything we’ve dreamed of, worked for, even prayed for, falls apart. How are we to keep going?

Have you had this feeling or found yourself in this situation? What did you do?

Together read the **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE**

Submission: We find our true identity---an identity born of obedience---when we give up our need to have our own way and when we turn our attention away from self and toward others.

Submission is not an easy thing to do. As Disciples, in what ways can we submit and turn our attention from self and toward others?

CLOSING PRAYER

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Week 5: Conflict Within the Family

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 38)

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Alienation**

Theme Scripture

DVD Presentation

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL:

Jacob and Esau Genesis 25:27-28; 27:1-26

Who is responsible for this ultimate alienation within the family? Issac? Rebekah? Esau? Jacob? All? In what ways?

Blessings given to Jacob and Esau

Compare **Genesis 27:26-29 and 38-40**. How are they alike? How are they different? What is the significance?

Jacob's Family Tree Genesis 29:31-30 - 30:1-23

Using these Scriptures, build a family tree for Jacob's family listing his wives, concubines and children born to each woman. Share with the group.

Jacob and Laban Genesis 30:25-43

Summarize this story for the group. How does this story further the image of Jacob as a manipulator? Was Jacob justified in any way?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Read Genesis 28:10-22

1. What does this passage say about God?
2. What does this passage say about human beings?
3. What does it say about the relationship between God and humans?

INTO THE WORLD

As we study the Bible together, one theme to keep in mind is how this message can be taken into our world today. With that in mind, together read

HUMAN CONDITION

Alienation within the family seems almost universal, even among the people of God. Estrangement between husband and wife, rebellion by daughter or son, fierce rivalry between children is as old as humankind.

As God's children, what is our responsibility in these situations of family conflict?

Together read the **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE**

We have looked at the Disciplines of *Celebration, Confession, Service, Submission*. Today we look at

Worship: When confronted by the seeking loving God, we worship, are changed and made ready for guidance.

What do you feel during and after a worship service? If we sincerely practice this Discipline, how would it affect our family relationships?

CLOSING PRAYER

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Week 6: Wrestling With God

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 44)

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Reconciliation**

Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL:

Jacob and Laban Part Ways

Genesis 31:44-55 & Study Manual pg. 46

Hostility with in-laws is common. In what ways was the hostility between Jacob and Laban like typical family squabbles? How was it different? How was the resolution accomplished? What significance does this story hold for our relationships today?

Jacob Wrestles with the Angel

Genesis 32:22-31 & Study Manual pg. 47

Identify the significance of this event. In what ways was Jacob humbled and changed? What significance does Jacob's experience with God hold for our personal relationship with God?

Jesus Teaches Reconciliation

Matthew 5:21-26; 43-48 & Study Manual pg. 50

This is a portion taken from the Sermon on the Mount. In what ways do these teachings help avoid alienation with families, friends, or society? How can we apply these teachings to our own relationships today?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

GENESIS 33:1-17

Put yourself into the scene. What was happening between Esau and Jacob as the scene is played out? What was going on beneath the surface?

Read **Luke:6:27-31**

What does Jesus teach us in this passage about reconciliation with those with whom we have differences?

Our families?

Our friends?

Our church family?

Our Colleagues?

INTO THE WORLD

As we study the Bible together, one theme to keep in mind is how this message can be taken into our world today. With that in mind, together read

HUMAN CONDITION

We do not want to accept responsibility or blame for discord. We find it painful to acknowledge our own guilt. We postpone, wait for someone else to make the first move, or pray the discord will go away.

Analyze our inability to “step up to the plate” and accept responsibility for discord. Is it simply the human condition? Or inability to face consequences? Or unwillingness to accept blame? Or stubbornness?

Together read the **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE**

We have experienced the spiritual disciplines of *Celebration, Confession, Service, Submission, Worship*.
Now, we look at

Prayer: As we hold on to God in prayer, we tap and work with God’s healing, strengthening, and directing power.

We have been asked each week to pray for those in our circle who are in need of healing, comfort, sustaining, and for those joys for which we give thanks to God. Has prayer been at work in your life? In what ways has the power of prayer been of help to you?

CLOSING PRAYER : Read together:

God, whether I get anything else done today, I want to make sure that I spend time loving you and loving other people --- because that is what life is all about. I don’t want to waste this day in anger and conflict with others. I am letting it go from my power to Yours. Thank you for your gracious gift of peace. AMEN

THE DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER

Prayer is.....? How would you complete this sentence? Prayer seems mysterious; however, when we examine what prayer is, there is really no mystery. Perhaps you have heard the expression of “Head, Heart and Hands” as the foundation of ministries here at The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection.

Head is head knowledge: study, learning, understanding, connecting information.

Heart is the knowledge sinking down into our very being: it is the road to being more like Jesus, it is having love and compassion for fellow man. Prayer is a component of the transformation of the heart.

Hands is the calling to serve others; to live out the Christian principles of doing for others.

- Let’s talk about Prayer. The discipline of prayer brings us into the deepest and highest work of the human spirit. Prayer is life creating and life changing. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us.
- Prayer helps us to begin to think God’s thoughts, to desire the things he desires, to love the things he loves, to will the things he wills.
- Jesus found a great need to pray. He would rise early in the morning or go late at night to a lonely place and pray. King David sought God in the early morning. John Wesley was so convicted about prayer that he devoted two hours daily to talking with God.
- Wesley’s mother, Susanna who had 19 children, would sit in a chair in the corner of the kitchen, apron over her head and pray. The children knew not to bother their mother during these times.
- Is prayer a “magic language”? Do I have to have the “right or correct” words to say. NO, NO, and NO! Prayer is a conversation with God. Prayer is a sentence while driving in the car. Prayer is saying thank you, God, for my family, my friends, my church. Prayer is crying out in anguish and sorrow. Prayer is being in awe of a beautiful sunset. Prayer is asking God for health and healing of someone you love. Prayer is heartfelt petition to God. Prayer is praying over your children, asking for God’s protection from the outer world. Prayer is asking God for forgiveness when you have not live up to God’s commands.
- We must never wait until we feel like praying. Prayer should be daily, hourly, or anytime you need God’s direction, strength, love, help and closeness.
- Prayer is the heartbeat of the spiritual life!

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Week 7: In God's Time

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 52)

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Patience**

Theme Scripture

The Joseph Story emerges from the story of Jacob and his sons. Jacob had 12 sons; each founded the 12 tribes of Israel. Listen for clues to the kind of person each son was. Read Genesis 49, Jacob's blessing for his sons. In what ways does Jacob describe his sons?

1. Reuben – first born; turbulent as waters; committed adultery with my concubine
2. Simeon & Levi – their weapons are swords of violence; they were the ones who so bloodily defended their sister Dinah with the Shechemites
3. Judah – brothers will bow down to him, the scepter will not depart from Judah – from his ancestral tree would come Jesus, the Messiah
4. Zebulun – descendants lived in the Promised Land near the Mediterranean
5. Issachar – “rawboned donkey”; will submit to forced labor. Along with Asher, Naphtali and Dan the Tribes were decimated by Assyria and disappeared from history
6. Dan – will provide justice for his people
7. Gad – will be attacked by raiders but will fight back
8. Asher – will have rich food and provide for a king – fertile farmlands provided prosperity
9. Naphtali – free spirit or independent nature, isolated in the hill country north of the Sea of Galilee
10. Joseph – fruitful vine - blessed and protected by God – “Prince among his brothers”
11. Benjamin – “ravenous wolf” King Saul's examples of savagery is a character of Benjamin's descendants

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

In Exodus 34:7, we read:

... Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the father to the third and fourth generation.

How do we interpret this part of the Scripture? On page 54 of the Study Manual, we read that Joseph's brothers used a goat to deceive their father just as he had used a goat to deceive his father Isaac to steal Esau's birthright.

Read and be prepared to discuss the Scripture reading:

The Joseph Story

Joseph's patience and integrity; Keeping the Faith Genesis 39:7-10; 16-23

Joseph was cut off from his family ; he was living in a pagan culture, his boss was King of Egypt who was considered a god by the Egyptians; Joseph’s wife was an Egyptian and his father-in-law was a priest of the sun-god. Question for discussion:

Learning from Early Families of the Bible

- **Genesis 4:5-8** (sibling rivalry) Cain & Able
- **Genesis 21:8-13** (jealousy) Ishmael & Isaac
- **Genesis 25:27-28** (favoritism) Jacob & Esau
- **Genesis 37:18-27** (lying and betrayal). Joseph & his brothers

The Genesis record is sobering. In light of the families represented, what is the hope for future generations? Discuss the importance of building a happy, healthy, God-honoring family within today’s society.

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Genesis 41:1-43

Review the story of Joseph’s rise to power:

The King’s troubling dreams (vv 1-13)

The King relates dreams to Joseph (vv 14-24)

Joseph interprets (vv 25-28)

Joseph given power (vv 37-43)

Our theme “*In God’s time – Patience*” is reflected in the time Joseph spent in captivity. He was 17 when he was sold as a slave, worked for Potiphar, spent many years in prison, spent 2 more years after interpreting the Cupbearer’s dream before being remembered for his assistance. He was 30 when he gained power.

What does this story mean for our lives? What is our responsibility if God provides for us? How do our needs change when we believe God will provide?

INTO THE WORLD

As we study the Bible together, one theme to keep in mind is how this message can be taken into our world today. With that in mind, together read

HUMAN CONDITION

We eat fast foods, consume computer information, and honk our horns angrily, urging others to hurry up. We are rudely impatient. To speak of “kairos,” God’s time, bewilders us.

We live in a fast paced society. In what ways can we find the ability to wait for “kairos”, God’s time?

Together read the **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE** (review previous disciplines)

We have looked at the Disciplines of *Celebration, Confession, Service, Submission, Worship*. Today we look at

Solitude. By turning our times of aloneness into times of listening to God in silence and solitude, we grow in ability to be present and attentive to others.

Review the attachment defining Solitude. Finding daily times of solitude and meditation can allow you to “listen” for God’s will concerning your life. Take a few minutes to plan your daily solitude, Bible reading, and prayer:

In what ways has solitude been helpful in your life? How have you practiced “time alone to pray, meditate, listen to God, contemplate....”

Today, I will plan daily times of solitude and prayer in these ways_____

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Lord, why am I always surprised at the painful trials I suffer, as though something strange were happening to me? Help me to rejoice that I participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that I may be overjoyed when your glory is revealed. If I am insulted because of Your name, I am blessed, for the spirit of glory and of God rests on me. Like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, I am a child of promise. Blessed be your name! AMEN.

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Week 8: God Works for Good

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 60)

Opening Prayer
Theme: **Providence**
Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Work as one group to read of God's promise and covenant to Abraham and his descendants. Fill in the blanks:

An overview of Abraham --- Jacob---Joseph cycle

- Genesis 12:1-3 God will _____
- 13:14-17 I will make _____
- 15:1 Do not be afraid; I am _____
- 17:1-8 This is my covenant; you will be _____
I will make you _____
- 22:15-18 You have not withheld your only son...I will make your descendants as numerous

your descendants will take possession _____
- 26:24 To Isaac....I am with you. I will bless you and increase _____

- 28:13-15 ...your descendants will spread out like _____
....to the _____
- 35:10-12 To Jacob....your name will be _____ (means people who struggle
with God).
- 45:5-7 God sent Joseph ahead to _____.
- 46:3-4 I am God....do not be afraid to _____;
I will make you _____;

I will go with you and _____.

In the Jewish tradition, the significance of one's descendants is their _____.

Note God's promise to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. In what ways is Israel part of our heritage and our ancestors? On page 66 of the study manual, share your reaction to the question: What do I really believe about the providence of God in human activity, human history, my own life and destiny?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Genesis 45:1-8

Joseph told his brothers, "Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good."

Trace the raw deals thrown at Joseph:

Sold for a slave

Framed by Potiphar's wife

Thrown into prison

Forgotten after helping the King's Cupbearer

Left in prison **2** more years

From age 17 to 30, Joseph's life was not his own

A theologian once said "Evil is the absence of God just as dark is the absence of light." Does God allow evil, *or* is evil created out of the free will choices made by man?

In what ways does Jesus' death on the cross fit into this equation?

Read **Romans 8:24 and 8:36-39**. What is Paul's response to these questions?

INTO THE WORLD

As we study the Bible together, one theme to keep in mind is how this message can be taken into our world today. With that in mind, together read

HUMAN CONDITION

We must provide for ourselves. We have to work and sweat, stew and worry. There may not be enough of the "good things" to go around. Don't let up; we need to guarantee our security. We want to control our future.

In what ways do we try to "control" our future?

Together read the **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE**

We have considered the Disciplines of *Celebration, Confession, Service, Submission, Worship, Solitude.*

Celebration. We gain freedom from anxiety as we recognize and believe God will provide.

Read the attachment about Celebration. In what ways can we turn over control to God and gain freedom through celebration in our lives?

CLOSING PRAYER

DISCIPLE II
Into the Word; Into the World
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Week 9: The Bonds of Slavery

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 68)

Opening Prayer
Theme: **Bondage**
Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

In Exodus 1-2, these women played a prominent part in setting the motion in place for the Exodus from Egypt. Explain what part they played:

Shiphrah _____

Puah _____

Jochebed _____

Miriam _____

King's Daughter _____

Zipporah _____

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Exodus means to exit or to depart. We are beginning the story of the departure of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt. The traditional view is that Moses wrote the bulk of this book during the exodus from Egypt and during the 40 years of wandering in the desert. Scan the chapter headings for the following Scripture assignments:

Exodus 1-5 Retell the story using important events covered in these chapters

Exodus 6-10 Retell the story using important events covered in these chapters

Study Manual, pgs 72-73 Review these pages and discuss what the Egyptian slavery involved.

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Exodus 11

In his book *735 Baffling Bible Questions Answered*, Larry Richards says “God never causes suffering gratuitously. The Book of Exodus gives three purposes that God intended to accomplish through the devastating scourges that struck Egypt. First, these mighty acts that God performed would serve forever as a reminder that God is the one who brought his people out of bondage. Second, the plagues were a ‘judgment on all the gods of Egypt’ for they demonstrated the powerlessness of Egypt’s gods to help the people of that land. And third, the plagues served as an unmistakable witness to the pagan Egyptians that they might know that ‘I am the Lord.’”

The Lord is said to have “hardened” Pharaoh’s heart. This passage gives us some trouble. The critical issues are (1) whether Pharaoh operated as a free and responsible person in refusing Moses’ request, or whether (2) he was caused to act against his own will by the action of God. Review the section on “Hardening the Heart on page 74 on the Study Manual. Discuss the following positions:

1. Did God simply strengthen the *intent to refuse* Moses’ request which Pharaoh already had? What was the potential danger to Egypt if all the Israelites left?
2. Or did God *cause* Pharaoh to act against his own will ? Did God want to progressively reveal more of himself and his power through the series of miracles that Moses performed? What was the result?
3. Was God’s hardening of Pharaoh’s heart done as a sign to the Israelites that He was the one, true almighty God? Support your idea. (Exodus 10:1-2)

INTO THE WORLD

As we study the Bible together, one theme to keep in mind is how this message can be taken into our world today. With that in mind, together read

HUMAN CONDITION

Within human nature is the desire to control other people. That desire, given power, takes charge and hates to turn loose. When organized into political or economic systems, the desire to control can enslave and dehumanize people.

What can we do to circumvent this type of political or economic power and control?

Together read the **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE**

We have looked at the Disciplines of *Celebration, Confession, Service, Submission, Worship, Solitude.*
Today we look at

Submission. We begin to act on behalf of the other as we come to see the interdependence of all people.

In his book, *Celebration of Disciplines*, Richard Foster says “Leadership is found in becoming the servant of all....Only submission can free us sufficiently to enable us to distinguish between genuine issues and stubborn self-will” (111-14). Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses submitted to God’s will when called to be servant leaders. Jesus demonstrated the ultimate in “Servant Leadership.” In Matthew 20:26-28, Jesus said, “*Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave---just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*”

Servants must be prepared to humble themselves (Mother Teresa)

Servants must be zealous (We are told that David stripped down to his underwear in uninhibited worship and praise to God as he danced with all his might - 2 Samuel 6:14)

Servants never try to be equal with the one he serves (David had the opportunity to kill Saul who was trying to kill David, but David insisted on honoring King Saul as God’s anointed.)

Servants care (servants show concern for the well-being of those around him/her even though they, too, may be in distress....the focus is not on self.)

Today, I will begin to follow Jesus by demonstrating *servant leadership* in this way_____

CLOSING PRAYER

You will listen O Lord, to the prayers of the lowly:

You will give them courage.

You will hear the cries of the oppressed and the orphans;

You will judge in their favor,

So that mortal men may cause terror no more. Psalm 10:17-18

DISCIPLE II
Into the Word; Into the World
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Week 10: God in the Fire

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 76)

Opening Prayer
Theme: **Called**
Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

If we carefully look at Moses' life, we understand that God can use the same person to accomplish vastly different tasks. Moses had multiple careers: **First 40 years:** a member of the royal family, enjoying privileges of that position. **Second 40 years:** tended sheep for his father-in-law; life of simplicity after royal splendor. **Last 40 years:** leader of the Exodus. In many ways his career utilized strengths and experiences from his two previous careers. The royal leader and the shepherd combined to lead the Hebrews out of bondage. Moses spent 2/3 of his life preparing for the last 1/3 !

Discussion Question: What skills developed by Moses his first 80 years prepared him to carry out the leadership assignment and the task of the Exodus?

Study the calls of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel: in small groups, compare each man's call with Moses' call to leadership. Identify the similarities, the setting, reason and urgency of the call, and their resistance/response. Share your findings:

MOSES

Setting:

Reason/Urgency:

Resistance/Response:

ISAIAH (use Scripture and notes for Day 3 in Study Manual, page 80)

Setting:

Reason/Urgency:

Resistance/Response:

JEREMIAH (use Scripture and notes for Day 4 in Study Manual, page 81)

Setting:

Reason/Urgency:

Resistance/Response:

EZEKIEL (use Scripture and notes for Day 5 in Study Manual, page 81-82)

Setting:

Reason/Urgency:

Resistance/Response:

ENCOUNTER THE WORD Ezekiel's Call: Ezekiel 1:28-3:11

At the time of Ezekiel, the powerful Assyrian nation had destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel (the section which was led by Solomon's son after his death – the home of 10 of the 12 Tribes of Israel). Now the Babylonians were looming over the horizon, poised to destroy the remaining part of Israel – Judah. Ezekiel was called to prophesy during this upheaval.

1. What repetitious refrains did you hear in this passage? Why did God emphasize these?
2. What meaning emerges from this passage for today's church?
3. In what ways does this passage call each of us to make changes in our lives?

INTO THE WORLD: As we study the Bible together, one theme to keep in mind is how this message can be taken into our world today. Today's Spiritual Discipline is *meditation*. With that in mind, read the Human Condition silently to yourself and make changes which make it a true statement for you:

HUMAN CONDITION

Who does not resist the call to serve? We demure; we defer to others. We feel so inadequate. We know there is a price to be paid. We fear the cost and the consequences.

My Spiritual Gift is _____ How I might serve _____

Together read the **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE**

We have looked at the Disciplines of *Celebration, Confession, Service, Submission, Worship, Solitude*. Today we look at

Meditation. We wait in God's presence, reflecting on God's Word and listening for God's voice, open and available to God's call.

What are the situations in which I sense God's guidance?

What are the most effective ways for me to learn God's plan for me?

CLOSING PRAYER

DISCIPLE II
Into the Word; Into the World
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Week 11: God Opens the Sea

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 84)

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Salvation**

Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Israel's Salvation

Read **Exodus 14:5-31** silently to yourself and make notes on the following questions for discussion:

What actions did God take to save Israel?

How did God act through others?

What picture of God did you get from this account?

Discuss the meaning of these symbols of Passover/Seder and contrast with our Communion:

- unblemished lamb to be roasted and eaten with remainder to be burned (shankbone)
- wine (symbol of joy)
- bitter herbs and salt water
- unleavened bread
- blood of the Passover lamb on the doorframe

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Two Pictures of God

What is God like?

Some people see two Gods in the Bible: the God of the Old Testament who is violent and retaliatory and the God of the New Testament who is a God of love and peace.

Read **Exodus 15:1-21:**

How many ways does the Lord save Israel throughout the Exodus?

In what ways is the Lord pictured as a God of love and peace?

Without question, a lot of actions described in the OT are cruel and ugly. Does this ugliness come from God? Who is guilty of the sin and rebellion?

Read **Hebrews 12:7-11:**

Paraphrase Paul's position on the discipline of the God of the NT. In what ways do you reconcile the "two Gods" ?

INTO THE WORLD: As we study the Bible together, one theme to keep in mind is how this message can be taken into our world today.

HUMAN CONDITION

We fear stepping out into the unknown. The old groove, even enslavement, feels comfortably familiar. Leaving the well-known paths and patterns makes us feel vulnerable, almost naked. The cost of a new direction, even a new freedom, will be high.

Have you ever faced a potential change in your life and experienced this feeling? How did you resolve your fear/discomfort?

Together read the **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE**

We have looked at the Disciplines of *Celebration, Confession, Service, Submission, Worship, Solitude, Guidance*. Today we look at

Guidance. The more we know of God, the more we learn and obey God's Word, the greater our sense of God's guiding us wherever we are.

Review the Spiritual Disciplines and their meaning:

Celebration (trust God to provide...freeing us to experience joy)

Confession (giving up our pretenses...recognizing our sin hurts others)

Service (choosing to live as a servant to others)

Submission (giving up our need to have our own way)

Worship (worship changes us and makes us ready for guidance)

Prayer (tapping into God's healing, strengthening power)

Solitude (spending time listening for God's voice in our lives)

Guidance (knowing and learning about God...feeling his guidance)

What keeps me from focusing my attention and giving some of my time to growing spiritually?

CLOSING PRAYER

DISCIPLE II
Into the Word; Into the World
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Week 12: Amid the Struggle God Provides

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 90)

Opening Prayer
Theme: **Trials**
Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY

Daily Manna: Exodus 16:13-31

In what ways does God sometimes discipline us by giving us what we demand?
What part of your day to day existence are you able to trust God's care and provision?

Water from a Rock: Exodus 17:1-7

List the times the Israelites complained about their condition in the desert (review Exodus 14,15,16)
Were the Israelites a truly ungrateful, forgetful people? Or, do they provide a "mirror" for the ungratefulness of the rest of us to God's provisions? In what ways?

A Spiritual Publicity Campaign: Psalm 105

List the ways this Psalm recounts the fulfilling of God's promises.
In what ways might we tell other people of God's goodness and faithfulness?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD EXODUS 19

Exodus 19 records God's attempt to prepare the Israelites for holy encounter. The Ten commandments were about to be given to the people.

What was the symbolism in washing clothes, waiting three days, setting boundaries on the mountain where the people could go, avoiding sexual relations? (Review Study Manual, page 96, "Preparing to Meet God")

In what ways do we, today, prepare for holy encounter? In what ways are we not prepared, just like the Israelites? (Consider the Spiritual Disciplines)

INTO THE WORLD: As we study the Bible together, one theme to keep in mind is how this message can be taken into our world today.

HUMAN CONDITION

Creaturely comforts enslave us and demand our immediate attention. More important things like education, sound relationships, deep faith, require time and considerable discipline. Why must we learn the hard way? Why can't we have freedom and spiritual maturity quickly and easily?

There is a quote which goes something like this: "Learn from other's mistakes rather than making them all yourself." Why is this a hard, almost impossible lesson? Why is the idea of receiving all the things we would like to have quickly and easily a bad idea?

Together read the **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE**

We have looked at the Disciplines of *Celebration, Confession, Service, Submission, Worship, Solitude, Guidance, Fasting.*

Fasting. We set aside or give up something for a time in order to concentrate on our spiritual life and heighten our sense of dependence on God.

Read the attachment on fasting. Have you ever considered or tried fasting? What could fasting represent other than giving up eating?

CLOSING PRAYER: "Popcorn Prayer: Ask each member to participate: "Lord, during this season, I am thankful for_____."

DISCIPLE II
Into the Word; Into the World
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Week 13: God's Commands

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 98)

Opening Prayer
Theme: **Law**
Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Background: Mt. Siani is the same as Mt. Horeb where God spoke to Moses in the burning bush. Horeb may refer to a mountain range or ridge with Siani indicating a particular summit on the ridge. The six hundred Laws that followed the Ten Commandments were based on these ten fundamentals.

Setting the Scene: The first time, the Ten Commandments were given as the Israelites camped in the desert. After the original tablets were broken by Moses because of Israel's sin, the Ten Commandments were given a second time to later generations just before Israel entered the Promised Land.

Refer to the two records of the commandments: **Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:1-21** and the Study Manual (see Ten Commandments on last page):

According to Steve Brown, author of *Approaching God: How to Pray*, these are not the **Ten Suggestions!** They are **commandments from God:**

The first four commandments speak to loving God:

1. No other gods before me
2. Do not worship other idols
3. Do not misuse the name of the Lord
4. Observe the Sabbath

The last six commandments speak to loving other people:

5. Respect your father and mother
6. Do not murder (premeditated)
7. Do not be unfaithful in marriage
8. Do not steal
9. Do not tell lies about others
10. Do not want that which belongs to another

As you discuss the commandments consider the answer Jesus gave the Pharisees when they were testing him and his teaching:

Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law? Jesus replied, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. Matthew 22:36-40

What impact would the practice and upholding of these commandments of God have on our society?

Read **Exodus 31:18 – 32:24: The Golden Calf.** Discuss two critical issues:

- What actually happened to Aaron and the people while Moses was on the Mountain? Look at the symbolism of the gold, calf, revelry in relation to pagan Egypt and the broken tablets.
- Although few of us dance around golden calves, do we, in our modern society, worship false gods? What form might this worship take? Refer to the Study Manual: Into the World on page 106.

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Numbers 35:9-34

Safe towns: the six safe towns were strategically located for accessibility: three to the east of the Jordan River and three to the west. If the manslayer was able to enter a safe town, he was protected from immediate harm. However, the elders of the manslayer's home town were to investigate the matter and let the townspeople decide whether the killing had been done intentionally. If the person was found guilty of murder, he was brought back and delivered over to the avenging blood relative for execution. Otherwise, the manslayer was granted asylum in the safe town. However, he must stay until the high priest's death...which might mean a prolonged exile, little better than living under house arrest.

Contrast and compare these laws and punishment in our own society. Consider the definitions of

***aggravated assault:** common assault combined with intent to commit another crime or with use of a deadly weapon

***involuntary manslaughter:** taking of human life through criminal negligence

***manslaughter:** taking of human life without malicious intent

***murder:** taking of another's life especially by deliberate and premeditated design

INTO THE WORLD: As we study the Bible together, one theme to keep in mind is how this message can be taken into our world today.

HUMAN CONDITION

We hate laws. Laws seem so negative, so restrictive. We want laws to keep others in check, but we want to bend them for ourselves.

What laws are we guilty of “bending”?

Together read the **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE**

We have looked at the Disciplines of *Celebration, Confession, Service, Submission, Worship, Solitude, Guidance*. Today we look at

Study. When we read Scripture with an open mind and a teachable spirit, we make ourselves available to Scripture’s transforming power.

Scriptures involves 4 steps:

- Repetition (studies show it takes 8 repetitions to have knowledge in your long term memory)
- Concentration (channeling mind in a specific direction on a regular basis)
- Comprehension (doesn’t lend itself to multi-tasking. Quiet and solitude enhances thought)
- Reflection (allows us to see things from God’s perspective. In reflection we come to understand not only our subject matter, but ourselves.
- Study the Bible through reading, discussion with others, reading other sources such as commentaries and theological writings
- For intensive study, consider a private retreat lasting 1-2 days. Take your Bible, a commentary and a journal for your private thoughts. Plan time for reading, solitude, prayer, reflection, responding and journaling of thoughts. You will be refreshed and blessed!

God’s word in my world: this message will shape my ministry and my life in these ways this week

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father:

Our greatest wish is to have you near. How wonderful that you want us to be near you – that you delight in seeing our faces and hearing our voices in prayer! Help us to walk close to you all the day long and to rest in the joy of knowing who you are! Help us to grow each and every day in doing this better and better.

Grant us grace when we stumble, keep us depending on you for strength, remind us of our need to take everything to you in prayer. Make us gracious witnesses to those who don’t know you, and a blessing to those who do. AMEN

DISCIPLE II
Into the Word; Into the World
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Week 14: The Just Laws of God

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 108)

Opening Prayer
Theme: **Justice**
Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

The Law was given to an agricultural society, hence the ordinances about bulls which gore and dangerous open pits. Nevertheless, the general principles of justice concerning human life and safety carry over into any society and work environment. As you work through your assigned Scripture, look for insights about community and relationships among people that might speak to particular present-day social concerns.

Exodus 21: Slaves, murder, violent crimes

God took a strong interest in preventing injury and promoting safety in the workplace and community. What message might these Scriptures have for our society prone to lawsuits? What can we learn from the Old Testament's prescriptions for settling property and injury cases?

Exodus 22: Property, laws for everyday life

The Scriptures offer strong support for people's right to security in their lives and property. Do you see any basis in our present-day laws to the commandments in this chapter?

Exodus 23:1-13. Equal justice for all

Do we *innately* know right from wrong and what is ethically and morally right? In what ways do our wants, needs, and emotions interfere with this "moral compass?" We often justify our actions and decisions, but what is God's commandment about the choices we make?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Leviticus 19:1-18

Does a holy God make a practical difference in people's day-to-day lives? Compare some of the standards that a holy God has placed on his people and John Wesley's "Rule for Christian Living":

God's Commands

Respect for parents
Keep the Sabbath
Forsake idolatry
Concern for the poor
Honesty and integrity in business
Protection of the physically challenged
Loving others as much as oneself
Respect for the elderly
Loving treatment of foreigners

Wesley's Rule for Christian Living

Do all the good you can
By all the means you can
In all the ways you can
In all the places you can
At all the times you can
To all the people you can
As long as ever you can.

INTO THE WORLD

As we study the Bible together, one theme to keep in mind is how this message can be taken into our world today. Today's Spiritual Discipline is *simplicity*. With that in mind, together read the Human Condition:

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

Life is not fair. The strong lord it over the weak. The bright out maneuver the slow. Sometimes the innocent are cut down. Often the wicked go unpunished. We try to get an edge wherever we can.

Is this true of who we are?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Celebration, Confession, Service, Submission, Worship, Prayer, Solitude, Guidance, Fasting, Study.

Simplicity. In choosing daily to live simply, I gain integrity in my own life and make possible wholeness for others.

Read the following attachment about Simplicity. In what sense would our choosing daily to live simply bring some justice to the situation outlined in the Human Condition?

CLOSING PRAYER

The Discipline of Simplicity

The Inner Expression of Simplicity:

- Simplicity is freedom. It brings joy and balance
- The Christian Discipline of simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward life-style.
- The central point for the Discipline of Simplicity is to seek the Kingdom of God and the righteousness of his Kingdom *first* and then everything necessary will come in its proper order.
- The inward reality of simplicity involves a life of joyful unconcern for possessions. It is an inward spirit of trust.
- When are seeking first the Kingdom of God, these three attitudes will characterize our lives. Freedom from anxiety is characterized by three inner attitudes:
 1. If what we have we receive as a gift,
 2. If what we have is to be cared for by God,
 3. If what we have is available to others, then we will possess freedom from anxiety. This is the inward reality of simplicity

The Outward Expressing of Simplicity

- The inner reality is not a reality until there is an outward expression

Ten Controlling Principles for the Outward Expression of Simplicity

- Buy things for their usefulness rather than their status
- Reject anything that is producing an addiction in you
- Develop a habit of giving things away
- Refuse to be propagandized by the distributors of modern gadgetry
- Learn to enjoy things without owning them
- Develop a deeper appreciation for creation
- Look with a healthy skepticism at all “buy now, pay later” schemes
- Obey Jesus’ instruction about plain, honest speech
- Reject anything that breeds the oppression of others
- Shun anything that distracts you from seeking first the Kingdom of God

DISCIPLE II
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Week 15: Protector of the Powerless

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 114)

Opening Prayer

*“Answer me, Lord, in the goodness of your constant love;
in your compassion turn to me!” (Psalm 69:16 TEV)*

Theme: **Compassion**

Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Major Social Concerns in the Covenant, *NIV Study Bible* (read aloud):

1. **Personhood:** everyone's person is to be secure (Exodus 21)
2. **False Accusation:** everyone is to be secure against slander and false accusation (Deut.19:15-21)
3. **Women:** no woman is to be taken advantage of within her subordinate status in society. (Deut. 22:23)
4. **Punishment:** punishment for wrongdoing shall not be excessive so as to dehumanize the culprit.
5. **Dignity:** every Israelite's dignity and right to be God's freedman and servant are to be honored and safeguarded (Deut. 23:7)
6. **Inheritance:** every Israelite's inheritance in the promised land is to be secure
7. **Property:** everyone's property is to be secure (Exodus 22)
8. **Fruit of Labor:** everyone is to receive the fruit of his labors
9. **Fruit of the Ground:** everyone is to share the fruit of the ground (Exodus 23:10-11)
10. **Rest on Sabbath:** everyone, down to the humblest servant and the resident alien, is to share in the weekly rest of God's Sabbath
11. **Marriage:** the marriage relationship is to be kept inviolate (Deut. 22:13-20)
12. **Exploitation:** no one, however disabled, impoverished or powerless, is to be oppressed, or exploited.
13. **Fair Trial:** everyone is to have free access to the courts and to be afforded a fair trial.
14. **Social Order:** every person's God-given place in the social order is to be honored.
15. **Law:** no one shall be above the law, not even the king (Deut. 17:18-20)
16. **Animals:** concern for the welfare of other creatures is to be extended to the animal world.

God Provides a “Safety Net” for His People (Study Manual pages 116-17)

Review the provisions for the Israelites in God’s “Safety Net.” Do you see any parallels for individual protections in today’s society?

Business Transactions: Deuteronomy 15:1-18

The lender mentioned in the Law is not what we think of today as a banker or credit institution, but merely a neighbor who had loaned something to someone. Institutional banking was not known in ancient Israel until the time of the Babylonian captivity (587 BC).

What happens when the lower socio-economic classes are charged high prices or exorbitant interest rates?

How is God’s plan used to help this part of society? What parts of this law might be applied to our society today?

Sabbatical Year and Jubilee: Leviticus 25

The concept of letting the land “rest” every 7 years involved significant environmental benefits. Jubilee involved returning property and lands to their owners and servants twice each century. This somewhat leveled the economy of Israel.

What benefits can you envision from this plan of God’s?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD Deuteronomy 15:1-11

God’s compassion to the poor and needy is strongly portrayed in this passage. In what ways do we or could we practice this compassion in today’s society?

INTO THE WORLD

As we study the Bible together, one theme to keep in mind is how this message can be taken into our world today. Today’s Spiritual Discipline is *generosity*. With that in mind, together read the Human Condition:

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

If I take care of you, I may not have enough for myself. If people need something, let them work for it. Other people’s misfortunes are not my fault. People are responsible for themselves.

Silently, reflect whether you have felt or thought any one of these statements.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Celebration, Confession, Service, Submission, Worship, Prayer, Solitude, Guidance, Fasting, Study.

Generosity. As we recognize that what we have both comes from God and belongs to God, we gain the perspective of a steward---free from being driven to buy more things, free to choose a life of compassionate caring.

The gift of generosity is described as “The God-given ability to give material wealth freely and joyfully, knowing that spiritual wealth will about as God’s work is advanced.” Generosity can also be demonstrated in the gift of one’s time, resources to help another and emotional support. Give some examples of generous behavior you have experience from another. At Christmas season, we remember to be caring, compassionate and giving to those who are less fortunate. In what ways might we continue to share God’s love in the spring, summer and fall?

CLOSING PRAYER

DISCIPLE II
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Week 16: God's Dwelling Place

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 122)

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Sanctuary**

Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Develop a short description of each section of the Tabernacle to share with the group. As you develop this description, look for parallels in ceremony, furnishings, clothing, and purpose reflected in Christian worship today. (Use diagrams or drawings from your study Bible if available):

The Courtyard (Exodus 27:9-19)

The Furnishings of the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:10-40)

The Priests' Clothing (Exodus 28:1-30)

Compare the ways the church building and its furnishings serve God's people in today's world with the purpose of the Tabernacle for God's chosen people, the Israelites.

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Moses' relationship with God: Exodus 33:8-11

Jesus' relationship with followers John 15:13-15

Imagine speaking to God the way Moses did, as though he were your friend!

As believers, why are we never alone when facing problems or crises?

By what avenue can we reach out to God, "our friend"?

INTO THE WORLD

As we study the Bible together, one theme to keep in mind is how this message can be taken into our world today. Today's Spiritual Discipline is *worship*. With that in mind, together read the Human Condition:

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

We are not disembodied spirits. We are human beings caught up in our daily activities. We desperately need a place where we will not be distracted, a place where we can experience solitude, inner quietness. Our restlessness drives us to discover a Power beyond ourselves, and we are trying to get in touch.

For you, where is such a place?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES (always remember we are at different emphases, different places at different times of our lives. Decide on one or two of the disciplines on which to concentrate your efforts at this time)

Celebration, Confession, Service, Submission, Worship, Prayer, Solitude, Guidance, Fasting, Study, Generosity.

Worship. When we come as expecting, confessing, praising people, the God who dwells among us forgives us, renews us, and empowers us to service.

Some would say we do not need a "church" or a "tabernacle" or a "synagogue" or a "cathedral" to worship; one can worship God alone in his or her home or in the out-of-doors. What answer would you give these people?

What does the worship experience mean in your faith life?

This ends our study of the Old Testament. During the next class, we will begin the New Testament with the study of The Gospel of Luke.

CLOSING PRAYER