

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

Week 17: Good News for the Whole World

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 130)

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Gospel**

Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

INTRODUCTION TO LUKE

Luke's gospel is an exceedingly careful bit of work. With the careful details of a historian, Luke dates the emergence of John the Baptist by no fewer than six contemporary datings: "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (1), Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea (2), Herod being tetrarch of Galilee (3), and his brother Philip Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene (5) in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas (6), the word of God came to John."

---The Gospel of John by William Barclay

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

From your assigned Scriptures, scan the chapters and headings to develop a summary timeline to share with the whole group. Be ready to "tell" the story of Jesus from birth to ascension in your timeline. Some things to include in your story are specific events, miracles, teachings and parables.

LUKE 1:26 – 4:13 The Preparation

LUKE 4:14 – 9:50 Ministry in Galilee

Discussion:

As you look over this time line developed from Luke, do you have any surprises or any reinforcement of deep-seated beliefs?

What are the challenges to your present theology?

Why type of king did Luke carefully portray Jesus to be? From this Scripture passage, what type of king or redeemer do you perceive Jesus to be?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD**Read Luke 1:26-38**

Mary was perhaps no more than 15 years old when she received this startling announcement---that she would soon bear the very Son of God. This meant the end of a normal life. Mary's name would be forever on the lips of gossips and rumor-mongers.

In our present society, this may not seem like such a devastating thing. After all, single women bear children every day! Not much notice is taken of these events. However, in Mary's time, such event was cause for stoning to death. Joseph, her husband-to-be, could decide to end their betrothal (more than engagement, yet not the consummation of marriage) through a public, humiliating divorce. Even if he decided to "quietly call off the wedding," Mary would still have to return in shame to her father's home or else survive on her own in whatever way she could.

Reflect on Mary's depth of faith when she replies, "Let it happen as you have said." What is your impression?

Can we, as 21st century Disciples, say with the same deep faith, "*I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said*" ?

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 *study*. With that in mind, together read the Human Condition:

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

Despair darkens the sky for many people. The clouds blot out the sun. Is there any hope? Can anyone push back the haze so that we can smile and sing again?

You may have moments in your life when these statements are true for you. On the basis of our understanding of the study of Scripture so far, how might we respond to this statement?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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

Study. Through our disciplined reading and study of Scripture and the resulting insights, God works to change us.

You have had approximately 50 weeks of Disciple Bible Study (Disciple I & II). Do you find this statement true for your own life? In what ways has study of Scripture helped open your life to the meaning and direction God has for you? Write a statement of personal reflection:

CLOSING PRAYER

O God, you are faithful and you call us to embark on this spiritual adventure. We give you free and open access to our lives. You are right alongside us to keep us steady and on track. Keep us in your care. Help us to never forget your love for us this day.
Amen

DISCIPLE II
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THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Week 18: Our Savior Has Come

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 136)

Opening Prayer
Theme: **Messiah**
Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Before discussion, compile a list of words which form a definition of your understanding of "*Messiah*":

BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST **Luke 1:5-25; Study Manual page 138**

Define the term "Nazirite." Why do you feel John was dedicated to this life before birth?

MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST **Luke 3:1-26; Study Manual page 138**

Contrast and compare the baptisms performed by John (with water) and the baptism to be performed by Jesus (Holy Spirit and fire). In what ways did John "*prepare the way*" as foretold in Isaiah?

THE ANNUNCIATION ("Magnificat") **Luke 1:46-56; Study Manual page 139**

In what ways does Mary praise God for the miracle that is to happen?

BIRTH OF JESUS

Luke 2:1-20; Study Manual page 140

Explore reasons the news of Jesus' birth was first announced to the shepherds. We sing "*peace on earth, good will toward men.*" But, what does this phrase *really* mean?

REVIEW THE DEFINITION OF "MESSIAH" If you would make changes, what are they?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Read Luke 4:1-13

Why was this temptation of Jesus necessary? After all, He was divine.

Look at verses 3-4: *If you are.....do this.....*
6-8: *I will give you.....if you.....*
9-12: *If you worship.....you will.....*

How are these temptations encountered in our daily lives? Can you think of others in addition to these examples?

"I want to be a part of the "crowd," so I will laugh or ignore an off-color or discriminatory joke";

"If I mark down a sale, the customer will give me a "kick-back" and I won't have to pay taxes on the commission I usually receive";

"I worship material possessions, so I am focused on acquiring and feeling important among my friends."

How can we avoid "caving in?"

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 *solitude*. With that in mind, together read the Human Condition:

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

Some things take place "in God's good time." Who knows the moment a baby is to be born or the moment a rosebud will begin to open? Our human tendency is either to force the bud to open early or to be preoccupied with other matters and miss the day of flowering. How can we be sensitive to the "time of God"? How can we be ready to receive God?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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

Solitude: In seeking to know who we are and the meaning and direction of our life is to have, we trust God and wait in silence with God..

“God speaks in gentle impressions of the heart. As we wait in stillness and sense His presence, we are aware that a voice other than our own has joined our thoughts....God comes right into our mind. Our thoughts, our desires are not only our desires---they may also be God’s thoughts and desires. He speaks secretly, noiselessly.....”

---*The Soul at Rest* by Tricia McCary Rhodes

A challenge for the coming week: **Spend some time in silence...waiting for God to speak to you.**

JOYS AND CONCERNS

CLOSING PRAYER: group join hands; silently pray for the person on the right and squeeze hand; then pray for the person on the left and squeeze hand.

DISCIPLE II
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Week 19: Teach Us to Pray

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 144)

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Prayer** **Psalm 119:169-70 (TEV)**

“Let my cry for help reach you Lord!

Give me understanding, as you have promised.

Listen to my prayer and save me according to your promise!”

Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Using the study manual, the whole group will explore the use of prayer in Jesus’ life. Refer to the **Study Manual** and your responses on **pages 146-48**:

Prayer in the Life of Jesus

On what occasions did Jesus pray?

When sharing a meal with the Disciples of followers, it was Jesus’ custom to bless the bread *before* he broke the loaf. What do you feel when bread is blessed and broken during Communion?

Do you feel that *intercessory* prayer opens door for the Holy Spirit that would otherwise not be opened?

Would God take care of things without our prayers or petitions; does it matter that we pray? Are some prayers really unanswered? Why? Consider the following possibilities and discuss:

- Perhaps we ask for things not good for us or others.....
- Jesus faced the pain of unanswered prayer in Gethsemane...the Bible is strangely silent on unanswered prayer
- Prayers are answered -yes; some - wait; some – “I have a better plan.”
- Billy Graham addressed this question:
I believe God hears every prayer we as believers, even imperfect or selfish prayers and those we can barely put into words...Never forget that God often answers our prayers with a no, and when he does say no, it isn't because he doesn't care for us, or because he hasn't heard our prayer. In fact, the opposite is the case. God knows what is best for us and he knows that many of the things we ask for would only harm us or lead us in the wrong direction if He gave them to us...that is why we should always pray for God's will to be done, no matter what our prayer is. The Bible says, 'This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, He hears us' (1st John 5:14).
- Does God answer prayers? Does he care? Does it matter? In his book *Approaching God*, Steve Brown answers these questions: Yes! Yes! More than you could possibly imagine!

The Model Prayer

When the Disciples asked Jesus how to pray, he began by telling them first how *not* to pray. Read **Matthew 6:6-8**. In **Luke 11:1**, Jesus gave the Disciples the outline or form for prayer, the familiar *Lord's Prayer*. Let's examine this prayer phrase by phrase to understand its full meaning:

- A. ***Our Father:*** the father of all, our creator, our heavenly guardian. These words are terms of endearment and intimacy for we all are the children of God. Read **Romans 8:15-16** and **Galatians 4:4-7**.
- B. ***Who art in Heaven:*** the place where our Father resides and our ultimate destination.
- C. ***Hallowed be thy name:*** giving God praise and honor, recognition that God is the Supreme Being.
- D. ***Thy Kingdom come:*** we long for peace and good will which God's Kingdom would bring. Frederick Buechner describes this part of the prayer as the most dangerous part of all. What *would* be changed in your life and in our culture if God's kingdom did come here on earth, and if God's will was done always and everywhere. Read **Matthew 5** very carefully. This chapter represents the values of the Kingdom, the very values we have just prayed to come.
- E. ***Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven:*** In this part of the prayer, we are bending our will to God's; *help me to do His will*. When we pray these words, are we just repeating rote words? Or, are we truly asking for God's will, His strength and support, even though it is not *our will*, to be done?
- F. ***Give us this day, our daily bread:*** “give us” meaning “give to all”; not just me but all who need sustenance. We pray for those who are hungry, homeless, sick and in need. We make a commitment to help those who are less fortunate than we are. We ask for “daily” bread, not enough

bread for all week or all month. Read **Exodus 16**. What is the significance of the word “daily” in this story? How may we apply these concepts to our own lives?

G. ***And forgive us our trespasses:*** this is a time in the prayer where we examine our own lives and invite God’s grace and mercy to flow. Are we worthy of forgiveness? Read **Psalm 51**, written after King David had committed adultery. Some of these lines will be familiar to you. Some you will recognize as verses in familiar hymns. Parts of this Psalm make a wonderful prayer for us even today. What parts appeal to you that might be incorporated into your own prayers?

H. ***As we forgive those who trespass against us:*** as we ask for God’s forgiveness, we ***pledge to forgive others!*** We must examine our own hostilities against our fellow man for wrongs we have suffered. If we expect forgiveness, we must also extend that compassion to those around us. We cannot ask God to do what we, ourselves will not or cannot do!

I. ***And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:*** Sometimes we lead ourselves into temptation with the choices we make in life. What are the temptations you wrestle with? In this prayer you are surrendering your desires to God, and inviting him to lead you, rather than holding on to the leadership of your own life. The book of **James** is a letter written to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations by a man who was probably the brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem council. This letter addresses temptations of which to be aware. You may want to read this short book and make a list of the temptations. -----Sermon on ***Prayer*** by Adam Hamilton

PRAYER TECHNIQUES

Keeping a Gratitude Journal

This approach has been used by many people of great faith, so it might work for you. Write one page each day in a spiral notebook. Record the day’s events, your reactions, decisions, thoughts, feelings, high points, low points, frustrations, what you were going to do and why you didn’t, what you read in your Bible, and how you felt about what you read. Be sure to end your entry with a statement of gratitude for a blessing received from God.

Write Out Your Prayer

If you find yourself distracted when you try to pray, use a notebook to write out your prayer. You will be amazed how focused you can become when you “talk” to God in writing! Another advantage of this approach is being able to look back over your prayers. You can underline in red all the prayers God has answered! This will be a reminder to give thanks for God’s blessings.

Keep a Prayer Diary

Record the date of your prayer request, the type of prayer request, then leave a space for recording how the prayer was answered and the date. When you have the answer, you will remember it is time to give thanks to God!

Why all this writing? First you side aside a specific time to talk with God. Second, you focus on your communication with the Heavenly Father, shutting out all the daily hustle and bustle. Third, you create a record of God’s blessings in your life. By performing a physical action, you create a focus on prayer. Fourth, when you put something in writing, you own it!

Choose one or more techniques to try....one might work for you!

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Read Luke 18:1-8 A Widow and a Judge

What word would you use to describe the widow in this parable? How might this parable have meaning for our personal prayer life?

Read Luke 18:9-14 A Pharisee and a Tax Collector

What message is Jesus conveying in this teaching? How does the term “justified” (just-as-if-I-had-never-deserved) apply to this parable?

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 *prayer*. With that in mind, together read the Human Condition:

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

We feel totally alone and lonely. Something in our hearts tells us we are not complete until we communicate with the eternal, the infinite. We cry out for help. We need to know our cry will be heard.

What truths do you find in this statement?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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

Prayer. As we pray for ourselves and for others, our spiritual life is strengthened and power is set loose in the love of those for whom we pray. .

This week, I will take this word on prayer into my world by

O Lord, clear the way for us to come to you. Make your love increase and overflow for each person that we see today. Strengthen our hearts to that we will be blameless and holy in your presence. Help us to live to please you , O God. Amen.

DISCIPLE II
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Week 20: Despising His Goodness

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 152)

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Rejection**

Theme Scripture: Who is the cornerstone?

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

In the following Scripture passages, look for the reasons why people rejected Jesus:

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

Luke 4:14-30

Jesus quoted the Scripture from Isaiah 61:1. The people would have been familiar with this passage, yet they did not see. Why do you think this is so? In what ways does this rejection continue even today?

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

Luke 5:17-26

The Pharisees were entirely a religious body. They had no political ambitions and were content with any government which allowed them to carry out the ceremonial law. The Pharisees accepted the scriptures plus all the thousand detailed regulations and rules of the oral and ceremonial law. Though the Pharisees believed in and hoped for the coming of the Messiah, they did not recognize the Messiah in Jesus (See last page: About the Pharisees). In what ways are we “blinded” even today to the truth in the Scripture?

Lord of the Sabbath

Luke 6:1-11

Explain the Pharisees’ criticism and Jesus’ answer. Is the way we observe the Sabbath today compatible with Jesus’ teaching?

The Authority of Jesus Questioned Luke 20:1-8

Who is the source of Jesus' authority? There were those people who believed in Jesus immediately, such as the men called to be his Disciples, yet others found it hard to believe. Why? How do we accept or reject this authority today?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD Parable of the Tenants in Luke 20:9-19

This behavior could and did happen in Judea, which at the time of Jesus was in the throes of economic trouble and labor unrest. There were many absentee landlords who let their lands out in just such a way. The rent was seldom paid in money; it was paid in a fixed amount of product or a percentage of the crop, whatever it might be. The parable is explained in Barclay's *The Gospel of Luke*:

The vineyard stands for the nation of Israel and *the tenants* are the rulers of Israel in whose hands the nation was entrusted. The messengers are the prophets who were disregarded, persecuted and killed. The *son* is Jesus himself. The doom is that the place which Israel should have occupied is to be given to others.

It tells of human privilege. The tenants did not own the vineyard; they entered into possession of it. The owner did not stand over them with a whip. He went away and left them to work in their own way.

It tells of human sin. The sin of the tenants was the refusal to give the owner his due and the wish to control what was the owner's sole right to control. Sin consists of failure to give God control and power which, rightfully, should be His.

It tells of human responsibility. For long enough the tenants were left to their own devices; but the day of reckoning came. At some point we must give account to God for what has been committed to our charge.

It tells of the patience of God. The owner did not strike at the first sign of rebellion on the part of the tenants. He gave them chance after chance to do the right thing. There is nothing so wonderful as the patience of God.

It tells us that Jesus knew what was coming. He did not come to Jerusalem hugging a dream; for open-eyed and unafraid, he went on. For Jesus, there was no turning back.

It tells us that Jesus never doubted God's ultimate triumph. Sin and evil may seem to prevail for a time, but it cannot escape punishment in the end. "*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.*" (Luke 20:17)

Question for discussion: What claim does this passage make of us?

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 *confessing*. With that in mind, together read the Human Condition:

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

We conform to a comfortable community of friends and associates. We have an unspoken agreement not to criticize ourselves or group, so we avoid rejection or isolation. If someone speaks critically about our ways, we draw together. If the one criticizing should be one of us, we turn from that person. I hope it never happens to me.

In our society today, we are constrained from speaking out against wrong or evil or the opportunity to share our faith because we might alienate, we might not be politically correct, or we might make others mad. What is a solution for this dilemma?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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

Confessing. In confessing our sins and our failure to obey, we face who we are and we are set free to accept the grace and forgiveness of God.

How would a lifestyle of service be different from the way I now live?

What changes do I need to make in the way I live in order to be available to others and their needs?

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, it is so hard for me as temptation abounds. When I open my eyes, I see diversions from your righteous path. I call upon you to show me how to escape. When I am unable to outrun these persistent thoughts, remind me to bring them in confession to Christ for cleansing. Lord may I dedicate myself to grow in the knowledge of your word and the understanding of your Spiritual wisdom so that I am able to resist those things which are not of your accord. Amen.

ABOUT THE PHARISEES

They were laymen but men very interested in the interpretation of and obedience to Scripture.

They were more numerous and much more popular with the people than the Sadducees, who were wealthy, aristocratic, and very conservative theologically and politically.

They were zealous for the Jewish faith and were champions of the messianic hope.

They believe that if all Jews would dedicate themselves to a faithful observance of all the laws of the law of Moses, God would raise up his Messiah and deliver Israel.

There were very much interested in Jesus since they held many things in common such as belief in resurrection and angels. Not all Pharisees opposed him.

Their main problem with Jesus was His attitude toward the Law was too liberal, too permissive; Jesus associated with prostitutes, tax collectors, and other sinners too freely; Jesus did not enjoin his disciples to observe the oral traditions so cherished by the Pharisees.

Their indignation was aroused because Jesus assumed divine prerogatives such as forgiving sin.

Evans, Craig A. *New International Biblical Commentary: Luke*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.

DISCIPLE II
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Week 21: Teach Us How to Live

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 160)

Opening Prayer
Theme: **The Way**
Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Luke 6:17-22 What types of people were probably represented in this crowd? Which group does Jesus address and why? What would Jesus have to say about our society today?

Luke 7:1-10 Describe the Roman centurion's faith. Why do you think was Jesus amazed? How is this type of faith possible today?

Luke 8:4-15 Retell the parable. Jesus was a good storyteller, but why were His stories misunderstood at times? We have the advantage of the written Word and are able to study it, but how might we, today lack understanding?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD Luke 9:10-17

This is the only miracle besides the Resurrection reported in all 4 gospels. The Twelve had come back from their tour. Never was a time when Jesus needed more to be alone with them, but the people discovered where Jesus had gone and followed him in hordes---*and he welcomed them.* There was divine compassion here. **We** get too busy to be disturbed, but Jesus put human need first over everything.

What did this miracle mean to those who were there?

There is a Jewish saying that “he who enjoys anything without thanksgiving is as though he has robbed God.” What does this miracle mean to us?

What is God saying to us in this story? Why do we have difficulty basing our lifestyle on these teachings?

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 *service*. With that in mind, together read the Human Condition:

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

So many voices are telling us how to live. Every huckster has a product to make us happy. Every advertisement offers the abundant life. Some teachers seem restrictive, so filled with do’s and don’ts. Some people say “Anything goes.” How can we know the way to live?

We are influenced by advertising more than we realize. If you can answer yes to one or more of the following, you are a recipient of these subtle messages daily and hourly:

Do you wake up to the radio in the morning?

Do you read the daily newspaper?

Do you listen to the radio while driving in the car?

Do you use road and highways where signs are posted?

Do you read magazines?

Do you watch TV?

Do you receive mail?

Is your phone number unblocked for direct marketing?

Do you use public restrooms?

These messages constantly remind us that products will make us happier, smarter, thinner, prettier, more handsome, more appealing, more likeable, richer and more comfortable. But do they?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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

Service. Empowered by Christ, we choose the lifestyle of service, giving ourselves and our involvement to the needs of others.

Is what ways might this statement be an answer to the Human Condition?

CLOSING PRAYER

You can pray while you work. Work doesn't stop prayer and prayer doesn't stop work.

It requires only that small raising of the mind to him. I love you God. I trust you. I believe in you. I need you now." Small things like that. They are wonderful prayers.

----Mother Teresa

DISCIPLE II
Into the Word; Into the World
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Week 22: Signs of God's Rule

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 168)

Opening Prayer
Theme: **Kingdom**
Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

We need to think of the Gospels not as a biography of Jesus' life; only as sketches of his life. **John 21:25** says "*Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.*" Look at some of these "glimpses" into Jesus' teaching. As you read the following Scripture passages, respond to this question:

If I took this point seriously, how would I change the way I live?

The Cost of Following Jesus

Luke 9:57-62

Mary and Martha

Luke 10:38-42

Parable of the Rich Fool

Luke 12:15-21

Read **Luke 12:35-48**. Analyze what Jesus was actually teaching his Disciples about *watchfulness*. What does this allegory mean?

Review **page 174 of the Study Manual** on the three meanings of *kingdom of God*.

Do you see evidence of God's judging today? If so, what?

In what way does each of these meanings influence your daily life?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Jesus sent out seventy-two workers saying, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore to send out workers into his harvest field” (Luke 10:2). Jesus gave them explicit instructions about taking the message to unbelievers. “Do not take a purse or bag or sandals and do not greet anyone on the road” (verse 3).

Read the remaining instructions Jesus gave in **Luke 10:8-16**. This week are looking at the cost of discipleship. If we listen to Jesus’ instructions to the seventy-two, what can we apply to our own lives in today’s world?

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 **submission**. With that in mind, together read the Human Condition:

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

My rule is: Look after Number One. I ask, will it be good for me? I expect others to do the same. I am suspicious of anyone who asks for commitments. I am especially hesitant when the claim demands urgency. There is plenty of time.

Is there plenty of time? Why or why not?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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

Submission. We let go of our need always to be in control and make ourselves both available and vulnerable to commitment to others.

What are some ways or areas we can relinquish control in our lives?

CLOSING PRAYER

We need silence to be alone with God, to speak to him, to listen to him, to ponder his words deep in our hearts. We need to be alone with God in silence to be renewed and to be transformed. Silence gives us a new outlook on life. In it we are filled with the grace of God himself, which makes us do all things with joy.

----Mother Teresa

DISCIPLE II
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Week 23: Learning to Follow

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 176)

Opening Prayer
Theme: **Humility**
Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Explore Jesus' teaching on money and possessions. Many times Jesus used hyperbole or exaggeration to emphasize his point. With this in mind, read and discuss the Scriptures' meaning through responding to the questions below. Do you find occasions when Jesus used hyperbole? Why?

1. What attitudes contribute to the belief that money is our security?
2. What behavior results from these attitudes?
3. If Jesus' teachings are applied to our lives, what does that require of us?

Cost of Being a Disciple

Luke 14:25-33

Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31

Rich Ruler

Luke 18:18-30

ENCOUNTER THE WORD Learning to Follow

Read **Matthew 25: 34-46**; then discuss the following questions:

What vision does this passage present to us?

How has the church understood and responded to this passage?

In what ways might this response be increased?

In what ways can I use my spiritual gifts?

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

Humility sounds weak, spineless. In an attempt to be humble, we become condescending. So many of our role models are aggressive, self-centered. We don't know how to be humble and still be strong and radiant.

How do you view humility? Is this statement a fair assessment?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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

Simplicity. As we come to see money not as our security but as a trust from God, we will use it joyfully in behalf of others.

In what areas of ministry do you have a passion? Is this an area in which you could tithe your time, talents, energy or money? In what ways?

CLOSING PRAYER

If we really fully belong to God, then we must trust in him. We must never be preoccupied with the future. There is no reason to be so. God is there.

---Mother Teresa

DISCIPLE II
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Week 24: Sent as Witnesses

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 184)

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Resurrection**

Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

In *The Case for Christ*, Lee Strobel asked this question of several Bible scholars:

Was Jesus' death a sham and his resurrection a hoax?

The answers received:

1. Could Jesus have survived the cross? **NO**. He suffered from hypovolemic shock from massive blood loss **before** his crucifixion. Crucifixion **suffocates** the victim. After the victim's hands are bound or nailed to the cross bar, the legs are bent to the side as the feet are nailed to the post. Sometimes a board was fixed as a crude seat. Blood and fluid fill the heart cavity causing suffocation. The spear which pierced Jesus' side **entered his heart**.
2. Was Jesus' body really absent from the tomb? **YES**. Guards, either Roman or Temple, were placed at the tomb to **prevent tomb robbing** which might lead to tales of Jesus' rising from the dead. (What ultimate irony!)
3. There are discrepancies in the stories between Matthew, Mark, Luke and John about details of that Sunday morning. **YES**, but these are discrepancies on secondary details; the **core of the story is the same**. If all four gospels were identical in details, this would have raised suspicion of **plagiarism!** Four people reporting the same story would not tell the story exactly the same way.
4. **Women** discovered the empty tomb. Reported as such is remarkable given the status of women in that society. The Greek verbs used to record the story can also be translated as "insane babbling." The Gospel writers faithfully recorded even **embarrassing aspects!**

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Luke 19:28-36

Triumphal Entry

Jesus, an “outlaw,” rode a donkey---only in war did kings ride upon a horse. When they came in peace, they rode an ass. What message was Jesus giving the people and the Jewish leaders?

Luke 20:20-26

Paying Taxes to Caesar

Tribute paid to Caesar was a poll tax of one denarius (approximately 5 cents) per year, simply for the privilege of existing. It was not the amount, but the tribute that angered the Jews. What is the significance of Jesus’ response?

Luke 22:7-20

The Last Meal

Covenant: in the Biblical sense, a relationship between man and God, a promise to obey and keep his law. The last supper canceled all previous covenants with God. What meaning for our lives does the *New Covenant* have (v. 20)?

Luke 24:36-49

Instructions

How was this event an *ending*?

How was this event a *beginning*?

What is Jesus’ message for us today? Read Matthew 28:19-20

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Luke 21: 5-28

This passage is an example of apocalyptic literature. The *New Illustrated Bible* Dictionary says the word *apocalypsis* is a Greek word meaning “revelation.” Therefore, *apocalyptic literature* is a special kind of writing that arose among the Jews and Christians to reveal certain mysteries about heaven and earth, humankind and god, angels and demons, the life of the world today and the world to come.

This account of Jesus’ teaching in Luke was written 10-20 years *after* the destruction of the Temple. It was unthinkable that the glory of the Temple could be destroyed, yet it was in a siege in which Josephus says 1,100,000 were killed and 97,000 were carried away into captivity. The nation of Israel was obliterated (reread verses 5, 6, 20-24).

This passage teaches us some basic principles of Christian life:

1. As Disciples who follow Jesus, what can we expect in our journey?
2. What are the promises on which we can rely?

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 **prayer**. With that in mind, together read the Human Condition:

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

We can be witnesses only to what we have experienced. Being a witness for an unpopular cause or an idea that runs counter to the culture can be intimidating, humiliating, even dangerous. And inconvenient.

How willing are we to be intimidated, humiliated, put in danger or inconvenienced for an idea or belief?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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

Prayer. An awareness of God's continuing presence creates in us an attitude of praying without ceasing..

The Greek word(s) translated as "praying without ceasing" is akin to the words meaning a "hacking cough." Can you control such cough? What would prayer in this manner look like?

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Lord, I come feebly before you unsure of myself. I begin this week desiring a deeper relationship with you and know the beginning of this is prayer, but I feel inadequate. What words? What thoughts? What emotions? What praises? What confessions? Help me to cultivate my private relationship with you in prayer. Give me confidence in my faith to seek a such relationship with you. In Jesus Name, Amen!

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

Week 25: Acts of the Holy Spirit

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 192)

Opening Prayer
Theme: **Holy Spirit**
Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

- What is the difference between a *disciple* and an *apostle*?
- According to the *New World Illustrated Bible Dictionary*:
Disciple: a student, learner, or pupil; a follower of Jesus. Term rarely used in the OT.
Apostle: a special messenger of Jesus; a person to whom Jesus delegated authority for certain tasks. This term was applied to the first 12 disciples (except Judas Iscariot) after the Resurrection.

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Acts can be viewed as the sequel to *The Gospel of Luke* providing information about the formation of the early church. We usually speak of *The Acts of the Apostles*, but **this book is not an exhaustive account of the acts of the apostles. *Acts* gives us a series of typical exploits of the heroic figures of the early church.**

Tradition holds that Luke is the author of *Acts*. We know **that Luke was a doctor** because of his instinctive use of medical words (the Greek medical word for convulsions describing demonic fits; a Greek word for a surgeon's needle when relating the camel and needle's eye parable).

Luke wrote both his gospel and *Acts* to a man called Theophilus. We can only guess who this man was, but here are three possibilities:

***Theophilus may not have been a real name but a combination of two Greek words *theos* (God) and *philein* (love). Luke may have written to a man of God but did not use his real name for safety's sake.**

***If Theophilus was a real person, he must have been a high government official since Luke uses the term "most excellent" which would denote a man of importance.**

***In ancient days, doctors were often slaves. Perhaps Luke was a slave of Theophilus and also his doctor. If Theophilus had been gravely ill, and Luke's skill brought him back to health, Luke's freedom might have been granted in gratitude. Perhaps Luke, as a gift, wrote down the story of Jesus and sent it to his benefactor.**

Luke was a historian. As you read Acts, watch for the passages in which **Luke uses the third person (he, they) to relate some events, switching to the first person (I, we) to tell others.** This would indicate that **Luke was an eyewitness** to some events and heard the stories of others.

---*Barclay's The Acts of the Apostles*

Acts 1 Choosing Matthias

We don't know much at all about Matthias who replaced Judas Iscariot. Matthais was part of the larger band of followers, for his reputation was such that he was one of two chosen for the replacement of Judas Iscariot.

Psalm 109:8: "Let another take his position his place of leadership." Peter thought it necessary to choose someone.

To fulfill The Twelve was important to Jews – number of Jacob's sons and number of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. The absence of one of their number by defection was a violation of a holy symmetry.

Tradition says he went to Africa. The Greeks believed he preached in the area bordering on the Black Sea. We know know thing more about him other than he was a Holy Substitute.

Acts 2 The Coming of the Holy Spirit

At the beginning of *Acts*, Jesus followers were confused and fearful, but by the end of *Acts* they are well on their way to transforming the Roman world with the gospel. Read **Acts 1:8**. How can we explain this amazing transformation?

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

Pentecost (the fiftieth) is a Jewish festival which took place 50 days after Passover (about June) and celebrated the wheat harvest, later becoming a celebration of the giving of the Law in Mount Sinai. Jews from all over the Roman world were in Jerusalem (Acts 2:9-11). **What happened at Pentecost began to reverse what happened at ancient Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) when God confused the languages** of the peoples and dispersed the nations because of their pride. Once again there was confusion, but it was because everybody could understand what was being said! Read **Acts 2:22-24; 30-33; 38-42**.

15-22: These men are not drunk as your suppose. It's only nine in the morning. (Quote from Joel 2:28-32: "I will pour out my spirit on all people....everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.") 30-33: But he [David] was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ...." 38-42: Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...."

What was God doing? What is the message we can apply to our world today?

“Boldness” characterizes the early Christians and Christians down through the ages. Read **Acts 4:15-22**.

What are we going to do with these men? Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

But Peter and John replied, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey your rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

Can you imagine the frustration of the officials as they realized that Jesus had not remained in the tomb? What might have been their understanding or feelings? We are not faced with such opportunities to be bold for our faith today.....*or are we?* **Can you think of some ways we might be called into boldness for Jesus?**

ENCOUNTER THE WORD Acts 4:23-31

For those who have not heard the word, John 15:22 says, “If I have not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.” **James instructs us that, “Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin”(4:17). What is our commission?**

Sometimes we witness by our integrity, our actions, our ministries. Sometimes we talk favorably about our church, our study group, our pastor. In what ways might we take the message on matters such as forgiveness, assurance, healing of soul or body, strength of Christian fellowship and prayer into our world?

Chapter 5: What lesson do we learn from Ananias and Sapphira? What WAS their mistake?

This message from God’s word will shape my ministry this week and I will respond in these ways:

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 **guidance**. With that in mind, together read the Human Condition:

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

When we think of power, we usually think about human resources. Position. Connections. A young man may flex his muscles. A business woman may stress organization. A worker may point to the union. All of us know that money is power. Few of us turn to God for power. It seems like a strange request.

The business of the Power of the Holy Spirit may seem vague, out of our reach or confusing. How might we experience this Power within our lives? How might we begin to put the Holy Spirit to work in our lives?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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

Guidance. God will guide us by the Holy Spirit, and through Spirit-filled persons and groups. We have only to be open and alert to that guidance.

Can you see or feel the Holy Spirit at work in the ministry area in which you are involved? In what ways?

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Creator: I acknowledge you as Lord over every area of my life this day. I desire to follow you. Help me walk in accordance with your perfect will in all that I do and in everything that I say. Living in this world is not always easy, and it often comes with challenges and confusion. Be my guide, leader, and moderator. May I always remember that you are the Enduring One that is with me always and loves me until the end of time. Amen.

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

Week 26: Community in Jerusalem

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 200)

Opening Prayer
Theme: **Jerusalem**
Theme Scripture

DVD PRESENTATION

In **Galatians 1:15-17**, Paul writes, *“But even before I was born, God had chosen me. He was kind and had decided to show me his Son, so that I would announce his message to the Gentiles. I didn’t talk this over with anyone. I didn’t say a word, not even to the men in Jerusalem who were apostles before I was....”*

(NOTE: Most Jews had two names, a Hebrew name and a Greek name. Saul was the Hebrew name; Paul the Greek name. Simon was Peter’s Hebrew name; Peter is the Greek translation of Cephas meaning “rock”). Paul states indirectly that he was an apostle of Christ Jesus; his support is the appearance of Jesus during his journey to Damascus. Who was Paul? If conversion is the beginning process of costly obedience for the sake of the gospel, why would Paul qualify for this description?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Stephen, one of the church’s early great preachers, was the church’s first martyr. Stephen’s particular sphere of labor seems to have been among the Greek Jews, being appointed to care for the needy. Today, we have “Stephen’s Ministry” in remembrance. At that time there were about 460 synagogues in Jerusalem. Membership was made up of foreign-born Jews who had been brought up in centers of Greek culture, had acquired a cosmopolitan outlook, and felt themselves superior to the Jews of Palestine. Unable to withstand Stephen in argument, they hired false witnesses and brought him before the council, the same council that had Jesus crucified: Annas and Caiaphas and other members of the high priest’s family (Acts 4:6). ---*Halley’s Bible Handbook*

In a *Bible Dictionary*: look up the following terms: Hellenism, Samaritan, Gentile, Ethiopia.
On a Bible map: locate the areas represented by the groups of Jews in Jerusalem: Judean Jews, Hellenized Jews, Samaritans, Ethiopians, Gentiles.

Acts 7:1-53**Stephen's Sermon**

Review the elements of Stephen's sermon to the Jerusalem Council. What events of history or persons does Stephen emphasize? Why? What charges or words angered the hearers?

Acts 8:9-25**Simon the Sorcerer**

What was Simon missing in his belief? Barclay says in his *Acts of the Apostles*, "To bring the Spirit to others a man must not be a man of wealth but one who himself possesses the Spirit." Does this mean that true Christians must be poor? Why or why not?

Acts 8:26-40**Philip and the Ethiopian**

Explore the meaning of baptism requested by the Ethiopian. According to Barclay, "tradition has it that this eunuch went home and evangelized Ethiopia." What message does this story have for the church today?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD**Acts 9:10-22**

Saul's (Paul) reputation as a ruthless persecutor of Christians preceded him to Damascus. Perhaps hearing that Saul was headed that way, Ananias, mentally prepared himself to be hunted down, arrested, imprisoned, and ultimately martyred for following the new movement.

Describe Ananias's reaction to God's request.

Ananias's story challenges believers today to consider: Who might God want us to approach with his saving message? Who that we know is the least likely to respond to Christ---yet just might if only someone would reach out in faith and obedience?

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 **service**. With that in mind, together read the Human Condition:

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

Sometimes I wish my life were more exciting. I get bogged down in the everyday. Life seems so routine, so mundane. By the time I handle my responsibilities, all my energy is sapped. I long for a sense of anticipation, an experience of vibrancy, a challenge.

How do we move from these attitudes and actions to a lifestyle God would have us lead?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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

Service. To risk ourselves, without qualification, in service to others is to offer back to God the gifts God has given us.

What is your Spiritual gift?

Define “servant-leader.” In what ways does this Spiritual Discipline and Spiritual Gift call us to the “servant-leader” role?

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father: Thank you for creating me in a unique and special way and for blessing me with spiritual gifts through the Holy Spirit. By your perfect plan, you designed the church, the body of Christ and its members to function interdependently. We all have a role to play. Help me to grow in my understanding of my gifts – how they can best be developed and used to serve others and glorify you. AMEN.

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

Week 27: Missionary Zeal

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 208)

Opening Prayer

Paul's Prayer for the Colossians

We have not stopped praying for you since the first day we heard about you. In fact we always pray that God will show you everything he wants you to do and that you may have all the wisdom and understanding that his Spirit gives. Then you will live a life that honors the Lord and you will always please him by doing good deeds. You will come to know God even better. His glorious power will make you patient and strong enough to endure anything and you will be truly happy.

----*Colossians 1:9-10 (CEV)*

Theme: **Antioch**

BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS

In Acts, we are beginning to see the development of new concepts about just who Jesus was and what his message for the world really meant. We remember that Jesus' ministry was concentrated at first in the Jewish synagogues then to others in the surrounding areas of Judea and Galilee. The Jews, for centuries, had been God's chosen people, but they had failed miserably; they had sinned and rebelled against their prophets, God, and rejected the Messiah. Now the message begins to spread to other parts of the world. The beliefs and concepts begin to change and barriers begin to break down:

Judaism

All other nations are outside the mercy of God

Keeping the Law was the way to salvation

Man's link to God was direct

Christianity

Mercy and grace are available to *all* men

The Law was no longer the way; the Cross was now the way to salvation

The Holy Spirit becomes an intercessor and power between God and Man

“Without these barriers broken down, Christianity might have become yet another kind of Judaism”

-----*Barclay's The Acts of the Apostles*

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

What's in a name? We have looked at the practice of the Jewish people using two names: a Jewish name used within their own circles and a Greek name by which they were known in the wider world. Sometimes, the Greek name translated the Hebrew name: Cephas and Peter are the corresponding words for *rock*; Thomas (Hebrew) and Didymus (Greek) the word for *twin*; Joshua the Hebrew name and Jesus the Greek name. Now, Saul becomes Paul, the Greek equivalent. It may be that since his mission was to the Gentiles, Paul determined to use only his Gentile name (*Barclay's The Acts of the Apostles*).

Acts 10:22-35 **Cornelius Calls for Peter**

This passage records surprising things that are happening at this time. We must remember that Jews believed that other nations were quite outside the mercy of God. The really strict Jew would have no contact with a Gentile. In the most amazing way the barriers are beginning to go down. How is the Holy Spirit active in and through Peter in this event? What legacy have we received and how can this message be applied today? How did Peter's vision help him understand Cornelius' needs (v. 34-35)?

Acts 12:6-18 **Peter's Miraculous Escape**

When Peter appeared after the escape from prison at the door of the house where the other disciples were praying for him, *they did not believe!* How is this consistent with the human condition? Why are we surprised when God answers prayers?

Acts 13:26-39 **Paul's Sermon at Pisidian Antioch**

As Paul, Barnabas, and Peter begin their missionary travels, we have the only full length sermon of Paul recorded. Why does Paul choose these points to be made to the crowds in Psidian, Antioch about the Good News?

Acts 14:1-20 **Courage and a Servant-Leader**

Barnabas, who served Paul shortly after his conversion, is now listed second; Paul is the leader (Acts 14:1). Why do you think Barnabas was willing to take on the role of servant-leader. Explore Paul's willingness to return to the city immediately after he was almost killed (Acts 14:19-20). What message does this passage present for us today?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Acts 11:1-18

The importance that Luke attached to this incident is shown by the amount of space he devoted to it. In ancient times a writer by no means had unlimited space. The book form had not come into use. Writers used rolls of material called papyrus kept in long rolls for storage. A roll about 35 feet long would be required to hold the book of *Acts*. Into that space Luke had almost endless material to fit. He must have selected with the greatest care what he was going to set down, yet he found the story of Peter and Cornelius of such importance that he twice relates it in full.

What does this passage say about Jesus' Great Commission? (Matthew 28:17-20)

Where do you see the Holy Spirit active in sending persons across economic, cultural, religious, and racial barriers with the message of the gospel?

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 **fasting**. With that in mind, together read the Human Condition:

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

Some people insist their way of believing is better than some other way. Live and let live, that's my motto. Everyone has his or her own beliefs. One way is about as good as another. It's all relative to your point of view.

From the viewpoint of a Disciple Bible Study student, this argument has some logical fallacies. What are the false statements? How would you respond to someone who might make these statements to you?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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

Fasting. In the act of fasting, we refocus attention in order to make a decision, seek direction, or experience freedom.

Does fasting require only abstaining from food? In what other ways might we fast?

CLOSING PRAYER

Come abide in me, Precious Jesus. Help me listen and understand, not to take issue and find fault. Help me to share the peace of Christ. Grant your transforming peace to the world. AMEN.

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

Week 28: Count It Joy

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 216)

Opening Prayer
Theme Scripture
Theme: **Philippi**

DVD PRESENTATION

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Using the map on page 219 of the Study Manual, follow Paul's journeys. Explore the following Scriptures with these questions in mind:

1. Describe the groups of people involved; look for the social scale of the people represented.
2. What role does the Holy Spirit play in these events?
3. What was the result of terms of the development of the church and spread of Christianity?

Acts 16:11-40 Philippi

Acts 17:1-15 Thessalonica and Berea

Acts 17:16-34 Athens

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Philippians: Chapters 2 and 4

Paraphrase Paul's words in the following passages. What guidelines for Christian living are found? Make a list of these guidelines on white board:

Philippians 2:3-4

Philippians 2:14-18

Philippians 4:4-8, 13

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 **celebration**. With that in mind, together read the Human Condition:

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

I am happy when things go well, sad when they don't. I guess if I had enough money or friends, people would treat me right and I would be happy all the time. People tell me how I should live, but none of it makes sense as far as being happy is concerned.

Most people can say they have experienced the emotions in one or more of these statements. What help or hope does Philippians teach us about these feelings of sadness, wanting happiness, and needing material possessions?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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

Celebration. When we move from a self-centered existence to a God-centered existence, we move from anxiety to joy.

Describe the ways the following activities help us move from a self-centered existence to a God-centered existence:

- Prayer
- Scripture Reading
- Corporate Worship
- Serving others

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father: I sing with joy, my feet dance in gladness, my hands extend upward in praise. You have redeemed me! Lord, may I live each day in this celebration of ultimate victory! In Jesus' name, AMEN.

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

Week 29: Fellowship of Courage

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 224)

Opening Prayer
Theme Scripture
Theme: **Corinth**

DVD PRESENTATION

Paul's correspondence provides us with more information about Corinth than any other New Testament Church. There may be as many as 7 letters combined which make up First and Second Corinthians:

1. A letter preceded 1 Corinthians (5:9 "I wrote you a letter....")
First Corinthians was written as a reply to this letter.
2. Matters became worse and the result was a letter referred to the *Severe Letter* which most scholars believe is contained in Second Corinthians 10-13. This section seems out of place with the rest of Second Corinthians.
3. Paul learned from Titus that all was well and wrote Second Corinthians 1-9: *The Letter of Reconciliation*.
4. Some of the letters have been misplaced when Paul's letters were put together.
(--Barclay's *The Letters to the Corinthians*)

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

The Corinthian Congregation

2 Corinthians 1:23 – 2:4; 2:5 – 11

(Check Bible commentary) In piecing together the information in this part of the letter with what is implied in the "lost letter," what did you learn about the Corinthian congregation? What situations did Paul face as pastor and missionary in Corinth?

Jesus warned: "*For false christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect---if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time*" (Matthew 24:24-25).

In Luke 20:46-47, Jesus says, "*Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.*"

In what ways does Jesus' teaching call us to be discerning of the many things under the umbrella of religion in our own society?

What to Avoid

2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1

“Yoked” is often defined as marriage, but how else might we be yoked to unbelievers? Paul warned the church of this “yoking” because.....? What implications does this lesson have for today's church?

Marks of an Unchristian Church

2 Corinthians 12:11-21

(Check Bible commentary) As part of Paul's defense of himself as an Apostle, what are the marks of an unchristian church? What implications does this lesson have for us in today's church?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

2 Corinthians 4:7-12; 13-18

Paul uses the metaphor “treasure in jars of clay” to describe the privileges which a Christian enjoys. What is the significance of this comparison? (See Bible commentary).

Paul describes Christian life in which our struggles are intermingled with God's glory in a series of paradoxes. Identify as many as you can:

What paradoxes do you find in your own walk of faith?

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 we look at religion from the outside, it's easy to walk away. Sometimes churches are little more than friction-filled clubs. Members seem plagued with all the sins that flesh is heir to. They can be downright arrogant. It seems hardly worth the effort to get involved.

In this statement is true, what makes being involved in the church worth the effort?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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

Generosity. When we learn to hold possessions and money lightly, we can receive thankfully and give liberally and joyfully.

We are surrounded by a world which values "things" and "stuff" and financial security. This Spiritual Discipline provides a paradox to that mindset. How can the two be reconciled?

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father: Create in me a spirit of generosity – loving kindness and caring concern for others; willingness to share my abundance with those who don't have; the spirit of giving while remembering what Christ has done for me. AMEN.

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

Week 30: Temples, Politics, and Business

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 232)

Opening Prayer

*With all my heart I try to serve you;
Keep me from disobeying your commandments.
I keep your law in my heart,
So that I will not sin against you.
I praise you, O Lord;
Teach me your ways.” (Psalm 119:10-12 TEV)*

Theme Scripture

Theme: **Ephesus**

DVD PRESENTATION

The Early Church: Controversies and Resistance

The Council of Jerusalem – the “Gentile” debate

Philippi – influence of women in the church (Lydia) and the miracle in the prison

Thessalonica and Berea – dangerous resistance, Jews infuriated, Paul had to flee for his life

Athens – Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in a city full of idols

Corinth – plagued with immorality and troublemakers within the church, Paul writes “The Severe Letter.”

Ephesus – a market city known as “The Treasure House of Asia,” it was the location for the Temple of Diana (Artemis), which was one of the Seven Wonders of the World. However, the area around the temple was a “safe” area which possessed the right of asylum, so Ephesus became a home for criminals. It was also the center of pagan superstition and famous for charms and spells. Against this background, Paul writes his letter to the Church at Ephesus.

*(Barclay’s **The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians**)*

Acts 20:28-38 records Paul’s goodbye speech to the leaders of the Ephesian Church who grieved that they would never see him again.

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Using your notes from daily reading and review of the Scriptures, share your understanding of the following:

Riot in Ephesus

Acts 19:23-41

In what ways did Christianity threaten the economic and political world of Ephesus? Draw parallels with Christianity in today's economic and political world. As Christians do we consider these to be interconnected or separate and non-connected? Why or why not?

The End of Barriers

Ephesians 2:14-22

What barriers to Christianity were removed for the Gentiles? What elements of Paul's teaching to the Ephesian Church can be applied to today's church?

The Church and the Members' roles

Ephesians 4:1-13

Paul lists several qualities for Christians which William Barclay further defines:

- Humility (consciousness of own unworthiness)
- Gentleness (maintaining proper proportions; for example, between *never* being angry and being *too* angry. There is a place for "holy anger.")
- Patience (spirit which will never give in)
- Love (*agape*, sometimes translated charity)

Review verses 11-13: What is Paul's intent in these verses?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Ephesians 2:11-22

What were the conditions of the Gentiles before Christ came? (verses 11-12)

How were the Gentiles brought into this new unity? (verses 14-18)

What was the result? (verses 19-22)

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 **service**. With that in mind, together read the Human Condition:

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

When God begins threatening our gods---our pocket books, our patriotism, our "rights," our carefully constructed walls against one another---we join the shouting crowds, often without knowing why..

Where do you see faith conflicts in economics or business? religion or church? politics or government? social or cultural attitudes/practices? entertainment or recreation?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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

Service. To live as servant in relationship is to desire the good of others, to value people above things, and to count no opportunity to serve as unworthy.

When this statement is considered at face value, it is a difficult assignment. In what ways can we live out this statement of Christian service through

- desiring good for others?
- valuing people above things?
- accepting all opportunities to serve as worthy?

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Lord: What is it that you call me to do? With the gifts you have given me, what acts of service do you call me to? Only you Lord know my full potential. Please help me find the path you seek for me. Let me see opportunities to serve others in my unique way. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

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

Week 31: Boldness for the Gospel

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 240)

Opening Prayer

*I praise the Lord, because he guides me,
And in the night my conscience warns me.
I am always aware of the Lord's presence;
He is near, and nothing can shake me.”
(Psalm 16:7-8 TEV)*

Theme Scripture

Theme: **Rome**

DVD PRESENTATION

Presenter: Robert Jewett

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Paul was a “church starter,” a groundbreaker. He was called to plant; others would water. Paul had been gathering up an offering which he would take to the churches in Jerusalem. Read the assigned Scripture, then answer the following questions:

1. Why was Paul in this situation?
2. What was Paul’s main defense?
3. What resulted from his speech?

I. Before the Crowd Acts 22:1-21 & Study Manual pg. 243	II. Before the Sanhedrin Acts 22:30-23 & Study Manual p. 243
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III. Before Felix Acts 24:1-27 & Study Manual pg. 244	IV. Before Festus Acts 25:1-27 & Study Manual pg. 244
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V. Before Agrippa
Acts 26:1-13 & Study Manual pg. 245

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Acts 14

Look for key ideas as you read the passage. Work to paraphrase the ideas in each section of this chapter. Bible commentaries may be of help.

v. 1-4 _____

v. 5-12 _____

v. 13-17 _____

v. 19-23 _____

What is your overall impression of Paul's message?

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 **Guidance**. With that in mind, together read the Human Condition:

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

Most of us try to slow down brave souls who risk the unknown. We say "be careful." Don't go; it's dangerous." "You'll get into trouble if you do that." Perhaps we're fearful ourselves, maybe even ashamed that we are not willing to lay our own lives on the line.

Identify a situation or situations in which we are reluctant or timid to express an opinion, or risk an unknown outcome in our spiritual life. In what ways might we become the servant that Jesus modeled for us?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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

Guidance. We make way for the guidance of the Holy Spirit when we are open, seeking, and receptive.

As we come to the end of this Disciple Study, in what ways in the Holy Spirit guiding you? How will you respond

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we live in a world that confuses and distracts us. Society has defined levels of appropriateness which has abused your commandments. Please guide me through the maze of daily living; help me to gain an understanding of your perfect design for living. AMEN.

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

Week 32: Ordering Our Lives

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 248)

Opening Prayer

*O Lord, you have always been our home.
Before you created the hills*

*Or brought the world into being,
You were eternally God, Lord's presence;
And will be God forever.*

.. .. .

*Teach us how short our life is,
So that we may become wise. (Psalm 90:1-2, 12 TEV)*

Theme: **Priority**

Into the Word...Into the World

REFLECTION

We have spent 31 weeks studying Genesis/Exodus --- the beginning of the faith Israel in the One True God and Luke/Acts -- the beginning of Christ's church.

- Genesis hints that the Sabbath is written into the very fabric of our relationship, our covenant, our dependency on God. In what ways does the Sabbath play a part in your worship of God

Luke12:22-31. Jesus taught to seek first the kingdom and God and his righteousness would be added to us.

- What is meant "this things will be added to you as well?"

At Church of the Resurrection, we encourage the faith journey through

Head – study of the scriptures until you have the knowledge within your head

Heart – after a time of study, the knowledge begins to sink into our heart. Love of God is the result

Hands - developing faith is reflected in doing – doing to the marginalized, the less fortunate, serving with hands

1 Timothy 2:15

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

- What is your response to this Scripture?

RESPOND

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus gave the Great Commission

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.

James 2:26 - *As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*

- **Why does James say in order for faith to be alive, there must be service [works]?**

REACT

Review the attached page of Spiritual Disciplines. These are qualities we gain in our lives as we practice them in daily living. Choose one or two for your focus over the next few months

1. _____ 2. _____

In what ways can you incorporate these into your daily life so they might become “spiritual habits”?

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God; the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These are the commandments that I gave you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your homes and on your gates.

In ancient times, the Israelites took this passage literally and wore Scriptures on their bodies and kept them on the doorposts of their homes.

- In what ways can we keep reminders of God near and around us today?

COMMUNION

On the night Jesus was betrayed, He took the bread and gave thanks and offered it to them saying...

Take, eat. This is my body given for you

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them saying....

Drink from it all of you. This is my blood of the Covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this in remembrance of Me.

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, we do not presume to come to this, your table trusting our own righteousness but trusting in your great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table, but your Mercy is unfailing. As we share this remembrance of your Son Jesus, fill us with the fullness of his life and may we grow into his likeness and always dwell in Him and He is us. AMEN

SERVE COMMUNION

THE LORD'S PRAYER IN UNISON....

Our Father who are in Heaven
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done
On earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
Forgive us our trespasses
As we also forgive those who trespass against us
And lead us not in to temptation
But deliver us from evil
For thine is the glory and the kingdom forever.....AMEN

SEND OFF:

AND NOW GO OUT INTO THE WORLD AND LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE