

## of Discipleship

January 1, 2017

### Day 1: John 1:1-3

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.*

In Genesis God spoke and something came into life. The creative force was the Word and the Word is Jesus Christ. John states at the beginning of the Gospel that when one sees Jesus one sees God, and when one hears Jesus one hears God (see John 5:37-38 & 14:9-11). Before Jesus was born into this world He was with God and involved with creation.

**Question:** Can you think of a beginning that was also an ending?

**Challenge:** Think of the last time you started something new. How did you feel? Now think of something you ended. How did you feel? Which do you prefer, endings or beginnings?

**Scripture:** Matthew 1:18-25

### Day 2: John 1:4-5

*What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*

One of the earliest beliefs of Judaism was that God is a God of life, not death. God in Christ created life and life will not be denied. Verse 5 is a snapshot for the whole book of John. Jesus comes into the world and the forces of evil tried to cancel Him out. But just as darkness cannot overcome light, so the forces of death could not overcome Jesus.

**Question:** Do you enjoy the daytime or the nighttime more, and why?

**Challenge:** Sit in a dark room for 5 minutes then at the far end light a candle and sit for five more minutes. Write down all you could see in the room when it was dark & then by candle light.

**Scripture:** Isaiah 42:1-10

### Day 3: John 1:6-8

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light*

John the Baptist was greatly respected (during his life into the first century). His one important job was to witness to the true light. We, like John, are called by God to witness to the light. We become a better witness if we also are respected in our communities and in our circle of friends.

**Question:** How would you explain to someone who had never seen light what it was?

**Challenge:** Share with someone this week why you have hope.

**Scripture:** Mark 1:1-8

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#### **Day 4:** John 1:9-11

*The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.*

The Gospel is for everyone. Just as light does not shine in just one direction so the love of God is spread abroad for all. Jesus acted out of love in all that he did for people. Even when he told people things they did not want to hear and things that were hard to hear he said them out of love. I think that we spend too much time trying to figure out Jesus or decide if he really did all those things. We need to spend more time accepting Him and experiencing the love of God.

**Question:** Can you say exactly why the lights come on when you flip the switch? Do you think the sun has disappeared at night?

**Challenge:** Come up with five proofs that God exists and that Jesus is His son.

**Scripture:** Isaiah 53:1-12

#### **Day 5:** John 1:12-13

*But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.*

To receive Jesus is like opening a gift. The gift is for us but we need to open it to receive it. We become a part of the family of God - children - with all the rights and responsibilities. Right after love the next most powerful force in the universe is belief. Belief is not magic, it simply gives us the power to accomplish great things. By believing we become children of God and being children of God we can change the world.

**Question:** How do you feel about adoption?

**Challenge:** Besides your belief in God, what other beliefs have changed your life?

**Scripture:** Acts 8:26-40

#### **Day 6:** John 1:14

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.*

The eternal (the Word) now moves to the temporal (time). The glory of God is seen fully in Jesus; not in a sunset or a mountain or a starry sky (though all of these are stirring to the soul). The glory is seen in Jesus because He touched people and demonstrated what God is like. A beautiful sight can inspire us but the hand of God will enliven us. Jesus in life and death and resurrection, all for us, fully demonstrated the love of God.

**Question:** How do you feel when you have helped someone else?

**Challenge:** Give your gifts this year because God came to us.

**Scripture:** Luke 2:1-20

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# Marks

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading  
Giving Time, Talents & Resources  
Spiritual Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

## of Discipleship

January 8, 2017

### Day 1: Isaiah 61:1

***The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners***

The mission of the servant is laid out in these verses. By our acceptance of Christ as Lord we become the servant. The spirit of God is upon us (which means that we have the power) so that we can bring good news. The good news is that there is hope and that God has not forsaken us. It is the Lord that binds up the brokenhearted and releases those captive. We are to proclaim that these events will happen.

**Question:** What comes to your mind when you think of a servant?

**Challenge:** Think of someone who needs a word of hope. Now plan how you can give it to them.

**Scripture:** Matthew 12:14-21

### Day 2: Isaiah 61:2

***to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;***

With the coming of Jesus into the world the Kingdom of God also came. The Kingdom of God is that time and place when there is complete peace in the world and nobody wants for food, shelter or love. It is the time when God reigns supreme. This time had not come completely but the world can feel its effects now. Comfort does not mean a problem is removed but it's bearable. The one who mourns still feels that loss but the loss is bearable because of the one giving comfort.

**Question:** Who would feel the "vengeance of God?"

**Challenge:** Think about the last time you had a serious loss. What was comforting to you at that time?

**Scripture:** Isaiah 6:1-13

### Day 3: Isaiah 61:3

***and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.***

A large part of providing comfort is to let the one who mourns know that their loss was neither meaningless nor an act of God. We cannot stop losses or setbacks in life but we can assure someone that the events that have caused the pain are not a sign that God has left them. Comfort also means that the one who mourns is allowed to cry or feel sad over the loss. We comfort someone by embracing them until the tears dry up and they can then hear our words of hope.

**Question:** What tree do you think would display the glory of the Lord?

**Challenge:** How would you describe a "garment of praise?"

**Scripture:** Isaiah 62:1-12

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**Question:** What tree do you think would display the glory of the Lord?

**Challenge:** How would you describe a "garment of praise?"

**Scripture:** Isaiah 62:1-12

**Day 4:** Isaiah 61:4

***They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.***

After our personal losses are comforted we can go about the task of building for the future. When someone suffers a loss it feels like the future has disappeared. If we believe that all our efforts are useless then we will not do those things which will bring about new life. This is why hope is so important. Without hope we will never look to the future. God is a God of hope and life, not despair and death.

**Question:** Have you ever built something? How did it feel when you were finished?

**Challenge:** Does making something with your hands give one hope? If so, why do you think so?

**Scripture:** Haggai 1:1-15

**Day 5:** Isaiah 61:5

***Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks; foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines;***

The mission of the servant is so important that the everyday tasks of life will be done by others. Not because the servant is lazy but because the task of bringing hope is so important. Jesus told His disciples to leave fishing and come follow Him (Matthew 4:18-22). In Acts (6:1-6) Peter said he and the other disciples could not leave preaching to feed the widows so others were chosen to do that task. Being relieved of the everyday tasks of life was not so that the servant could take it easy but to allow the servant to work at the task of bringing hope.

**Question:** What "jobs" are you responsible for in your family?

**Challenge:** Do you spend your day just doing tasks for others? If so, try to take some time to renew yourself.

**Scripture:** Psalm 46:1-11

**Day 6:** Isaiah 61:6

***but you shall be called priests of the Lord, you shall be named ministers of our God; you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory.***

A priest is someone who communicates the reality of God to others. A minister works for God and brings to the world what God wants to have happen. Wealth and riches mean security and freedom from want. As a servant of God we are free from the worry about eternal life and we are secure in it as a child of God.

**Question:** What is the one thing other people need to know about God?

**Challenge:** To whom could you communicate the reality of God?

**Scripture:** Romans 10:12-20

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**Challenge:** To whom could you communicate the reality of God?

**Scripture:** Romans 10:12-20

## of Discipleship

January 15, 2017

### Day 1: Luke 7:18

**The disciples of John reported all these things to him. So John summoned two of his disciples**

John the Baptist was in prison for talking negatively about the king's life style. John had heard the things that Jesus was doing (Jesus' teaching, healing and preaching). John knew Jesus because he baptized Him (Matthew 3:13-17). John sends two (as was the custom) to go and see for themselves if Jesus was the Messiah and report back to John. When you want to be sure of something then two sets of ears and eyes are better than one.

**Question:** When was the first time you heard about Jesus?

**Challenge:** Why do you think it is a good idea to have a second set of ears and eyes when you are getting some important news?

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 19:14-21

### Day 2: Luke 7:19

**and sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?"**

John suspected that Jesus was the "one" to come but he wanted to know for sure (John 1:19-28). There were at that time a number of people claiming to be the Messiah. Also a number of people claimed to be able to do the signs that would prove they were the Messiah. Today many groups will claim to have the answers to life and we need to be discerning as we listen to them.

**Question:** Can you think of a group that claims to have an answer to the meaning of life?

**Challenge:** How would you prove that you were you if everything that had your name on it disappeared?

**Scripture:** Matthew 1:1-17

### Day 3: Luke 7:20

**When the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" "**

The question lets us know that John was expecting the Messiah to come in his lifetime. He was not just sitting around (until he was put in prison), he was doing the work that God asked him to do. He was to call people to repentance without knowing when the "one" who is to come would arrive. John is an example of a faithful disciple – he does God's work even if he does not know if he will see the end result.

**Question:** What is the longest time you have waited for something?

**Challenge:** What is the longest project you have been involved in and did you see the end results?

**Scripture:** Job 38:1-41

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**Day 4:** Luke 7:21

***Jesus had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were blind.***

It seems that John's disciples arrived to talk to Jesus just as Jesus was in the midst of curing a number of people. John's disciples were not only going to talk to Jesus, they were going to travel with Him for a while to experience Jesus' ministry first hand. Today we in a sense do the same thing. We agree to travel with Jesus and then we find out who He is and what he is about. It is a mistake to try to understand Jesus before we follow Him because understanding will come as we follow, not before.

**Question:** Who do you know that was cured of some illness and it seemed like a miracle?

**Challenge:** Talk to someone who has been cured of a life threatening illness and ask them how they got their health back.

**Scripture:** Luke 8:22-39

**Day 5:** Luke 7:22

***And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them.***

The disciples of John experience being in the Kingdom of God. All of the things that Jesus had done will tell John that He, Jesus, is the Messiah. The blind seeing and the deaf hearing meant more than just physical healing. It meant people could now see and hear God. The dead being raised proved there was a resurrection of the dead (hope) and the poor being given the good news meant that everybody is invited into the Kingdom of God.

**Question:** What is the best news you have ever heard?

**Challenge:** What words of hope would you give someone who was at the end of their life?

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:1-58

**Day 6:** Luke 7:23

***And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."***

The offense is saying "it cannot be true" or "it makes no sense." It has always been a problem to people through the ages that our God came in human form and required nothing from us (to receive eternal life) but to accept that He is the Son of God and to follow Him. It is not enough to find Jesus interesting. To have eternal life we need to call Him Lord and ask for forgiveness of our sin. Jesus brought the Kingdom of God with Him and we receive the blessing by accepting Jesus.

**Question:** Have you ever been angry with God?

**Challenge:** Is there anything you find offensive about the Christian faith?

**Scripture:** Romans 1:1-18

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January 22, 2017

### Day 1: Luke 5:17

***One day, while he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting near by (they had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem); and the power of the Lord was with him to heal.***

Preaching is telling that the Good News has arrived and explaining how we can receive it. Teaching is explaining what the Good News means. It is also explaining what the scripture means. Most of the Pharisees and teachers of the law were there to debate with Jesus. They believed Jesus had a wrong view of God. Jesus' power to heal was an indicator that God was with Him.

**Question:** How much of the Bible can you quote?

**Challenge:** How can you tell God is with someone besides through healing?

**Scripture:** Luke 4:31-36

### Day 2: Luke 5:18-19

***Just then some men came, carrying a paralyzed man on a bed. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; but finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus.***

The man on the bed could not come to Jesus by himself. It might have been that he could not walk or he did not have the will to walk. It is good to have friends that will even take off a roof to get you help. Spiritual friends will help us find what is life-giving even if we have to be dragged along.

**Question:** When was the last time someone helped you?

**Challenge:** Who have you brought to Jesus for healing?

**Scripture:** Matthew 9:1-8, Mark 2:1-12

### Day 3: Luke 5:20

***When he saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you."***

It is the faith of the friends that caught Jesus' attention. The man was really paralyzed. This is the first reference to faith in Luke. Faith in this case is the confidence that Jesus could heal and the determination to get through the crowd. Good friends are a blessing but spiritual friends can save your life. Jesus' saying "your sins are forgiven" means that the paralytic was most concerned about his relationship to God. Jesus knew, without hearing him speak, that he needed forgiveness so he could experience the physical healing. Forgiveness of sins was not a prerequisite to being healed, it was just what this man needed first.

**Question:** Can you list five good friends?

**Challenge:** List three spiritual friends.

**Scripture:** Hebrews 11:1-3, 1 Corinthians 7:10-16

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### Day 1: Luke 5:17

***One day, while he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting near by (they had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem); and the power of the Lord was with him to heal.***

Preaching is telling that the Good News has arrived and explaining how we can receive it. Teaching is explaining what the Good News means. It is also explaining what the scripture means. Most of the Pharisees and teachers of the law were there to debate with Jesus. They believed Jesus had a wrong view of God. Jesus' power to heal was an indicator that God was with Him.

**Question:** How much of the Bible can you quote?

**Challenge:** How can you tell God is with someone besides through healing?

**Scripture:** Luke 4:31-36

### Day 2: Luke 5:18-19

***Just then some men came, carrying a paralyzed man on a bed. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; but finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus.***

The man on the bed could not come to Jesus by himself. It might have been that he could not walk or he did not have the will to walk. It is good to have friends that will even take off a roof to get you help. Spiritual friends will help us find what is life-giving even if we have to be dragged along.

**Question:** When was the last time someone helped you?

**Challenge:** Who have you brought to Jesus for healing?

**Scripture:** Matthew 9:1-8, Mark 2:1-12

### Day 3: Luke 5:20

***When he saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you."***

It is the faith of the friends that caught Jesus' attention. The man was really paralyzed. This is the first reference to faith in Luke. Faith in this case is the confidence that Jesus could heal and the determination to get through the crowd. Good friends are a blessing but spiritual friends can save your life. Jesus' saying "your sins are forgiven" means that the paralytic was most concerned about his relationship to God. Jesus knew, without hearing him speak, that he needed forgiveness so he could experience the physical healing. Forgiveness of sins was not a prerequisite to being healed, it was just what this man needed first.

**Question:** Can you list five good friends?

**Challenge:** List three spiritual friends.

**Scripture:** Hebrews 11:1-3, 1 Corinthians 7:10-16

**Day 4:** Luke 5:21

*Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, "Who is this who is speaking blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"*

Blasphemy is claiming Gods' prerogatives and thereby disrespecting God. Jesus is doing neither in this account. What Jesus is doing in this event and what he does throughout the Gospel is to change people's image of God. What is happening is that the scribes and Pharisees, who have a fixed image of God, are angry that their image of God is being challenged. We need to always keep in the back of our minds that our image of God is different than who God really is. We will never fully understand God, however we can still know God.

**Question:** Have you heard someone give an inaccurate view (in your opinion) of God?

**Challenge:** Can you think of something that only God can do?

**Scripture:** John 20:19-25

**Day 5:** Luke 5:22-24

*When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, "Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, "Stand up and walk"? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the one who was paralyzed—"I say to you, stand up and take your bed and go to your home."*

Jesus was concentrating so much on the paralytic that he forgot the others around Him. When He did realize their thoughts, He addressed the questioners' concerns by telling them that the body and spirit are united and that Jesus has power over both. The paralytic could not follow the directions to get up and walk until he felt forgiven. The questioners were not asking as if they were in awe of what happened, rather they are irritated at Jesus. Too often we miss the glory of God (and thereby a blessing) because it is not what we expected.

**Question:** Is there anything that surprises you about God?

**Challenge:** What is the difference between spiritual and physical healing? Can you give examples of both?

**Scripture:** Luke 15:11-32

**Day 6:** Luke 5:25-26

*Immediately he stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God. Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen strange things today."*

We know the man is glorifying God because of the physical healing and spiritual healing. Physically we can get up and walk after a healing experience but without a spiritual experience we will not give glory to God. Our mouth becomes unstuck after God has touched us. The group is only amazed when the man gets up and walks. It is unfortunate that the sensational grabs so much of our attention.

**Question:** What is the most amazing thing you have ever seen?

**Challenge:** Write down an experience when you felt touched by God

**Scripture:** Luke 15:1-10

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# Marks

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading  
Giving Time, Talents & Resources  
Spiritual Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

## of Discipleship

January 29, 2017

### Day 1: Luke 18:1

*Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.*

Prayer is spending some time in the presence of God. Prayer is also the constant reminder that God is with us even when we do not feel it. The forces of evil will try to tell us that God is not real because we do not get what we want in prayer. In fact if we stop praying we cut ourselves off from our source of strength. If we come to God, God will be with us even if we do not “get” what we want.

**Question:** What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the word *prayer*?

**Challenge:** Think of the last time you “gave up” on something. Was it the right thing to do or should you try again?

**Scripture:** Genesis 18:16-33

### Day 2: Luke 18:2-5

*He said, "In a certain city there was a widow who kept coming to him saying "Grant me justice against my opponent." For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, "Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming."*

A widow could not inherit her husband's property and so deprived of her husband's support, she had to depend upon others for her food and shelter. The role of the judge in the society was to maintain harmonious relations and adjudicate between disputes. We have a judge that is less than fair and does not respect God yet will grant justice to the woman. She receives what she deserves from the judge by stating the truth with conviction and staying the course.

**Question:** Why is it important for a judge to be fair?

**Challenge:** Do a little investigation of how our culture (not government) takes care of widows and orphans.

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 10:12-22

### Day 3: Luke 18:6-8

*And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"*

If the unfair and callous judge will give justice for fear of being badgered by the persistent widow, how much more will God do? We sometimes feel that God is either not just or not real because so many things that are unjust still happen. God may not stop natural disasters because to do so may cause more trouble in the long run. The evil we do to one another we must work to stop. Will the “Son of Man” find us trying to stop evil or just giving up?

**Question:** Would you put natural disasters in the category of evil things?

**Challenge:** What do you think of the judge's reason for giving justice? Is doing the right thing for the wrong reason OK?

**Scripture:** Isaiah 42:1-25

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**Scripture:** Isaiah 42:1-25

**Day 4:** Luke 18:9

*He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt:*

Trusting in oneself alone is a posture of blindness to one's position before God. We stand before God not because of our goodness but because of what Christ did for us. People that think they are right with God because they go to church and read the Bible and do some good deeds are mistaken. We do not earn our good standing before God. It is given to us as we accept Christ's gift of new life and call him Lord.

**Question:** How will you stand before God?

**Challenge:** Have you had an experience where you were treated with contempt? How did you feel and how did you deal with it? Have you ever felt contempt for another?

**Scripture:** Isaiah 1:1-31

**Day 5:** Luke 18:10

*"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.*

The Pharisee was the religious person of the day. The tax collector was considered the greatest crook and traitor in the society. Both went to the same place to pray. It is interesting that everybody had to go to the same place to pray. The Pharisee could not say "I am not going to that church because sinners go there." Worship is not a place for the well connected, well-heeled and those whose life has no problems. It for us sinners seeking God' mercy

**Question:** Do you see any "Pharisees" in today's world?

**Challenge:** Think about being forced to go to worship with people you do not like. How would you worship in that situation?

**Scripture:** Genesis 50:15-21

**Day 6:** Luke 18:11-14

*The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income." But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."*

Unfortunately the religious person comes off second best. Note that the Pharisees' offering was OK, but the attitude was all wrong. The things the Pharisee did were good but God desires a "broken spirit and a contrite heart" (Psalm 51:17). The tax collector's prayer is one of the shortest and most powerful in the Bible. It transformed a sinner into a child of God. It showed how we all stand before God - sinners in need of repentance.

**Question:** Who is the best person you know (not necessarily perfect)?

**Challenge:** Why do we ask God to forgive our sin?

**Scripture:** Matthew 18:21-35

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