



Discipleship Ideas for the Iowa District West

Introduction

The following “Discipleship Ideas” from the readings are not intended for any other purpose than to provide ideas of application from each reading that may be included in the taught and preached Word for this particular Sunday to help teach a life of discipleship. L.C.M.S. pastors are gifted at preaching Law and Gospel, but often lack in the matter of personal applications to the Word. This tool is for no other reason than to offer some seeds of thought to do that.

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY -- SERIES C January 24, 2016

From C.P.H. About the Cover: Jesus opens the scroll and reads the lesson. He hands the scroll to the attendant and sits down to address the people. He opens His mouth and says, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled.” There, before them, in their hearing, this Scripture has come to life and has been fulfilled in Him. Scripture is fulfilled and comes to life for us also each time we hear it read.

First Reading; Nehemiah 8:1–3, 5–6, 8–10

All the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel.

So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn

or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

1st Reading Discipleship Notes: Mighty things happened to the people who gathered in the square before the Water Gate. The Word of God took on great power in their lives as they listened and the meaning of that Word became the conviction of their lives. They were encouraged to make that day holy in their lives and know the joy of the Lord in their lives. Whenever we hear the Word of God and its meaning is clearly made known to us, the same thing ought to happen. The application of this text is to find the joy of the Lord in the strength of our lives that comes as a result of God's Word becoming active in us. The people were encouraged to celebrate and to share with those who had nothing prepared for celebration. We who have the blessings of God's Word also are people who have plenty that we too can share with others. The grace of God through His Word is what empowers us to do so with great joy.

Epistle Reading 1 Corinthians 12:12–31a

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And I will show you a still more excellent way.

Epistle Discipleship Notes: The Holy Spirit empowers all kinds of spiritual gifts to all God's people and in this reading Paul encourages the reader to earnestly desire the higher gifts. These are not those gifts that are the most obvious. These are the spiritual gifts that are necessary for the unity of the body of Christ. These are the gifts of compassion, charity, care and service. The application of this text does not express itself in everyone becoming pastors, or doctors or prophets, but all people utilizing those gifts God has given each of them for the unity of the body and the glory of God according to the oneness of the Spirit that God's people are given. This is the great application of the text, to utilize God's spiritual gifts in our various vocations that He has given to His glory and the benefit of all others who are a part of the body of Christ.

Gospel Reading: Luke 4:16–30

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to
proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself.' What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well." And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away.

Gospel Discipleship Notes: Like the hearers of the Word in the first reading for today, those in the hearing of Jesus that day in the synagogue marveled at His Word. It wasn't long thereafter that they turned on Jesus, however. An application we can carry from these words is to marvel at the revelation of Christ in our lives. Those people wanted more from Jesus, They wanted miracles and evidence of His Godly power. But His Word is sufficient and with that we should rejoice and find our joy. He is present in the synagogue of our hearts through His Word and in the world around us we can likewise speak well of Him to others and make known the wonder of His love. In this way we can appropriately use the spiritual gifts we are given.

Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline

Read Nehemiah 8:1–3, 5–6, 8–10

All the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel.

So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

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And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

1. What was Nehemiah sent to do at Jerusalem?
2. How was the association of this project related to what takes place in this reading?
3. How is this association something to which we can relate?
4. What does it mean that the "joy of the Lord your strength"?
5. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–31a

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And I will show you a still more excellent way.

6. What is the point of Paul's illustration about the body and many parts?
7. What is Paul's point of the necessity of many parts?
8. What is Paul's meaning of the "higher gifts" and how does that relate to the immediate previous verses?
9. What is meant by the more excellent way?
10. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

READ:

Luke 4:16–30

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in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away.

11. What does the matter that Jesus was handed the scroll to read suggest about how the people of the synagogue viewed him?
12. What was this prophecy that Jesus read speaking directly about?
13. How do you think you would have responded to Jesus' response to this reading if you had been a local resident and familiar with the family of the Savior?
14. What was Jesus alluding to about the proverb He said they would likely quote?
15. Why would this have made the people rise up against Jesus?
16. What application of this Gospel reading will you apply to your life as a result of hearing it today?

Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline (Leader's Guide)

Read Nehemiah 8:1–3, 5–6, 8–10

All the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel.

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1. What was Nehemiah sent to do at Jerusalem?

He was sent there to lead the people in the rebuilding of the security wall around Jerusalem

2. How was the association of this project related to what takes place in this reading?

The reading and learning of God's Word is something that creates unity in the hearts and minds of God's people. To unite them in the Word and its clear teachings pertaining to God's people also united them in their challenge to come together in mission as God's people now that the wall had been built.

3. How is this association something to which we can relate?

It is also important for people of the Church today to unite around God's Word in order to accomplish the work and mission before the Church today.

4. What does it mean that the "joy of the Lord your strength"?

"The joy of the Lord is your strength" is not a carnal sensual joy, but a holy and spiritual joy of the Lord. It is joy in the goodness of God, under the direction and government of the grace of God. This joy will be the strength of the Church which needs to be encouraged. The more cheerful we are in our religious exercises the more we shall abound in them.

5. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

Read: **1 Corinthians 12:12–31a**

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

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And I will show you a still more excellent way.

6. What is the point of Paul's illustration about the body and many parts?

Spiritual Gifts are given to all believers, but there was obviously some concern about how some people had more obvious gifts than others. So, as a body has many parts but is one body, so also is the Church, one body with many essential parts even though some are more visible than others.

7. What is Paul's point of the necessity of many parts?

His point was that no one is inessential in the work of the Kingdom.

8. What is Paul's meaning of the "higher gifts" and how does that relate to the immediate previous verses?

Given that Paul has been emphasizing the variety of gifts and the value of each of them, it seems odd that Paul would now call these Corinthian Christians to "desire the higher gifts." The Spirit "works all of these, distributing to each one separately as he desires" (12:11), so striving for gifts seems out of place. But Paul uses these words to lay the groundwork for pointing these Christians to a "most excellent way"—the way of love—a way that is not allotted by the Spirit to a few people, but a way that every believer can and should embrace.

9. What is meant by the more excellent way?

The more excellent way is the way of love which every believer can embrace because it is a gift given by the Spirit to all believers.

10. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

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11. What does the matter that Jesus was handed the scroll to read suggest about how the people of the synagogue viewed him?

This suggests that Jesus was already being viewed as one knowledgeable of the Word and a teacher of the Word.

12. What was this prophecy that Jesus read speaking directly about?

These were words of prophecy about the Messiah of God.

13. How do you think you would have responded to Jesus' response to this reading if you had been a local resident and familiar with the family of the Savior?

Answers will be personal

14. What was Jesus alluding to about the proverb He said they would likely quote?

He was alluding to the fact that after He had identified Himself as the fulfillment of prophecy, now they would also expect greater signs and miracles that would prove His messiahship.

15. Why would this have made the people rise up against Jesus?

This was a way of extracting the truth of what they were thinking about Jesus and being true was more than they could handle. They were incriminated with truth and therefore they were falling prey to the condemnation of the law and they didn't want to admit it so the next step is to turn on the Lord (their accuser) and try to get rid of Him.

16. What application of this Gospel reading will you apply to your life as a result of hearing it today?

Discipleship Bulletin Blub

Nehemiah wished to unite the people of Jerusalem with the Word of God and it worked. Paul wished to unite the people of God with the truth that God gives varied gifts to all of God's people so that those many gifts might be used to unite the body of Christ in mission and ministry. Jesus wished to unite the people of His hometown in knowing who He is and what He had come to accomplish for the world. What gifts can we use to unite the people of our church community as we gather around the powerful Word of truth together? That is a worthy question.

Discipleship Prayer Thought

Almighty God, You give gifts to Your Church for the purpose of expressing love and service to one another to Your glory. Your Word unites believers into one body of faith and conviction. Help us by the power of the Holy Spirit to use those gifts we are given to Your glory and for the good of all. Unite us in common ministry and mission to the end that Your name is glorified and Your mission accomplished. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**