



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 SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER - SERIES C

April 3, 2016

From C.P.H. About the Cover: The disciples had endured much. Jesus had been put to death. They had been warned not to talk about what they had been taught or seen, and they were alone. For fear of the Jews, they were behind locked doors. Then Jesus comes. The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus had risen from death to see them! We, too, are glad to see Him in Word and Sacrament. Lord, have mercy, and grant us Your peace!

First Reading; Acts 5:12–20

¹²Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico. ¹³None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. ¹⁴And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ¹⁵so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. ¹⁶The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

¹⁷But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy ¹⁸they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. ¹⁹But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ²⁰“Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.”

1st Reading Discipleship Notes: Do you ever wonder if Peter and the other apostles had a clue about this point of their lives and what they would encounter? Think of walking through the streets of Jerusalem and people laying the sick on mats so that the shadow of Peter might fall on them for healing. Wow! What an amazing and immeasurable grace God had poured out on the apostles. It was more than they could ever have imagined. The same is true for us today. God's grace is immeasurably more than we can ever imagine. While we might not cast shadows in the streets which can heal the sick, God's grace is sufficiently great enough for us to still minister to the sick, to readily and willingly tell the good news of life in Jesus' name and to offer peace and forgiveness to all who would look to Jesus.

Epistle Reading Revelation 1:4-18

⁴John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

⁸"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

⁹I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet ¹¹saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

¹²Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴The hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, ¹⁸and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

Epistle Discipleship Notes: The letter to the seven churches begins with the identity of the author. He is none less than the eternal God who presents Himself in the voice of the second person of the Holy Trinity who died and is now alive and who possesses the keys of Death and Hades. There is little application for us in the identity of God except to recognize the magnitude of our God and the majesty of His power. In doing so, we receive the grace of His love for us as

well. Having such love can motivate us in our lives to live for Him as did John, being obedient to the will of God as John was in writing down the words given to him and in making known the awesome power and authority of our God to others.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19–31

¹⁹On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." ²²And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld."

²⁴Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

²⁶Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." ²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Gospel Discipleship Notes: We can only imagine the joy that filled the hearts and minds of the disciples when Jesus showed up alive and unexpected that night behind the closed doors. They were glad when they saw the Lord. How glad are we when we see the Lord present with us at the altar in His body and blood? How glad are we when we see the Lord at work in our midst with the forgiveness of sins to all who confess their sins and believe? How glad are we when we experience the presence of the Lord when He comes in the water and the Word? The disciples received the Holy Spirit and so have we. Upon that reception they were given a marching order which was to offer the blessed gift of forgiveness and mercy in Jesus' name. We have the same thing to offer the world and because we live with the mercy of our God we are equipped to do so.

Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline

Read Acts 5:12–20

¹²Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. ¹³None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. ¹⁴And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ¹⁵so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. ¹⁶The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

¹⁷But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy ¹⁸they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. ¹⁹But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ²⁰"Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life."

1. Who were those who did not dare to join the apostles and the people?
2. How were the believers added to the Lord?
3. What do you imagine the apostles felt as they were given these great and wonderful gifts of grace to share? Do you suppose they ever had any idea of the magnitude of God's grace that would be given them?
4. How do you suppose the apostles initially took to the angel's commission to go back out into the temple and speak the words of life?
5. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

Read Revelation 1:4–18

⁴John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

⁸"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

⁹I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet ¹¹saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven

churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

¹²Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴The hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

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6. What is meant by John calling himself “partner in the tribulation and the kingdom?”
7. What is meant by John of “being in the Spirit on the Lord’s day?”
8. Is there any significance of the seven golden lampstands?
9. Imagining this image and the majesty of God that was displayed, how do you imagine your response to be?
10. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

Read John 20:19–31

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³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

11. What does it mean that the disciples were “glad” when they saw the Lord?
12. What did Jesus offer before he told them what he would be doing with them and why?
13. What is it that Jesus asked them to offer others and what should this accomplish in those who receive it?
14. How are we at times like Thomas in our doubts?
15. What did John say that the purpose of the written word is and how is this conveyed in the manner in which we live our lives today?
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 Acts 5:12–20

¹²Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. ¹³None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. ¹⁴And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ¹⁵so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. ¹⁶The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

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1. Who were those who did not dare to join the apostles and the people?

It is not entirely clear in this reading who they are but most likely the rather peripheral people who were interested in the teaching of the apostle but not yet there which may have included some of the religious leadership as well. Some scholars point to these who dared not join as the religious leaders, but that is not entirely clear in the text.

2. How were the believers added to the Lord?

The power of God's Word alone brings the transformation from unbelief to faith. As the apostles proclaimed the Word, the people believed and were added to the Lord's Kingdom.

3. What do you imagine the apostles felt as they were given these great and wonderful gifts of grace to share? Do you suppose they ever had any idea of the magnitude of God's grace that would be given them?

Answers will vary.

4. How do you suppose the apostles initially took to the angel's commission to go back out into the temple and speak the words of life?

Answers will vary but the reality of this commission must have been difficult for the disciples to grasp after having been arrested and yet they were greatly strengthened in their willingness to witness as well

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

Read: Revelation 1:4–18

⁴John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

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6. What is meant by John calling himself "partner in the tribulation and the kingdom?"

John had been banished to the island of Patmos because of his willingness to testify to the Word of God and testimony of Jesus. His partnership in tribulation is shared throughout the communion of saints.

7. What is meant by John of "being in the Spirit on the Lord's day?"

He was in a serious, heavenly, spiritual frame, under the gracious influences of the Spirit of God. Those who enjoy communion with God on the Lord's day, seek to draw their thoughts and affections away from earthly things and direct their full attention to the things of the Lord. This is what is meant by being in the Spirit.

8. Is there any significance of the seven golden lampstands?

There are a number of ideas about what is meant and symbolized by the seven golden lampstands. Probably the most likely significance has to do with the representation of the Light of God's Word that had been manifested in the seven congregations mentioned in this text. Jesus is the light of the world and there He sat in the midst of these seven golden lampstands.

9. Imagining this image and the majesty of God that was displayed, how do you imagine your response to be?

Answers will vary.

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

READ: John 20:19–31

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11. What does it mean that the disciples were "glad" when they saw the Lord?

The word "glad" fails to carry the deep significance of what the word in the original language conveys. It literally means that they were filled with an excess of their joy, and surcharged with wonder. In the bewilderment of their seeing Him alive He added to their assurance, and strengthened their faith.

12. What did Jesus offer before he told them what he would be doing with them and why?

He offered His peace which would be necessary for them to be sent into the world. Without this divine peace, the work would be impossible and filled with frustration.

13. What is it that Jesus asked them to offer others and what should this accomplish in those who receive it?

The forgiveness of sins.

14. How are we at times like Thomas in our doubts?

Answers will vary

15. What did John say that the purpose of the written word is and how is this conveyed in the manner in which we live our lives today?

The purpose of the written word is that we might believe and have life in Jesus' name. This is conveyed in the life of the Church by the extension of God's mercy for us in Christ. Here would be a wonderful time to ask for identification of that mercy in various ways they see it happening in the Church.

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

Discipleship Bulletin Blub

Today we are reminded of the majesty of God and how it affects the people of God. For the apostles who had been arrested for speaking of Christ, it meant they were given an extended privilege to do more of the same. For John on the island of Patmos, it meant a spiritual blessing and commissioning to write God's message to the seven Churches. For the disciples behind closed doors soon after the resurrection it meant great joy and a commissioning to convey the message of God's mercy. What does the majesty of God mean for you and me and how are we responding to that majesty of God in His mercy. As modern disciples of Christ, we also have a message of mercy to make known.

Discipleship Prayer Thought

Almighty God, You have made Yourself known in marvelous and mysterious ways. Yet always You have revealed Yourself as a merciful God for Your people. Help us always to recognize Your majesty and presence in our lives and fill us with Your mercy to make known to others Your love and forgiveness which is ours in our Lord Jesus Christ. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**