



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 OF EASTER - SERIES C

April 10, 2016

From C.P.H. About the Cover: After Jesus’ resurrection, He appeared to His disciples to encourage them in their faith. He appears on the shore as they fish and blesses them with a great catch. John recognizes Him and tells Peter, “It is the Lord!” Jesus comes to us in different ways and blesses us, and we recognize it is the Lord who daily and richly blesses us and encourages us in our faith.

First Reading; Acts 9:1–22

¹But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” ⁵And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” ⁷The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. ⁸Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

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street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, ¹²and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." ¹³But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. ¹⁴And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." ¹⁵But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. ¹⁶For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." ¹⁷So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; ¹⁹and taking food, he was strengthened.

For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. ²⁰And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." ²¹And all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?" ²²But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

1st Reading Discipleship Notes: It was truly amazing how Saul was suddenly converted and made to become a voice of testimony for the Savior. It is also truly amazing that this same thing has happened to modern day disciples. Converted, either in Holy Baptism as a child, or via the proclaimed Gospel when somewhat older, like Saul we also have a divine responsibility to speak of Jesus to others. This is something entirely possible because also like Saul, we have received the Holy Spirit. God not only calls us by the Gospel but He enlightens us with His Holy Word and makes us Holy so that we might serve Him in making known His salvation to the world around us. This takes testimony, but it also takes resources which God also enables us to share for this divine purpose.

Epistle Reading Revelation 5:8–14

⁸And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹And they sang a new song, saying,

 "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals,
 for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
 from every tribe and language and people and nation,
¹⁰and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
 and they shall reign on the earth."

¹¹Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and

might and honor and glory and blessing!" ¹³And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" ¹⁴And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Epistle Discipleship Notes: It is quite obvious that honoring God holds high priority in this reading. John saw the twenty-four elders, the living creatures and elders, and every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea worshiping Christ and proclaiming honor and glory and might to Him forever and ever. Worship which exalts the Lord is to hold high priority in our lives also. Not only is worship commanded, but it is due our God. As modern disciples, worship ought to be a priority and it can be because it also becomes for us a source of great spiritual blessing. In worship we not only honor God, but more importantly He blesses us with His grace.

Gospel Reading: John 21:1-14

¹After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. ²Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. ³Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." ⁶He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. ⁷That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. ⁸The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

⁹When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Gospel Discipleship Notes: Instead of wanting to walk on water to reach Jesus, this time Peter jumps into the sea in order to get to the Savior. This action tells something about discipleship and that is the desire of a disciple to be in the presence of the Savior. This happens as we come to His Word and sacraments. But what also happens is the fact that like an abundance of fish that the Lord provided the disciples, we receive an abundance of blessings in worship as we receive forgiveness of sins and strength to live the new life we have in Christ Jesus.

Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline

Read Acts 9:1–22

¹But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" ⁵And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." ⁷The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. ⁸Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

¹⁰Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, ¹²and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." ¹³But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. ¹⁴And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." ¹⁵But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. ¹⁶For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." ¹⁷So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; ¹⁹and taking food, he was strengthened.

For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. ²⁰And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." ²¹And all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?" ²²But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

1. Who was meant in verse 2 by "the Way?"
2. Why would Saul have responded to the voice by calling Him "Lord?"
3. What do we know about Ananias?
4. What was the simple proclamation of Saul following his conversion and why was this proclamation significant?
5. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

Read Revelation 5:8–14

⁸And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹And they sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
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6. What is the primary activity of this portion of John’s vision?
7. What does this tell us about the importance of honoring our Savior?
8. What is the significance of verse 13? (See Psalm 19:1)
9. Is our earthly worship of God merely a matter of our honoring Him or is there something more involved in our worship?
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 it say about the disciples that they determined to go fishing rather than do anything else?
12. Can you think of another time that Peter wished to come to the Lord from a boat? What is different this time?
13. Is it significant that the exact number of fish was recorded in this reading?
14. What did John say was the purpose of recording this event according to verse 14 and why is that significant?
15. 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 9:1–22

¹But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" ⁵And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." ⁷The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. ⁸Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

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1. Who was meant in verse 2 by "the Way?"

These were the followers of Jesus and this may have been a kind of code word for them but it was also an identification of Jesus who called Himself "the way, the truth and the life" in John 14:6.

2. Why would Saul have responded to the voice by calling Him "Lord?"

The term "Lord" was a term of recognition that this voice and person was greater than he. Saul did not know who this was speaking to him, but recognized the greater power and authority over him that came from the voice.

3. What do we know about Ananias?

Other than what early historians say, that he was "a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews" there is only one other possible identification from an early Christian historian by the name of Hippolytus of Rome as one of the Seventy Disciples whose mission is recorded in Luke 10:1-20. According to Roman Catholic tradition, Ananias was martyred in Eleutheropolis.

4. What was the simple proclamation of Saul following his conversion and why was this proclamation significant?

"He is the Son of God." This proclamation was significant because it was the claim of Jesus as the Messiah promised of God through the prophets of the Old Testament. For Saul, a devout and accomplished Jew, this was significant and meaningful to all the Jews he encountered and to whom he made this testimony.

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

Read: Revelation 5:8-14

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6. What is the primary activity of this portion of John's vision?

It is an activity of worship and honoring Christ.

7. What does this tell us about the importance of honoring our Savior?

It speaks volumes to us about the importance of worshipping Christ our Savior as God. Not only is such worship a command and expectation of our God, but worship is also a blessing in the recognition and acknowledgment of who He is and what he has done for us.

8. What is the significance of verse 13? (See Psalm 19:1)

All creation ultimately will recognize and acknowledge Jesus as Lord and this is evidence of that fact in the vision of John.

9. Is our earthly worship of God merely a matter of our honoring Him or is there something more involved in our worship?

Our earthly worship is not merely a matter of honoring Jesus as Lord, it is also a means by which He blesses us through Word and sacrament imparting to us His grace and every spiritual blessing needed for us to serve in His kingdom.

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 it say about the disciples that they determined to go fishing rather than do anything else?

People will generally retreat to what they feel most comfortable doing when they are in emotional or spiritual conflict. These disciples had been fishermen and Jesus drew them apart to become “fishers of men.” While he had schooled them in discipleship for three years, they were still most uncomfortable with that role and retreated to what they knew best. Once again our Savior found them there and comforts them in the role they are yet to fulfill as His disciples. He does the same with us today through the Word and Sacrament.

12. Can you think of another time that Peter wished to come to the Lord from a boat? What is different this time?

He once wished to come to Jesus by walking on the water and when he saw the waves he panicked. In this case he didn't even bother asking. He just jumped in and did what he was most comfortable doing by either swimming or wading to shore. Being as close to shore as they were, it may have been a wade rather than a swim.

13. Is it significant that the exact number of fish was recorded in this reading?

Many have attempted to put meaning to the numbers of fish expressing things like “3” is symbolic of the holy trinity, “50” is symbolic of apostolic succession, “100” being the number of fulfillment. One scholar identifies that there are 153 varieties of fish in the sea and this is symbolic of the inclusiveness of Christ's kingdom which is for all the world. We can't really put much stock in the numeric symbolism but we can put great stock in the miraculous reality that this large quantity of fish did not break the nets as a large quantity had one other time. Jesus was providing all they needed for body and life and even more and protecting the process. He is doing so yet in the kingdom if we would only recognize it as truth.

14. What did John say was the purpose of recording this event according to verse 14 and why is that significant?

The purpose of having recorded this post resurrection event was to provide yet one more bit of evidence that Jesus was raised from the dead, this being the third occasion of His being seen by witnesses. Such clear evidence of two time being witnessed would be sufficient evidence in a court of law, but this third occasion was more than substantial proof of the resurrection of our Lord.

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

Discipleship Bulletin Blub

While Saul went in pursuit of persecuting believers, God had yet another purpose for his existence and so He drew Saul aside and miraculously converted him on the road to Damascus. While we may not have experienced such a dramatic conversion, we were drawn to Christ none the less through the power of the Gospel either in water or by the proclaimed Word. The end result is one of worship as we see evidenced in John's revelation and in the disciple's joy in seeing the risen Lord. As modern day disciples, we, like those we learn about today, are counted among those who are drawn to Christ and eager to give Him glory and honor. But we are also blessed in receiving great grace and favor in His forgiveness and mercy order to serve Him and others in His kingdom.

Discipleship Prayer Thought

Almighty God, bless us with Your presence made known to us in Your Word and sacrament as You made Yourself known to Saul, to the saints of heaven and to the disciples beside the sea. Help us to not only bring You honor and glory, but help us also to be strengthened and blessed with Your mercy and help that we might be even greater equipped to serve You in Your Kingdom willingly and joyfully to the glory of Your Holy name. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**