



**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.

**SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST - SERIES C**  
**SEPTEMBER 4, 2016**

**From C.P.H. About the Cover:** You may have heard “there’s no such thing as a free lunch.” There is a cost to everything, including being a disciple of Jesus. The cost is complete reliance on Jesus’ love for us. We are the salt of which Jesus speaks. We are useful in His kingdom, unless we lose our saltiness. Then, we are useless. With Jesus, we bear our cross, we are His disciples, and we are blessed to witness His love.

**First Reading: Deuteronomy 30:15–20**

<sup>15</sup>“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.

<sup>16</sup>If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his just decrees then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.

<sup>17</sup>But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup>I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. <sup>19</sup>I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, <sup>20</sup>loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

1<sup>st</sup> Reading Discipleship Notes: God desires obedience to flow from His creatures. He also recognizes that obedience is a choice for mankind. That is how God created man, with a free will to choose. Therefore He calls out in this reading to choose life which accompanies obedience. But to choose life and obedience requires one other thing and that is a heart which is drawn to God and not away from Him. Thanks be to God that the disciple of Christ even today can choose life and obedience because God has drawn us to Himself through His grace. He has made us His own, forgiven and restored us to be the holy people of God who therefore, by His grace, can choose to walk in His ways, holding fast to Him, and accomplishing those things that are profitable for the welfare of the people and done in the glory of the Lord.

**Epistle Reading      Philemon 1–21**

<sup>1</sup>Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,  
To Philemon our beloved fellow worker <sup>2</sup>and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:

<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup>I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, <sup>5</sup>because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints, <sup>6</sup>and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. <sup>7</sup>For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

<sup>8</sup>Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, <sup>9</sup>yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus— <sup>10</sup>I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. <sup>11</sup>(Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) <sup>12</sup>I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. <sup>13</sup>I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, <sup>14</sup>but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will. <sup>15</sup>For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, <sup>16</sup>no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

<sup>17</sup>So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. <sup>18</sup>If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. <sup>19</sup>I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. <sup>20</sup>Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

<sup>21</sup>Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

Epistle Discipleship Notes: Paul was not afraid to command Philemon to “do what is required.” Who does that in the Church? What was required of Philemon is really what is required of us all which is to live in love and charity and work within the body of Christ to accomplish what is for the glory of God and the benefit of His people. Given God’s grace as Philemon and we have been given, we can indeed “do what is required of us” and live and serve in love, forgiveness and complete charity which is carried out in every aspect of our lives.

**Gospel Reading:****Luke 14:25–35**

<sup>25</sup>Now great crowds accompanied [Jesus], and he turned and said to them,  
<sup>26</sup>"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup>Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup>For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup>Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, <sup>30</sup>saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' <sup>31</sup>Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup>And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup>So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.  
<sup>34</sup>"Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? <sup>35</sup>It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Gospel Discipleship Notes: These words of Jesus certainly define the "cost" of discipleship. Bearing personal crosses does not feel good and it costs personal pain, struggle, hardship, persecution, and so much more. Without God's grace, it would be impossible to bear any cross or even to be Christ's disciple. With God's grace those crosses are not only bearable but we are given the strength to do even more as disciples to accomplish God's divine will and to serve our fellowman as the salt of the earth God has enabled us to be. Hearing God's Word, growing in His grace, we are strengthened and the burdens of this life made light for us to serve in our homes, our neighborhoods and community and in God's Church.

## Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline

### Read Deuteronomy 30:15–20

<sup>15</sup>“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.

<sup>16</sup>If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his just decrees then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.

<sup>17</sup>But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup>I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. <sup>19</sup>I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, <sup>20</sup>loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

1. What does it mean that God had set before the people life and good or death and evil?
2. What was God promising and not promising if the people obeyed the commandments of God?
3. How are the practical aspects of obedience still important today and why should these be motivation for such a life?
4. How is obedience even possible?
5. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

### Read Philemon 1–21

<sup>1</sup>Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,  
To Philemon our beloved fellow worker <sup>2</sup>and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:

<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup>I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, <sup>5</sup>because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints, <sup>6</sup>and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. <sup>7</sup>For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

<sup>8</sup>Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, <sup>9</sup>yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus— <sup>10</sup>I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. <sup>11</sup>(Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to

me.) <sup>12</sup>I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. <sup>13</sup>I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, <sup>14</sup>but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will. <sup>15</sup>For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, <sup>16</sup>no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

<sup>17</sup>So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. <sup>18</sup>If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. <sup>19</sup>I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. <sup>20</sup>Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

<sup>21</sup>Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

6. How is it that one whose faith and love is so evident as was the case for Philemon, needs to be commanded to do what is required?
7. How might doing what is required have been unexpected of Philemon?
8. Discuss what it would be like to accept a slave back as an equal brother.
9. How is this account a picture of our relationship to God?
10. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

**Read: Luke 14:25–35**

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11. How are we to understand what it means to “hate” our loved ones?
12. How are we to understand what a cross is that we are asked to bear?
13. What was the point of the examples of building a tower and waging a war that Jesus shared?
14. We are called to be the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13). How does that fit into what Jesus said in verse 34 of this reading?
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 Deuteronomy 30:15–20

<sup>15</sup>"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.

<sup>16</sup>If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his just decrees then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.

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1. What does it mean that God had set before the people life and good or death and evil?

*Every man wants to obtain life and good and to escape death and evil. Every man desires happiness and dreads misery. So here Moses says, "I have shown you the way to obtain all the happiness you can desire and to avoid all misery. Simply, be obedient, and all will be well." Our first parents ate the forbidden fruit in hopes of getting the knowledge of good and evil; but it was a miserable knowledge they got. Their knowledge of good was known by the loss of it, and evil by the sense of it. Yet the compassion of God towards man is that instead of giving him to his own delusion, He has blessed him by his Word with such a knowledge of good and evil as will make him happy if he is merely responsive to the love of God with a proper sense of obedience.*

2. What was God promising and not promising if the people obeyed the commandments of God?

*God was promising temporal good as a result of proper obedience and promising temporal punishment for disobedience. He was not promising eternal salvation because of their obedience however. This comes not by obedience, but by faith. Realize that obedience can happen even among those who do not have faith, but that will never result in salvation.*

3. How are the practical aspects of obedience still important today and why should these be motivation for such a life?

*There is blessing that follows obedience and there are problems that accompany disobedience. Blessing ought to be motivation for obedience, but not just to please God, but rather to serve Him as a result of faith.*

4. How is obedience even possible?

*Proper obedience is possible only because of the grace of God at work in us as a result of the faith and love we have for God and our fellow man.*

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

**Read: Philemon 1–21**

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To Philemon our beloved fellow worker <sup>2</sup>and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow  
soldier, and the church in your house:

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brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

<sup>8</sup>Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required,  
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Christ Jesus— <sup>10</sup>I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my  
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brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

<sup>21</sup>Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

6. How is it that one whose faith and love is so evident as was the case for Philemon, needs to be commanded to do what is required?

*Faith and love can be evident in all believers, but believers are at the same time saint and sinner. It is quite likely that sin will abound in a believer's life where there is a sinful human weakness. We have no idea about Philemon's weakness, but perhaps Paul did and that weakness must have required a command to do what is required. The same is true for us if we are to remain living in the arms of mercy as a disciple.*

7. How might doing what is required have been unexpected of Philemon?

*Philemon was the rightful owner and master of his slave, Onesimus. As the rightful owner and master, it was not expected from an earthly standpoint that he receive Onesimus back into his good graces without proper punishment. But Paul was here appealing to him not from an earthly standpoint, but from a spiritual one.*

8. Discuss what it would be like to accept a slave back as an equal brother.

*Allow for response.*

9. How is this account a picture of our relationship to God?

*We belong to God as Onesimus belonged to Philemon. We have turned our back on God and run from Him as Onesimus had done from Philemon. It should not have been expected of God that He receive us back any more than it would have been expected of Philemon that he receive Onesimus back. But, we have an advocate pleading for us in Jesus Christ as Onesimus had in St. Paul. All of which is designed for our ability to be brought back into a proper restored and appropriate relationship with God and with one another.*

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

**READ: Luke 14:25–35**

<sup>25</sup>Now great crowds accompanied [Jesus], and he turned and said to them,  
<sup>26</sup>"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup>Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup>For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup>Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, <sup>30</sup>saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' <sup>31</sup>Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup>And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup>So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.  
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11. How are we to understand what it means to "hate" our loved ones?

*First we must understand that here Jesus was referring to those who come "to" him and not referring to those who "follow". In order to come to Jesus, it does require that we love Him with heart and soul and mind and then secondly to love our neighbors as ourselves. To understand what it means to "hate" our loved ones we must first understand the need to love God more. Hatred here is not to be understood as that sinful response we might have to others out of anger and resentment, but rather the response we have toward loving God more than all other things, including our loved ones.*

12. How are we to understand what a cross is that we are asked to bear?

*Bearing the cross does not mean all suffering that we experience in this life. Much of the suffering we experience comes solely as a consequence of our own sin. We get drunk and wreck the car is not bearing the cross, it is experiencing the consequence of sin. The cross talked about here is any suffering we must endure as a result of faith as we suffer for the sake of Christ.*

13. What was the point of the examples of building a tower and waging a war that Jesus shared?

*Here Jesus was clarifying the cost of the cross. As we become believers, we do have to realize that as we claim in our confirmation vows, we will “suffer all, even death rather than fall away from this faith.” That is quite a cost and these examples of building a tower and waging a war are a call to ask ourselves the serious question as to whether or not the relationship to God through faith in Jesus Christ is something we are honestly willing to afford. We cannot be only a believer of convenience. In such a case we are neither hot nor cold and therefore rejected.*

14. We are called to be the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13). How does that fit into what Jesus said in verse 34 of this reading?

*It fits once again into that comparison of whether or not we are really committed to Christ. If as the salt of the earth, we become complacent in our commitment to Christ and His word, the result is rejection, we aren't salty and our worth is compromised because we aren't salty (or out of faith, living as the salt of the earth).*

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

## Discipleship Bulletin Blub

Have you been bearing cross of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom or merely your own? In order to come to and to follow Christ, there are crosses you will expect to bear. These are not the ones you bring on yourself, but the ones Christians everywhere experience. And like all Christians everywhere, we are given grace to endure those hardships we receive as a result of our faith. With God's grace we can receive those crosses and endure in the faith as we follow Christ and serve in His kingdom as His disciple.

## Discipleship Prayer Thought

Almighty and Most merciful God, grant us Your grace so to take up the crosses of faith and follow after you. Give us strength of faith and confidence that through faith in Christ, we are capable not only of doing all things faithfully, but that even our worth and value of service in the Kingdom is going to be blessed. Fill us with love for You and for one another that living in such faith, Your will is accomplished and Your will done to Your glory. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**