

Xtreme Lenten Series: Discipleship April 5, 2020

Overarching theme: In 2020, FUMC will be a **Go** church!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

The past is the past. There is nothing that can be done about it. The past can only be used to gain wisdom for the future. What can change is the future. When we, as God's people, are willing to follow God in our daily lives, God will make a good way in the future. The way may be bumpy at times and have curves, but the process will be filled with God's love and grace.

Start point:

Lent 2020, the period of 40 days before Easter (excluding Sundays), begins on Ash Wednesday, February 26, and ends at sundown on the Saturday, April 11, before Easter. The penitential season of Lent is a season of the church year which commemorates the forty days Jesus fasted and prayed in the wilderness before he began his public ministry.

During Lent, we enter into a season of preparation, which includes self-reflection and repentance. Ideally, we seek to literally "turn around" and realign our lives and focus towards God. Most people think of Lent as a time to give up things, however, it can be a time to take on new life-giving practices. Lent helps rid ourselves of distractions and our own selfish desires to focus more clearly on God. For example, a person may give up sweets for 40 days and when the temptation to eat a sweet hits, that person instead prays to God for strength.

Practically speaking, Lent is a good way to form a new habit that helps an individual to live and love as more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. I use to hear that it takes 21 days to form a new habit. Actually, for me, it took longer. Only you know how long it takes you to form a new habit. So, the intentional practice of incorporating a new Godly habit during Lent allows time for that habit to become a part of your life.

During the Sundays of Lent, we will focus on the following practices: Compassion, Prayer, Simplicity, Forgiveness, Servanthood, and Discipleship.

Book of Luke:

The Gospel of Luke was written sometime after 60 A.D. and before 70 A.D. The Gospel narratives were probably written to help people remember the story from actual witnesses. Most likely, decades after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the stories about Jesus had morphed into half-truths. Each Gospel had many similar stories but with a unique perspective from the eye witness. The author, Luke, was most likely a physician and worked with Paul on a missionary journey. Luke wrote a companion letter, which is called Acts, after the Gospel of Luke was written. Both letters, Luke wrote to Theophilus which means "God's Friend." There is speculation that Theophilus was a wealthy influential believer, or a name for a group of people receiving the letter. We really do not know for sure. The purpose for Luke writing the Gospel letter is explained in chapter 1 verses 1-4. Luke wrote to give an orderly and researched account of what was fulfilled in the eyewitness account of Christ Jesus. The people that received the Gospel of Luke were most likely gentile Christians struggling to journey as a Christian and understand the fullness of Jesus.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Luke 9:18-26 (NIV)

¹⁸ Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" ¹⁹ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life." ²⁰ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "God's Messiah." ²¹ Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. ²² And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." ²³ Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. ²⁵ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? ²⁶ Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NIV)

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Proverbs 6:20-23 (NIV)

- ²⁰ My children, keep your father's command
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.
- ²¹ Bind them always on your heart;
fasten them around your neck.
- ²² When you walk, they will guide you;
when you sleep, they will watch over you;
when you awake, they will speak to you.
- ²³ For this command is a lamp,
this teaching is a light,
and correction and instruction
are the way to life...

Questions to ponder about the passages:

What jumps out at you from this passage?

Who do the people think Jesus is?

What is going to happen?

What does Jesus say it means, or looks like, to be a disciple of Jesus?

What does it mean to gain the whole world, or lose self?

What is the result of being ashamed of Jesus and his words?

Is there are difference between just knowing who Jesus is and being a disciple?

Commentary:

This sixth week of Lent, we are going to focus on Discipleship. In the Luke passage, we see Jesus explaining what is about to happen in Jerusalem just similar to last week in Mark. The main teaching is centered around what it means to be a disciple in the name of Jesus. James 2:19, states that even the demons believe, or know there is a God. So, just knowing who Jesus is, is not enough to be a disciple. A disciple is one who is actively growing in understanding and in a life style that patterns after Jesus. It is accepting into your life that Jesus is the savior of the world and the one who came to redeem us from our own self-centeredness and sin by the grace of God. When one commits to be a disciple of Christ, then one is called a Christian. Basically, a Christian is one who follows Jesus Christ as Lord Daily. The Biblical story of Palm Sunday found in Luke 19:28-44, is the culmination of the idea that Jesus was worthy to be the "Lamb that would be slain" and thus the savior of the world. In Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection, we see the culmination of Jesus' willingness and obedience to follow the will of God to redeem that which was created. It is out of these dynamic recognitions that a person like you and me responds with thankfulness and commitment to the one who redeemed us for something better. The better, is living a life patterned after Jesus that leads us being servants of one another as we love our God who love us. Consequently, we live patterning our life after Jesus.

I included the passages from Deuteronomy and Proverbs because they highlight the ways of old in how followers were encouraged to keep the love of God and God's word in their heart, soul, mind, and before them throughout life. Proverbs encourages the children to listen to the wisdom of God that comes through the parents. For parents are to teach and model the ways of God to the children.

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

In this passage, what is the main lesson you get from it?

How are you being a disciple of Jesus, or why are you not?

What do you need to change to be a stronger disciple of Jesus?

How do you foster your growth as a disciple of Jesus?

How do you foster your children's growth in the ways of God through Christ?

What do you need to let go of in the world in order to gain your life in Jesus?

How are you being a servant to one another?

Activity of for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week:
Proverbs 6:21-22 (NIV)
"21 Bind them always on your heart;
fasten them around your neck.
22 When you walk, they will guide you;
when you sleep, they will watch over you;
when you awake, they will speak to you."
3. How can you practice the words found in Proverbs 6:21-22?