

BUILDING BLOCKS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus invited his disciples saying, "Come, follow me." A diverse group of people heard that invitation and responded. Peter was loud and didn't always think things through. Matthew had been a tax collector and was not well-liked, some people thought John was too young, and there were women who traveled with Jesus from the beginning (some people disapproved). He loved them all, and did not ask them to be carbon copies of one another. Each of them made *their* contribution to his mission. He still invites disciples to follow. Some of us hear the Call, and call ourselves Christians, and organize our lives around his teaching and his love.

++This year's confirmation class will be 'customizable', so you can respond to God in ways that make sense for you. ++

Here are 4 things we think are 'building blocks' of discipleship, things Jesus emphasized by his words and deeds. We think every disciple needs to have some experience of all 4 of these. Under each building block, there are several ways you might learn about or live that aspect of discipleship in your confirmation process.

1. Prayer and Worship (because connection to God keeps your soul alive)

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary or are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matt 11:28, and "My sheep hear my voice" John 10:27 and also, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. This is the first and greatest commandment..." Matt 22:37-38

+ Without God, none of this matters. God is real, and God is not just watching us from afar- God is very near, and speaking to us all the time. Usually we do not hear because we are distracted by entertainment or stress or busy-ness. But God is here and waiting for us to notice. This is your life, and God is seeking you- how do you listen best? And how can you respond? How can you practice gratitude and recognize joy and guidance?

Mandatory: show up to worship at least twice in August. Answer the question at the end (how did God speak to you today?).

You may write your answer, or tell one of the leaders about it in a conversation.

Mandatory: pick a way of seeking God or watching for God that appeals to you, and do it 5 days in a row for at least 10 minutes. (A list of ideas and instructions will be given to you)

Optional explorations:

- participate one Sunday in summer choir (notice: what was it like to sing for God? Did you see or notice anything different from up there?)
- prepare for worship in a new way: download the bulletin from our website on Friday or Saturday, and look up the passages that will be read in church. Read them ahead of time, and see if that helps you hear something new during worship
- explore an unusual kind of prayer (we have a whole notebook full of one page suggestions you could try)
- describe an experience of being loved. Remember every detail you can. What do you think God is trying to say to you about that experience?
- describe something painful or difficult that you know about (suicide, anxiety, eating disorders, divorce, diabetes, cancer, death, discrimination, heartbreak) Express your feelings about this in a poem, or prayer, or letter. What is God trying to say to you about this thing you know about? What would you say to someone else experiencing this?
- propose an idea: what is a way you express joy or gratitude or praise? How could you do that as an offering to God?
- propose an idea: what makes you feel calm or peace or awe? What feels like 'holy ground' to you? Go there once and notice what it is like-see if you can notice God's presence.

2. Community (because this is what Jesus taught and modeled)

Jesus said, "...And the second (most important commandment) is like the first (which you just read, above): love your neighbor as yourself." Matt 22:38

"Love one another as I have loved you." John 13:34 "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples: if you have love for one another." John 13:35

"You are the Body of Christ and individually members of it..." 1Cor 12:27

"the eye cannot say to the hand 'I don't need you'." 1Cor 12:21

+ Christian faith is not a spectator sport, nor an individual thing. While each of us has an individual relationship with God who knows us by name, and each of us chooses to follow (or not) individually, we are only Christian in community, along with others who help us grow

and put the teachings of Jesus into practice. We need one another.

Mandatory: participate in all the confirmation class meetings by listening with care and contributing to the conversation honestly and with an open heart.

Mandatory: ask someone from this congregation to be your sponsor by Sept. 3 (details on how to do this will be given to you at confirmation retreat)

Optional explorations:

- ask someone older than you what it means to them to be part of our church community.
- show love for someone (secretly, or in the open) and see what that is like (examples- write a note, listen with love, make a small treat/gift and leave it where they will find it, etc.)
- be kind to someone who is difficult for you to love □(ask for God's help in doing this) What happens?
- propose an idea: what makes you feel like you belong? Or how might you help someone else know they belong to God? Make a suggestion to us.

3. **Service** (because we meet Jesus when we show love with action)

Jesus said, "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be the servant of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:43, and also "Whatever you do to the least of these, my brothers and my sisters, you do to me" Matthew 25:40. James wrote "Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only..." James 1:22

+ Christian faith is not just about words and beliefs, but about action. We are followers of Jesus who are continuing his work in the world. Each of us is given particular gifts and preferences that help us know what we are called to do. As you pick some actions of service, consider what you are good at, and also what things particularly tug at your heart.

Mandatory: Show love for others through acts of service or kindness. At least one action all by yourself, at least one in partnership with others. It should total 2 or more hours.

Optional explorations:

- participate in our food distribution ministry
- visit someone who would be glad to see you. Read a story from your gospel (see below) to them. Or play music for them on your instrument. (Or a recording of you playing music). Or bring them a piece of artwork or a cheery card that you made.
- offer to volunteer in the church office
- talk to a deacon or elder about what they do and why they do it?
- Do a chore that belongs to someone else, so that they can have some free time (a family member? Someone at church? Someone at school or in your neighborhood?
- propose an idea: what do you like to do that might be a blessing to someone else? Do you like to cook? Draw? Make music? Talk? Give? How might this be a way to share God's love?

4. **Study** (because God still speaks to us through the Word of God written in the Bible)

Jesus said, "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." John 15:11

Other biblical writers say: "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Psalm 119:105

"All scripture is given by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, and for training in righteousness". 2 Tim 3:16

*+ Knowing the Jesus stories from the Bible can help us understand his mission, helps us understand ourselves, and help us make sense of the world. These stories are the root of the Christian faith, and as followers we are **part** of the Story. Each year of our life and each experience brings new questions, and new choices. Knowing our way around the gospels is like having a compass that can help us when we are uncertain or stuck. Having the stories about Jesus and his teaching in your head means God can remind you of those stories, and use them to speak to you as you grow in grace.*

Mandatory: choose one of the gospels and read it all the way through. (This can be done in about 90 min) Underline stuff or make marks in the margin about things you love, or things you have questions about.

Then: find a way to express your response to it such as (*select an option from below*)

A collage or piece of art

A short paper (or letter) about what you liked and disliked,

A short paper about anything that surprised you in the gospel you read.

A letter to the gospel writer.

Or maybe a letter to Jesus!

A list of questions you have, now that you have read this gospel.

Propose a response that feels right for you: a conversation, an action, a song, a prayer... what comes naturally to you?

Mandatory: write a statement describing your faith (specific instructions and coaching and examples will be part of our confirmation class meetings)

Optional explorations:

- memorize a verse that means something to you (you could ask others if they have a favorite verse, look on the internet, or choose one of the verses in this document, or from a Sunday service)
- pick a passage you did not understand or like. Come to the church office and look at a COMMENTARY (Wendy or Sandy will show you how) to read a page of information about the confusing text, and see if that makes it clearer!
- read an epistle (letter) and see what you notice (these are the books right after Acts in your New Testament)
- propose an idea: is there a topic or idea you are curious about? Maybe we can help you find an essay, a sermon, or something to read on that topic.
- propose an idea: what would you like to study? What bothers you? What do you wish you knew or understood?

SUMMARY:

There are 7 mandatory tasks we would like you to do. Some of them will take no extra time, they just ask you to watch for God while doing them. We want these to be meaningful and even fun (in a work-fun sort of way)

We want you to choose at least 2 things from Optional Explorations and try them. YOU CAN INVENT IDEAS OF YOUR OWN-but please get them approved by one of us. You will receive a checklist, to be turned in on Sept. 3 by 5pm., to keep you on track with the plan you design.