

## **Bible Studies: Five Gifts of Discipleship**

### **How Do We Live Our Baptism?**

Martin Luther taught we are to daily renew our baptism. We rise and say, "I am baptized into Christ."

Whether we are young or old, this daily renewal of baptism leads to a practicing of faith and deepening of discipleship. *Living our Baptism* describes our faith journey as we come from the baptismal waters to live a new life in Christ.

We do not have to discern how to follow Christ alone or without assistance. Instead God sends the Holy Spirit to call, gather, and sustain us in God's grace, connecting us to brothers and sisters in Christ who also are living out their baptism.

"Baptism inaugurates a life of discipleship in the death and resurrection of Christ. Baptism conforms us to the death and resurrection of Christ precisely so that we repent and receive forgiveness, love our neighbors, suffer for the sake of the Gospel, and witness to Christ." ("The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament," principle 14, page 20)

### **How can we renew our baptism each day?**

We can renew our baptism in a variety of ways. Here are a few possibilities:

- Each morning, rise and say Martin Luther's words, "I am baptized into Christ."
- Each day, pray for the Holy Spirit to be your guide and keep you near Jesus Christ.
- Each night, place water on your forehead, make the sign of the cross, remember you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.
- Combine all of the above.

### **How do we renew our baptism at church?**

Here is the question asked by the presiding minister during the Affirmation of Baptism.

Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in Holy Baptism:  
to live among God's faithful people,  
to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper,  
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,  
to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,  
to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?

**RESPONSE: I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.**

### **After I say, "I do, and I ask God to help and guide me", what happens?**

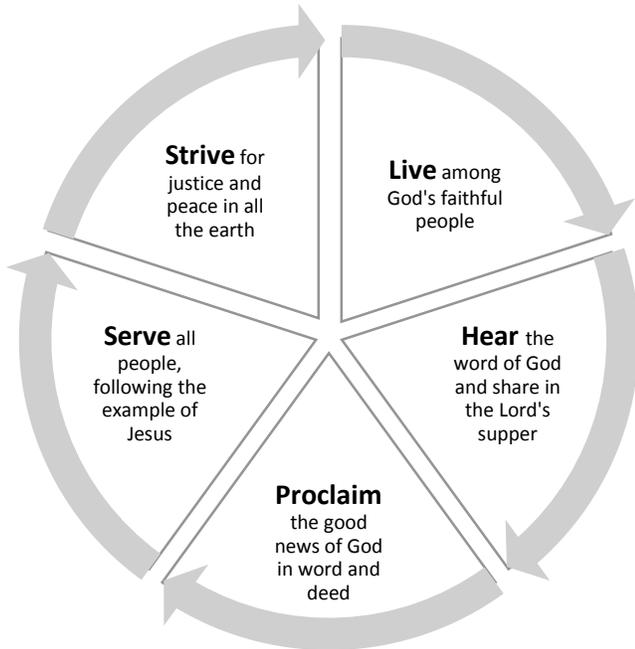
Hopefully, the five-fold question used in the Affirmation of Baptism becomes:

- A five-fold guide for living your baptism as a disciple of Christ
- Five gifts to discover as you walk in the newness of life in Christ



## What are the Five Gifts of Discipleship?

At the Affirmation of Baptism, we are asked to continue in the covenant God made with us in Holy Baptism. This process of continuing in the covenant of baptism includes five parts—not requirements, but rather gifts from God to help shape our new life in Christ.



### FIVE GIFTS OF DISCIPLESHIP

#### Inner Gifts:

**LIVE** among God's faithful people

**HEAR** the word of God and **SHARE** in the Lord's supper

#### Outer Gifts:

**PROCLAIM** the good news of God in Christ through word and deed

**SERVE** all people, following the example of Jesus

**STRIVE** for justice and peace in all the earth

## How are these gifts to be used?

Each of the five gifts of discipleship has the potential to deepen our understanding of what it means to follow Jesus. The Holy Spirit provides these gifts of discipleship with each of the five gifts flowing and overlapping with the others.

On a daily basis, we are invited to live, hear, share, proclaim, serve, and strive—in the name of Christ. God guides and shapes us in the living of our baptism in the newness of life in Christ as we practice our faith each day.

These five gifts help us to practice our faith and serve as a reminder of who has claimed us in baptism. If we do not practice faith, it is easy to get confused, complacent, chase other dreams, lose focus, and wander away from God's calling—not reflecting our new life in Christ and the love of God. It is God's work, but our hands as we are sent out into the world to be a visible witness to the love of Christ.

## How do I use these Bible Studies?

- Individual Devotions
- Small Group Discussions
- Sunday School
- Sermon Series
- Retreats



## LIVING OUR BAPTISM...*Five gifts of discipleship*

### Live among God's faithful people

#### *A gift!*

During the liturgy of Holy Baptism, the presiding minister asks those gathered, "People of God, do you promise to support and pray for [the newly baptized] in their new life in Christ?" The church responds, "We do, and we ask God to help and guide us." (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 228)

When the church is at its best, it abundantly and graciously supports and prays for the baptized and all people—both near and far. Most of us grow in Christian maturity as we are prayed up by the community of faithful believers—those willing to share our burdens and dance in our thanksgivings.

Living among God's faithful people gives us multiple opportunities to encourage each other to choose a life of love and forgiveness—the way of Christ Jesus. To live among God's faithful people is a gift extended to us by God at our baptism. The church teaches us what it means to be sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.

1. *Describe your baptism—either from your own personal remembrances or from the stories you have been told.*

#### *The body of Christ*

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4:4 NRSV)

In baptism, we become part of the church—the body of Christ, the faithful people of God. Each of us is an essential part of the body of Christ. But at the same time, living among God's faithful people is a gift of great value to be unwrapped and discovered until our final breath on this earth.

For in baptism, God unites us with Jesus Christ and connects us to the body of Christ, now and forever. The Holy Spirit gives us this gift of the church whether we are baptized as infants or at the age of 100.

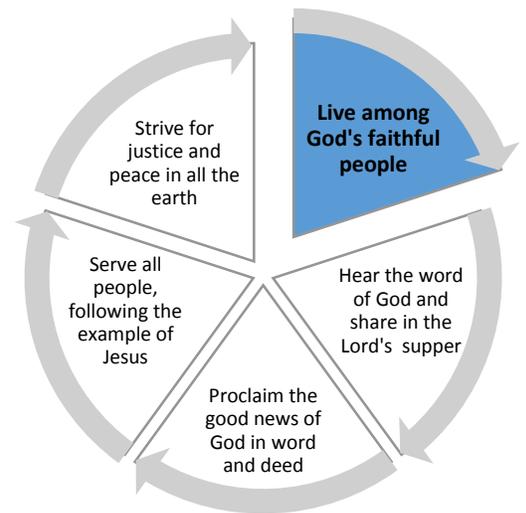
2. *How has your experiences of being part of a church been a gift?*
3. *What might block the church from being a gift to its members?*

#### *Indeed, a gift!*

Living among God's faithful people allows us to witness individuals confronting real life situations—the joys and sorrows of life on this earth. We learn by watching others live out their baptism—through good and bad times.

The church reminds us of the hope of Easter when we stand together at the grave of a loved one, when we push back the powers of darkness and light the candles of Christmas, when we feed the hungry and clothe the naked, as well as when we kneel for confession and rise again in God's amazing grace.

4. *How does the church encourage you to be a disciple of Christ?*



## DIG DEEPER: Live among God’s faithful people

### Live

Each morning when we wake to a new day, we can offer a prayer of thanksgiving. God has created us and gives us breath to live. But there is more to life than inhaling air. Jesus came to give us a new life.

1. *What does it mean to have a new life in Christ Jesus?*

### Among

The word *among* means to be surrounded and in the midst of others. We are to live in the midst of God’s faithful people.

2. *How do you respond when a Christian wants to follow Christ, but does not want to worship or be active with a congregation?*
3. *Can a Christian be a Christian—alone? Explain your answer.*

To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.”  
-Ephesians 4:12-13  
NRSV

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.  
-1 Peter 2:9-10  
NRSV

### God’s Faithful People

To live among God’s faithful people does not mean literally to reside solely with other Christians. Brothers and sisters in Christ come in all shapes, shades, and sizes. They can be our neighbors, classmates, co-workers, social media friends, and extended family. The Holy Spirit brings people in our lives to nurture our faith as well as those who we are to encourage. Hopefully, we are blessed by a church family, where we gather for worship, fellowship, education, and service.

Certainly no church contains perfect people. Even in the most united of congregations, conflicts can arise. Relationships can get strained. Thus, God’s faithful people not only learn about forgiveness, grace, hospitality, and love, but the church is where we practice our faith as Christ instructs. Hopefully, the blessing of being connected to the church far outweighs any burdens.

**STEWARD OF GOD’S GIFT** A steward takes care of that which belongs to another, including gifts given by God. Rate yourself below on the scale. How much do you live among God’s faithful people?

Never \_\_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ Always

4. *How might God be stirring you to expand your current faith practice in this area?*

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN: To live among God’s faithful people?

5. *What does it mean for you to live among God’s faithful people?*
6. *When, if ever, has the church ever felt like a burden?*
7. *How has being part of God’s faithful people blessed your life?*

### REMEMBER THOSE IN PRAYER:

- ME: For the faithful people of God who have taught and encouraged me  
YOU: For those we know who need support (physical, spiritual, emotional, mental)  
CHURCH: For pastors, church leaders, our own church, local congregations, and the people of God throughout the world  
WORLD: For those who struggle daily to find food, shelter, and water to live

## Hear the word of God and share the Lord's supper

### *A gift?*

God's word and the Lord's supper are tangible gifts given by God to disciples of Jesus Christ. These gifts are not wrapped up in brightly-colored packages with pretty bows. But these Spirit-given gifts have the power to transform lives, offering both consolation and challenge.

### *Word of God*

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being." (John 1:1-3 NRSV) Those poetic words are used by John to begin his gospel.

Jesus is the Word of God, but the word of God is also the Bible. Martin Luther loved to take the word of God found in the Bible and link it to powerful music with the hopes of stirring some deep passions in the heart and soul. Musicians from each generation have done the same. To hear the word of God is to be open to that very word to change us. Sometimes that word of God challenges the core of who we are and calls us back into a deeper relationship with the One who created us. Other times that word of God made known in Jesus Christ holds our broken spirits and comforts us like a loving mother cares for her young.

1. *Who has helped you to hear the word of God?*
2. *Give examples of when the word of God has comforted and challenged you.*

The disciples of Jesus had daily opportunities to hear the word of God through the voice and actions of Jesus himself. He taught them on the Sermon on the Mount, through parables, in his answers to questions, and in daily conversation.

3. *Use your imagination. What would that have been like to walk beside Jesus and learn from him?*
4. *What is a favorite verse or story from the Bible?*

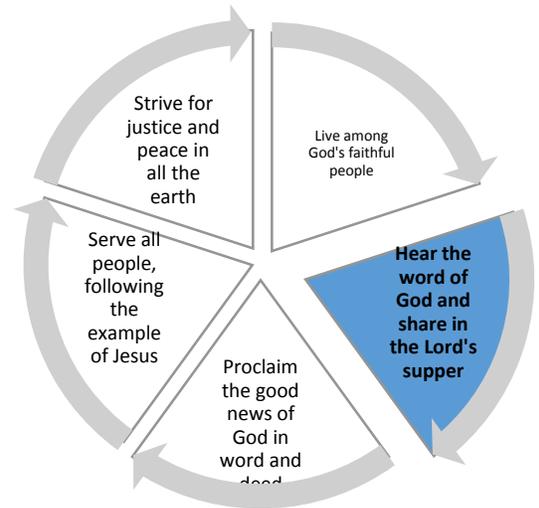
### *Lord's supper*

On the night before he was crucified, Jesus gathered his disciples for the annual Passover meal. But this year was different. Jesus took bread and broke it, claiming the body to be his own. Then he took the wine, lifted the cup, and gave thanks, explaining it was his blood. Jesus concluded, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (1 Corinthians 11:26 NRSV)

5. *If you had been at that meal with Jesus and heard him claim the broken bread to be his body and the wine to be his blood, what might you have thought and felt?*

Whether we refer to the meal of bread and wine as the Lord's supper, Holy Communion, or Eucharist, we are proclaiming the Lord's death and at the same time experiencing a foretaste of the feast to come. In the Lord's supper, we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. We receive a tangible morsel of God's bountiful grace.

6. *Describe the first time you received the Lord's supper.*



## DIG DEEPER: Hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper

### Hear the Word of God

We are to hear the word of God so that God's Word is imprinted on our heart and guides our journey on this earth. We are to immerse in the word of God through daily prayer, study, and worship. We are to hear the word of God even when no one is reading the Bible aloud. Most of us are blessed with access to the word of God through Christian music, preaching, teaching, writings, art, liturgy, and of course the Bible itself.

1. *If you had a morning to immerse yourself in God's word, what would you do?*

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

-Matthew 7:24  
NRSV

That the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'"

-1 Corinthians 11:23b-25  
NRSV

### Share

The word *share* means to take the whole of something, divide it, and split the portions. All get a part. No one deserves more than another.

2. *What does it mean to you to be invited to share in the Lord's supper?*

### Lord's Supper

We call it the Lord's supper because Jesus is the host of the meal, the one who invites us to his supper and to share in his sacrifice. As guests, we know we are not worthy, but he still includes us. We prepare for that meal through the confessing of our sin and acknowledging of our unworthiness. Despite our limitations, we are invited to share in the Lord's supper—not because we are good, but because God is good.

3. *How do you feel both before and after receiving the Lord's supper?*
4. *After receiving the Lord's supper, what are we free to do?*

**STEWARD OF GOD'S GIFT** A steward takes care of that which belongs to another, including gifts given by God. Rate yourself below on the scale.

How much do you hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper?

Never \_\_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ Always

5. *How might God be stirring you to expand your current faith practice in this area?*

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN:** To hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper?

6. *What does it mean for you to hear the word of God on a daily and weekly basis?*
7. *What does it mean for you to share in the Lord's supper?*

### REMEMBER THOSE IN PRAYER:

ME: For the word of God and the Lord's supper to fill, mold, and shape my life  
YOU: For the word of God and Lord's supper to nurture and nourish those in need  
CHURCH: For the word of God and the Lord's supper to provide comfort to the afflicted and to conflict the comfortable within the church  
WORLD: For the witness of the love of Christ to be a blessing to our world in need of healing



## LIVING OUR BAPTISM...*Five gifts of discipleship*

### Proclaim the good news of God in word and deed

#### *A gift?*

The Gospel of Luke begins with Gabriel, an angel of God appearing before a faithful, old priest named Zechariah. He and his wife have no children. The angel proclaims good news to Zechariah, “Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at this birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord.” (Luke 1:13b-15a NRSV)

Six months later, the angel Gabriel appears to Mary, a cousin of Elizabeth, to proclaim the good news of her pregnancy by the Holy Spirit. Mary’s responds, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word.” (Luke 1:38 NRSV)

Afterwards, Mary travels with haste to visit her pregnant cousin Elizabeth to share the good news. When Elizabeth hears the greeting of Mary in her presence, the child in the womb of Elizabeth leaps and Elizabeth proclaims, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?” (Luke 1:42-43 NRSV)

Both women—one young and the other old—were amazed at the gift of pregnancy under extraordinary circumstances. Both women had good news to proclaim to the other.

1. *Imagine the conversation between these two women. What might each say?*
2. *How might they proclaim good news in word and deed?*
3. *What might they risk when their good news would be made public?*

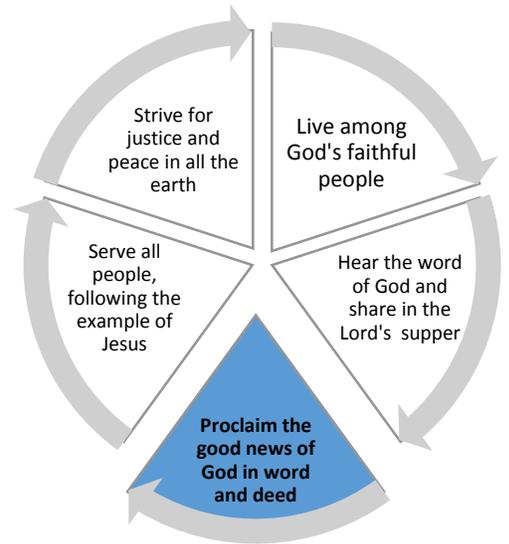
After John was born and named, the Holy Spirit filled Zechariah with these words for his son,

“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,  
to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins.  
By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us,  
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace.” (Luke 1:76-79 NRSV)

It is unclear how often the cousins of John and Jesus would have seen each other when they were young, but their deep bond went beyond the extraordinary nature of their births and closeness of their mothers. From birth, both John and Jesus knew they were special—destined for greatness. John spoke with humility about his cousin Jesus, “I am not worthy to unite the thong of his sandals.” (Luke 3:16b NRSV)

Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, and John the Baptist are powerful examples of proclaimers of God’s good news in both word and deed. Each sacrificed much.

4. *In regards to proclaiming God’s good news through word and deed, who do you relate to—Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary or John the Baptist? Who is a role model?*
5. *What risks come from being a proclaimer of the good news of God?*
6. *How easy or difficult is it for you to proclaim God’s good news in word and deed?*



## DIG DEEPER: Proclaim the good news of God in word and deed

### Proclaim

For most people it is easy to tell good news to family and friends—to talk about a great new restaurant and movie. Words flow. But is that proclaiming? Proclaims sounds, well, preachy. Sounds like you need to be a public speaker.

1. *Be honest. When you hear the word “proclaim” what is your first reaction?*

### Good News of God

The good news of God is indeed GOOD news—the kind of news that casts out fear, gives hope, sheds light, and transforms life. This good news in the New Testament is proclaimed by heavenly angels and those filled with the Spirit. The words *angel*, *evangelism*, and *gospel* all share the same Greek root word. We humans are called to be God’s proclaimers on this earth.

2. *What is the good news of God?*
3. *How does it feel to be God’s messenger of good news on earth?*
4. *Of all the good which could be said about God, what is your favorite piece of good news about God?*

“P repare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

-Luke 3: 4b-6

NRSV

### In Word and Deed

It is tempting to separate word and deed.

Our words carry weight, have impact, and are meant to be supported by our action. Likewise our deeds on this earth are to be supported by our words. We cannot assume people know the One who has called us in baptism, sealed us with the Holy Spirit, marked us with the cross of Christ forever, forgiven our sins and promised eternal life to us.

If there are no words, trust the Holy Spirit to use the silence and to give you the needed words.

**STEWARD OF GOD’S GIFT** A steward takes care of that which belongs to another, including gifts given by God. Rate yourself below on the scale. How much do you proclaim the good news of God in word and deed?

Never \_\_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ Always

5. *How might God be stirring you to expand your current faith practice in this area?*

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN:** To proclaim the good news of God in word and deed?

6. *What does it mean for you to proclaim the Good News of God in word, deed, as well as both word and deed?*

### REMEMBER THOSE IN PRAYER:

ME: For courage to proclaim the good news of God in word and deed  
YOU: For the good news of God to reach all those who are in need  
CHURCH: For the church to go beyond the walls to share the good news of God  
WORLD: For those in the world who are in need of hope

## Serve all people, following the example of Jesus

### *A gift?*

Christ has set us free, but for what? To serve? Then what is the point of being free?

Martin Luther once wrote, “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all. (Treatise on “The Freedom of a Christian” 1520)

In Christ, we no longer *have to serve*, but we get to do so with a spirit of love, kindness, and generosity. To serve all people, following the example of Jesus is a two-fold gift. Those who are served are blessed, but those who give of their time and talent are also blessed.

1. *How do you feel when you help someone who is in need?*
2. *How do you feel when someone helps you?*

### *The example of Jesus*

We are to model our lives after Jesus. There is no doubt, Jesus came to serve. He did not just talk and strategize about serving others. Instead, he led by example. Time and time again, he responded to those in need. Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry, calmed the anxious, gave hope to the despairing, and the list goes on.

3. *What is one of your favorite stories of Jesus helping someone in need?*

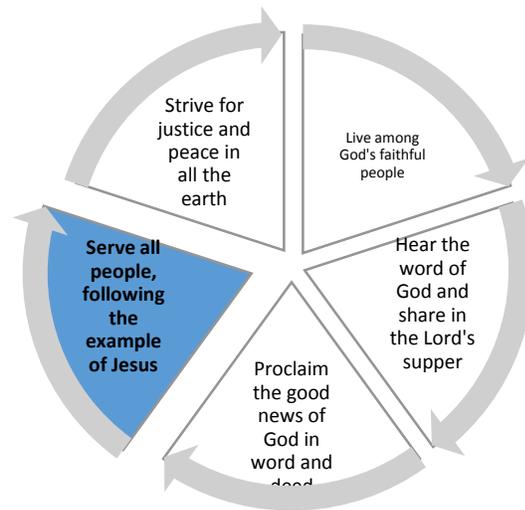
Jesus turned things upside down by his willingness to serve all people—young and old, male and female, Jew and Gentile. He allowed the children to come and get close to him. He was willing to touch unclean lepers and heal on the Sabbath. Jesus was not bound by the rules of the day. He came to serve all people That meant breaking down traditions and barriers to do so.

Here is one example of Jesus helping a person in need. “Now [Jesus] was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, “Woman, you are set free from your ailment.” When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.” (Luke 13:10-13 NRSV)

Jesus took the initiative and healed this woman. But the leaders were quite upset to witness Jesus healing on the sabbath and they challenged him. His response is classic as he replies, “And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?” (Luke 13:16 NRSV)

Time and time again, Jesus was a gift to those around him. Sometimes people came to him and begged him. Other times he took the initiative and responded to the needs he observed.

4. *What can we learn from Jesus healing this woman on the Sabbath?*
5. *Summarize how Jesus served.*



## DIG DEEPER: Serve all people, following the example of Jesus

### Serve

It is one thing to be paid to serve food, take out garbage, and care for someone who is sick. It is something else to volunteer to do any of those things without seeking praise or thanks. To choose to be a servant reflects an attitude of the heart.

1. *Are people born with a heart to serve or can we learn to serve?*
2. *After you have helped someone, how do you respond if that person does not thank you?*

Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

-John 12:26  
NRSV

### All people

We are called to serve those near to us—family, friends, neighbors, and our church. We are also called to serve those who look, act, think, and talk different than ourselves. This call to serve all people is beyond our human capacity. Thus, God sends the Holy Spirit to open our hearts, eyes, ears, and hands to those who are in need—today, now, here in this place. “All people” is understood as each person—no matter what.

3. *What is your reaction to the call to serve all people?*
4. *Be honest. What kinds of people are challenging for you to serve?*

The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

-Matthew 23:11-12  
NRSV

### Following the Example of Jesus

We are disciples and followers of Jesus Christ. It is Christ alone who shows us what it means to serve all people. We learn through his teaching, preaching, and interactions, but we see clearly his servant heart when he died on the cross. He gave his life for all people—not just for those who loved, followed, and trusted him.

As we serve all people following the example of Jesus, we bear witness to the immeasurable love of God made know in the crucified Christ.

**STEWARD OF GOD’S GIFT** A steward takes care of that which belongs to another, including gifts given by God. Rate yourself below on the scale. How much do you serve all people following the example of Jesus?

Never \_\_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ Always

5. *How might God be stirring you to expand your current faith practice in this area?*

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN:** Serve all people, following the example of Jesus?

6. *What does it mean for you to serve all people, following the example of Jesus?*
7. *How is serving a gift of discipleship?*

### REMEMBER THOSE IN PRAYER:

ME: For my heart to become that of a servant and one willing to serve all people  
YOU: For the compassion of Christ to reach those in need  
CHURCH: For the church to boldly move beyond the church walls with compassion and in service  
WORLD: For Christians to speak the truth to power so that people are served with equity



## Strive for justice and peace on earth

### *A Gift?*

Striving for justice and peace might sound exhausting—like an unending task (rather than a gift) which has the potential to keep us awake at night. Injustice and strife reflect human existence at its worst.

1. *What injustice or strife concerns you the most?*

### *The Heart of the Matter...*

God has created all that exists. Humans are created in the very image of God. Consequently, God loves each person, and we are to do likewise. “Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.” (1 John 4:11 NRSV)

But not everyone is likeable or loveable—including us. Nevertheless, this does not mean we (or they) are unloved or of no value to God. No, it is just the opposite. God unabashedly loves each of us—though admittedly, not all of our actions.

God hears the cries of God’s beloved—and responds. We too, are to hear those same cries and respond. The prophet Isaiah pleads, “... cease to do evil, learn to do good; **seek justice**, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.” (Isaiah 1:16b-17 NRSV) Justice, peace, and love are intertwined. For in reality,

- There can be NO peace without justice.
- There can be NO justice without peace.
- There can be NO peace and justice without love.
- For justice and peace are born from love.

2. *What does it mean to say, “No justice, no peace. Know justice, know peace.”*
3. *What does it mean to say “justice and peace are born from love”?*

### *A Gift!*

Striving for justice and peace becomes a realized gift of discipleship as we discover a God-inspired love for neighbor which will not allow us to be deaf, silent, or apathetic. The gift comes in being driven to God for courage, wisdom, and compassion. The gift comes when we face injustice and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak the truth in love. The gift comes in being so aligned with the crucified Christ that his love fills and compels us to love our neighbor beyond what we thought would be humanly possible.

As we love our neighbor, we are drawn into their story and their pain. Our voices are offered for those who cannot speak on their own behalf. Our prayers join the prophet Amos, “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream.” (Amos 5:24 NRSV) We join the crucified Christ and share the pain of the world as we strive for justice and peace.

The gift comes, by the grace of God, when we are allowed to view each person as God views us, the beloved of God—as sheep of God’s own fold, a lamb of God’s own flock, and a sinner of God’s own redeeming. Thanks be to God!



## DIG DEEPER: Strive for justice and peace on earth

### Strive

We are to *strive*—to venture, to exert, to give it our best—so that we can experience and live out a glimpse of the promised gifts in baptism of justice and peace. We can never know the fullness of justice and peace in a broken, strife-ridden world, but we can get a glimpse.

1. *What is the significance of the word “strive” in this gift of discipleship?*
2. *What other word than “strive” could be used?*

**B**ut strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.  
-1 Corinthians 12:31  
NRSV

### Justice

Justice in the Bible is rooted in God’s action toward humanity. God is a just God, establishing a right relation with God’s people. Our relationship with God, rooted in baptism, is reflected in our relationship with others. We are to strive for justice because God is just.

**E**very step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.  
-Martin Luther King, Jr.

3. *Read the quote from Martin Luther King, Jr. Why is justice so difficult?*
4. *Why does the goal of justice require sacrifice, suffering, and struggle?*
5. *What specific injustice might you want to strive to end?*
6. *What prevents you from working for justice and peace?*

### Peace

We often think of peace as a world without wars or conflict. But it is much more than that. In our liturgy, we are invited *in peace, let us pray to the Lord*. We sing *Lamb of God, grant us peace*. We share the peace of the Lord as our greeting to one another. There is something more—much more—to peace than a world without conflict. Peace involves wellness—food, shelter, safety, well-being, and wholeness.

7. *Why is it important to understand peace as more than the absence of conflict?*
8. *Describe a time when you were filled with peace.*

**STEWARDSHIP OF GOD’S GIFT** A steward takes care of that which belongs to another, including gifts given by God. Rate yourself below on the scale. How much do you strive for justice and peace on earth?

Never \_\_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ Always

9. *How might God be stirring you to expand your current faith practice in this area?*

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN: To strive for justice and peace on earth?

10. *What does it mean to you to strive for justice and peace on earth?*
11. *How might striving for justice and peace bring you closer to Christ?*

### REMEMBER THOSE IN PRAYER:

ME: For me to be filled with God’s courage in order to be an ally with those facing injustice  
YOU: For those who are denied opportunities due to bigotry, prejudice, and hatred  
CHURCH: For boldness to name injustice, speak truth in love, and work towards peace for all  
WORLD: For government officials, leaders, and those who work for peace with justice

