



A LIFE OF BEING A DISCIPLE

LESSON 1 – STEWARDSHIP OF TRUTH (LEADER GUIDE)

Opening Prayer

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

Let's have a chat—devil's advocate style!

One person in your group needs to volunteer to be the devil's advocate (sorry, this will make you feel dirty 😊) and the rest are going to respond to this statement from the devil's advocate:

"I went to Sunday School when I was younger. I go to church. I know what Jesus did for me. You can't tell me that I need to read the Bible on my own at home or go to Bible study at church."

Devil's advocate, try to hold your ground. Others who are discussing, try to win the devil's advocate over with Scripture.

Before discussing the statement, read the following passages as a group (devil's advocate included!) and discuss what points the passages add to the discussion. After discussing the passages, the Bible study leader will give you a few minutes to have a discussion between the devil's advocate and the rest in your group.

- John 17:17 – Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.
In a world of subjective truth, we have objective truth. We need to constantly line up what the world says with what Jesus says!
- John 20:31 – But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.
Believing in Jesus is life! That faith is the most important thing in your life—keep it strong!
- 2 Peter 3:17 – Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.
We may think we are secure, but faith can be lost. Just as we want our kids to grow, we need to grow in our faith as well! A "confirmation" faith at age 13 does not serve me with the current circumstance when I'm 60—I need to grow! Bible study also keeps me from falling for error.
- 2 Timothy 3:16–17 – All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
The Bible is useful for every aspect of life. If you want to cook, you look in a cookbook. If you want to be a Christian, you look in the Bible.

- Hebrews 1:1-2 – In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.
Jesus, the most important person in the world, wants to speak to you through his Word. Would you ever ignore an invitation like that from someone even less important?
- James 2:14-19 – What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.
But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.”
Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.
Faith is more than mere knowledge—the demons know the Bible better than you ever will. Instead, faith wants to act—it wants to build your relationship with Jesus through the Word.

A DISCIPLE MANAGES GOD’S TRUTH

1. The writer to the Hebrews uses terms/phrases like “daily,” “so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness,” and “hold firmly.” What does each teach us about studying the Bible?

“Daily” – regular contact with the Word. If you are too busy as a family to do a nightly devotion around the dinner table because you only eat dinner together 3 times a week, then start with 3 times!
“sin’s deceitfulness” – Sin has you look at the world in a way that you think is beautiful and right but is flat out wrong. Be into the Word or you’ll be deceived.
“hold firmly” – Recognize how precious this is and how important it is to hold firmly, too. Respect for God’s Word is only a generation away from being lost.

“See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end.” (Hebrews 3:12-14)

2. Psalm 1 describes how a disciple manages God’s truth. Read the verses below, then discuss the bolded attributes of a “blessed” person by explaining what is meant by each.

*“Delight” – the idea behind the word **יָצַח** is to “feel rich.” A blessed person feels rich with the Word of God in his hands.*

“Meditate” – The goal of eastern meditation is to empty your mind of rational thought, but the goal of biblical meditation is to fill your mind with Scripture’s thoughts. Chew on the Word. Day and night, the truths of Scripture run through his head as he applies it to whatever he faces day after day.

“Tree by streams of water” – strong roots! Able to handle life’s calamities (see Matthew 7:24-27)

“Yields its fruit in season” – The right words at the right time.

“Leaf does not wither” – Endurance. God often doesn’t remove a struggle, he gives strength. Like Moses said to the Israelites about to enter the Promised Land, “Your strength will equal your days.” (Deuteronomy 33:25)

“Prosper” – The teacher will want to note that Joel Osteen prosperity gospel is not meant here but rather an ability to see the big picture (perspective) through all life’s trials.

“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.” (Psalm 1:1-3)

3. What very natural connections does the apostle Peter draw between the Christian and studying God’s Word?

Babies crave milk because they are hungry, and it is the only thing that satisfies and gives life. The Christian does the same when it comes to the words of everlasting life in Jesus. The benefit is growth. A person will very naturally want to keep eating something that tastes good—God’s Word is good—you’ve tasted it! Keep eating! Use this as an opportunity to talk about some of the challenges this week—memory verses, time in Word, time in Bible study—walk them through the challenge card.

“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.” (1 Peter 2:2-3)

GROUP ACTIVITY

1. Individually, come up with your best tip for studying God’s Word personally. After 30 seconds, share it with your group.

Answers will vary. E.g., Slow down, set aside a definite time each day, begin with prayer, pay attention to each word, ask the text questions, etc.

2. One of the biggest challenges for the Christian when it comes to Bible reading is that we read it too fast! Luther advocated the “four strands” method of Bible reading. Read Luke 16:19-31 as a group and for five minutes, draw as many truths from the text as you can so see what a blessing slowing down as you study God’s Word can be.

Strand 1 – What teachings are in this section?

Strand 2 – How does this lead me to confess my own sinfulness?

Strand 3 – For what does this lead me to give thanks?

Strand 4 – For what does this lead me to pray?

3. You've heard "having no plan is a plan to fail." On the next page is a personal devotion plan form produced through Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's *Grow in Grace*. Work through the form now if there is time or at home sometime this week. Feel free to ask your pastor for advice!

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Pen a Proverb. In the space below, write a two-line proverb sharing the wisdom the Holy Spirit reminded you of about the importance and blessing of Bible study.

MY PERSONAL DEVOTIONAL PLAN

1. Whom might I ask to be my personal Barnabas to be God's gift to help me put this plan into action and begin again (and improve the plan!) when I struggle?
2. What will help me make sure I am pursuing time in Word and prayer not as a "to do" done for God's benefit, but as a gift it is from my gracious God?
3. As you consider plans for time in Word and prayer, be sure to consider these specific questions:
 - What is the best time of the day for me to make this a regular part of my day?
 - How much time will I set aside?
 - What will come out of my schedule to make room for this?
 - Where will I spend this time so as to avoid as many distractions as possible?
 - How can I reduce distractions from other duties and tasks in my many callings in life?
4. What way will I seek to slow down and meditate on what I am reading?
5. What books or other materials do I want to use during my devotional time?
6. If I plan to study Scripture "directly," how will I determine what to read and how much to read?
7. How can I make prayer a more vital part of my devotional time?
8. If I intend to develop a plan for expanding intercessory prayer, how will I structure that?
9. What else could be a blessing to my time in Word and prayer? (Use of hymns, devotional books, etc.)