

A series of footprints in sand, receding into the distance, leading the eye towards the top of the page. The footprints are dark and clearly defined against the light-colored sand.

IN HIS STEPS

Fix Your Eyes on Jesus

Discussion Group Guide

connec⁺tion
ministries

References:



<https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-International-Readers-Version-NIRV-Bible/>

New International Readers Version (NIRV) Bible

New International Version (NIV) Bible



Equip Christian congregations to minister with adults with intellectual disabilities

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INTRODUCTION

The theme for this year's Summer Friendship Gatherings (SFG) is "In His Steps." 1 Peter 2:21 states; "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps." Through His teachings and actions, Jesus models many ways that we as Christians are to live out our faith, and follow in His steps.

This week, we will be studying a handful of Jesus' teachings which reveal to us the love and grace of God, and how we can implement these critical virtues into our lives. The following guide is worded into simple language so our friends with intellectual disabilities can better understand and apply the message of Jesus into everyday situations they may encounter. However, the Savior's teachings are meant for all to understand and treasure. May the Holy Spirit guide you in your preparations and stir you to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ, both at the Gathering and in everyday life.

As a companion in the Discussion Group, it is important to emphasize the following key points during the three-day study:

DAY 1

INTERRUPTIONS

Jesus heals Jarius' daughter, and the bleeding woman
(Mark 5:21-42)

Lesson Objectives:

1. Handling interruptions as modeled by Jesus.

Jesus allowed Himself to be interrupted in order to teach those around Him. How we handle interruptions can be a Christian example for others.

Daily Bible Verse:

In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps. Proverbs 16:9 (NIV)

DAY 2

COMPASSION

The Good Samaritan
(Luke 10:25-37)

Lesson Objectives:

- 1. Love others like Jesus loves us; treat them how we want to be treated.**
- 2. Look to Jesus' teaching on how we can show compassion to others.**

Daily Bible Verse:

" 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul. Love Him with all your strength and mind.' And, 'love your neighbor as you love yourself.' "
Luke 10:27 (NIRV)

DAY 3

PRAYER

Jesus Teaches Us to Pray
(Matthew 6:5-13)

Lesson Objectives:

- 1. How, when and why do we pray?**
- 2. We follow in Jesus' steps by praying the prayer Jesus taught us.**

Daily Bible Verse:

Never stop praying. Give thanks no matter what happens. God wants you to thank Him because you believe in Christ Jesus.
1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 (NIRV)

HELPFUL HINTS

BE PREPARED!

To be prepared to participate in your discussion group, please read through this guide and study the following Biblical passages prior to the event:

REVIEW EACH DAY'S OUTLINE

INVOLVE EVERYONE IN THE GROUP

HAVE PARTICIPANTS READ ALOUD

WAIT PATIENTLY FOR A RESPONSE

CONNECT THE BIBLE LESSON TO REAL LIFE

DAY 1

INTERRUPTIONS

Jesus heals Jarius' daughter, and the bleeding woman (*Mark 5:21-42*)

DAY 2

COMPASSION

The Good Samaritan (*Luke 10:25-37*)

DAY 3

PRAYER

Jesus Teaches Us to Pray (*Matthew 6:5-13*)

In each day's outline, you will find 4 sections: Background Information for Discussion Group, Discussion Questions, Personal Reflection Questions, and Group Prayer. These will help you participate in your group. All companions should help the adult friends understand the lesson.

Everyone in the group should be encouraged to participate in the discussion, including the adult friends, caregivers, and volunteers. It will be important to moderate the conversation so that all participants have a chance to share. Even though our adult friends may be nonverbal, they can hear, listen, and learn from the discussion.

If you have adult friends with disabilities, a caregiver, volunteer, or a family member in your group that is a good reader, consider having them read aloud Bible passage references, if time allows. This encourages group participation and involvement.

When asking an adult friend a question, take a moment to wait for his/her response. Those with disabilities sometimes need a moment to process the question, and to formulate their answer. If he/she does not respond after a minute, ask the question again or rephrase it. Do not hesitate to ask for help from our friend's caregivers and housemates in the group. Companions can whisper answers in adult friend's ear.

Connect the Bible lesson to a real-life situation. This helps everyone relate the Bible lesson to their lives. And whenever possible, tie the discussions back to walking in Jesus' steps.

DAY 1

INTERRUPTIONS

Jesus heals Jarius' daughter, and the bleeding woman
(Mark 5:21-42)

Daily Bible Verse

In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps. *Proverbs 16:9 (NIV)*

Lesson Objectives

1. How to deal with interruptions as modeled by Jesus.

Background Information for Discussion Group

A. God can use every interruption to shape our character.

1. Not every interruption is a good interruption, but God can still use it.
2. "And we know that in all things God works for those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." *Romans 8:28 (NIV)*

B. God uses interruptions to chip away at pride and the "me first" attitude in our lives.

C. Who controls your time? You, the world, or God? Who should be in control?

1. Memory verse: "In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps." *Proverbs 16:9 (NIV)*

D. God uses interruptions to change us to be more like Jesus. It's in these small frustrations and interruptions that we find opportunities to rely on God. We learn to obey Him, and to be an example to others.

1. These interruptions are the moments when things don't go our way.

E. When we respond to interruptions like Jesus did, we become a Godly example for others.

F. Jesus did not say "yes" to every interruption.

DISCUSSION GROUP

DAY 1

Background Information for Discussion Group (cont.)

1. “Very early the next morning, long before daylight, Jesus got up and left the house. He went out of town to a lonely place, where He prayed. But Simon and his companions went out searching for Him, and when they found Him, they said, “Everyone is looking for you.” But Jesus answered, “We must go on to the other villages around here. I have to preach in them also, because that is why I came.”
Mark 1:35-38 (NIV)

G. In our prayers, we can ask God the following questions:

1. Does this interruption strengthen my faith in God, or someone else’s faith?
2. Will my response to the interruption make me more like Jesus?
3. Will I be a Christian example for others to follow?

H. Jesus was frequently interrupted, as seen in the story with Jairus’ daughter in Mark 5:21-42.

1. The first interruption came when Jairus, a respected synagogue leader, approached Jesus. Jairus pleaded for Jesus to heal his 12-year-old daughter, who was dying.
2. The second interruption came while Jesus was on His way to Jairus’ house. The crowds were pressing in on Jesus. An unnamed woman who had been bleeding for 12 years touched His garment, and right away her bleeding stopped.
3. When the woman told Jesus what she had done. Jesus said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you.”

I. In Mark 5, Jesus responded to the interruption of the respected synagogue leader Jairus, and also to the unnamed bleeding woman. Both people were important to Jesus, regardless of their status.

1. Jesus allowed Himself to be interrupted in order to teach those around Him.
2. Many interruptions are really things God would want us to do.
3. If we pray and listen, God can show us how He wants us to respond to the interruption, and do something about it.
4. We should ask what God wants us to do with every interruption.

DISCUSSION GROUP

DAY 1

Discussion Questions

Note: Be sure to leave about 10 minutes for prayer time after discussion.

1. How would Jesus want us to respond in these following situations?

a. The man/woman who interrupted the Gathering looking for the pastor.

- What would you have told him/her?
- Would you have invited him/her to join our group?

b. You are watching your favorite TV show, and a friend who is going through a hard time wants to talk.

- How would you feel about your friend wanting to talk while your show was on?
- What would you tell him/her? Pick the best response:
 - "You will have to wait until my show is over."
 - "Shhh, this is the best part."
 - "Let me turn the volume down. Come sit with me." (**right answer**)
 - "Get lost!"
- (**Discuss**) Why would you respond that way? How do you think Jesus would respond?

c. You were getting ready to take a nap and someone asks you to help with some chores.

- How would you feel about someone asking you to help with chores?
- What would you do? Pick the best response:
 - Pretend you are sleeping and ignore him/her.
 - Ask how you can help. (**right answer**)
 - Scare him/her away by throwing a temper tantrum.
 - Let him/her know how unfair it is that you have to help.

2. In Mark 1:35-38, Jesus was interrupted by His disciples while praying by Himself. They told Him that the people were looking for Him. What was Jesus doing when the disciples interrupted Him?

- a. Answer: Jesus was praying. He lovingly reminded the disciples that He must move on to other villages.**

DISCUSSION GROUP

DAY 1

Discussion Questions (cont.)

b. Did Jesus respond to the interruption by...

- Throwing a pity party? Getting angry? Thinking it was unfair? Getting frustrated? Ignoring it?

3. How do we know what God wants us to do?

- ### a. Pray, and study God's Word!

4. What interruptions annoy you the most?

- ### a. Go around the table and evaluate each response.

- ### b. How do you respond to these interruptions? Do you...

- Get angry?
- Throw a pity party?
- Get frustrated?
- Ignore the interruption?

- ### c. How should you respond to interruptions?

- Will the interruption help strengthen my faith in God, or someone else's faith?
- Will my response to the interruption make me more like Jesus?
- Will I be a Christian example for others to follow?

- ### d. Am I willing to be like Jesus, and walk in His steps?

5. Why do we respond the wrong way to interruptions?

- ### a. Usually it's because of our "me first" attitude, or our own agenda.

Personal Reflection Questions

Note: Discuss reflection questions if time permits.

1. Think of a recent time when you were interrupted. How did you respond?

- ### a. Did you respond correctly?

- Did you stop to pray? How could you respond better the next time?

Group Prayers

Take this time to collect prayer requests (for all adult friends, companions, and caregivers).

DISCUSSION GROUP

DAY 1

DAY 2

COMPASSION

The Good Samaritan (*Luke 10:25-37*)

Daily Bible Verse

“ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul. Love Him with all your strength and mind.’ And, ‘love your neighbor as you love yourself.’ ” *Luke 10:27 (NIRV)*

Lesson Objectives

1. Love others like Jesus loves us, and treat them how we want to be treated.
2. Look to Jesus’ teaching on how we can show compassion to others.

Background Information for Discussion Group

- A. Compassion: sympathy of another’s problems with a desire to do something about it.
- B. Most likely, the priest, Levite, and Samaritan all felt pity for the beaten man. However, only the Samaritan was moved beyond pity. To have pity means we feel sorry for someone else, but we don’t act on it. To have compassion is when we are moved to act because we feel sorry for someone.
 1. Having pity is not a bad thing because it can lead us to take action, whether it be with prayer, providing resources, and physically helping those in need.
 2. However, just feeling pity becomes a problem when we don’t take action through prayer, physically helping someone in need, donating money, etc. In Jesus’ story, the man who was beaten up desperately needed help. Although the priest and the Levite could clearly see this, they did not move beyond their pity to take action and help the man.
- C. We don’t know if the beaten man was rich, poor, respected by the community, or a nobody. Jesus was making the point that it doesn’t matter who someone is, or where they come from– we should have compassion for everyone!

DISCUSSION GROUP

DAY 2

Background Information for Discussion Group (cont.)

D. We also don't know the reasons why the priest and the Levite did not help the man. They might have been worried the robbers were still around. Maybe they didn't want to get involved in the situation. Or, perhaps they were too busy to help.

1. Whatever their reasons, the priest and the Levite put their own needs first, and were willing to let the man suffer and possibly die on the road.
2. Too often we also put ourselves first, before others. Our sinful nature makes us selfish, and we can all have a "me first" attitude.
3. Memory verse: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul. Love Him with all your strength and mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.' " *Luke 10:27 (NIRV)*

Discussion Questions

Note: Be sure to leave about 10 minutes for prayer time after discussion.

1. Who were the people in Jesus' story?

- a. The man who was beaten by robbers.
- b. A priest, who observed God's Laws and traditions.
- c. A Levite, a special member of the Jewish people and loyal to God's Law.
- d. A Samaritan, whom the Jewish people saw as inferior.

2. What actions did the priest, the Levite, and Samaritan take?

- a. They all saw the beaten man on the road.
- b. Most likely, they all felt pity for the man.
- c. However, the priest and the Levite did not move beyond their pity. Both did not help the beaten man, and walked on by.
- d. But, the Samaritan had compassion for the man, and helped him!

3. What did the Samaritan do for the beaten man?

- a. The Samaritan cleaned, bandaged, and treated his wounds.
- b. He set the man on his own donkey.
- c. He brought the man to a nearby inn, and took care of him.

DISCUSSION GROUP

DAY 2

Discussion Questions (cont.)

- d. The next day when the Samaritan was leaving, he gave the owner of the inn two silver coins as payment.
- e. He instructed the inn keeper to take care of the beaten man.
- f. The Samaritan then said he would repay the inn keeper for any expense when he returned.

4. In Jesus' story, who was the neighbor to the man?

- a. The Samaritan!

5. What does Jesus teach us through the Good Samaritan?

- a. We should love everyone as Jesus loves us (*John 13:34*).
- b. Too often we put ourselves first, before others. Our sinful nature makes us selfish, and we can all have a "me first" attitude.
- c. We should have compassion for everyone! We don't know if the beaten man was rich, poor, respected by the community, or a nobody. Jesus was making the point that it doesn't matter who someone is, or where they come from; we need to love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves.
- d. Recite the memory verse together: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul. Love Him with all your strength and mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.' " *Luke 10:27 (NIRV)*

Personal Reflection Questions

Note: Discuss reflection questions if time permits.

1. How can you walk in His steps, and have compassion?

- a. Your housemate is upset because someone made fun of him at workshop. You comfort him, and pray together.
- b. While waiting in line at the supermarket, you see a woman ahead of you drop her bag of groceries. You step out of line, losing your place, and go over to help her pick up the groceries.
- c. Someone you know is struggling with a personal issue. You make notes of prayers and encouragement for them.

DISCUSSION GROUP

DAY 2

Personal Reflection Questions (cont.)

2. Who in your life can you be a neighbor to right now?

- a. Go around the table if there is time, and have participants respond.

Group Prayers

Take this time to collect prayer requests *(for all adult friends, companions, and caregivers)*.

There will be no discussion group on Day 3. The Day 3 Reflection Questions can be found in the Discussion Booklet. You can take the booklet home today.

DISCUSSION GROUP

DAY 2