

Materials Needed: A Bible

Scripture: Luke 8:22-25

Question: Where is your faith?

Background information for the leader

Jesus and his disciples are on a boat on the Sea of Galilee. This story begins a series of wonders Jesus performs. They include stilling a storm, healing a demoniac, raising a dead girl and healing a sick woman. This is a rare occasion in which the disciples are beneficiaries of Jesus' power---more often they join Jesus in ministering to others. There are two important questions: Jesus asks, *Where is your faith?* The disciples ask, *Who then is this that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?* The question the disciples ask reveals their lack of understanding of who it is they are following. Modern day disciples don't fully understand either.

Getting Started

After welcome and introductions, ask each person to tell about one experience that has deeply impacted (either positively or negatively) his/her faith.

Explain that during Lent we will focus on some (of the dozens) of questions in Luke's gospels. No one is presumed to have all the answers, but the experience, knowledge and faith of each person will enhance discussion and understanding of the gospel. Encourage input from all member of the group.

Offer a prayer acknowledging and inviting the Holy Spirit to guide the reading and hearing of scripture. This is an example: *Loving God, as we gather around your Word, we pray for the guidance of your Holy Spirit. Focus our minds and open our hearts so we may understand the fullness of your love for us and the power of your Word in our lives. Amen.*

The Lesson

Have a volunteer (or you) read the scripture in an easily understood version of the Bible.

Encourage discussion by asking content questions.

What is happening in the story?

Who is asking questions and what are they?

Who are the players?

After it is clear the group has a basic understanding of the story, ask questions that invite them to find themselves in the story. Some examples are:

What do we learn about the relationship between Jesus and his disciples?

With whom do you closely identify in the story? Why?

Can you recall a time when you felt like Jesus was *asleep* when you needed him? What did you do? How did that experience change your faith?

What parts of your life are in need of the calm Jesus brings to the storm?

How can we as Christians participate in calming the storms which rage around us?

Closing

Close the time with prayer, gathering up concerns expressed in the conversation. You may do this yourself or have another person prepared to do so.

Materials Needed: A Bible

Scripture: Luke 10: 25-37

Questions: Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Who is my neighbor?

Background information for the leader

This familiar story, often called the story of *The Good Samaritan*, begins with the question of a lawyer. Prompted by Jesus, the lawyer uses scripture (Leviticus 19:18) to answer his own question, but then seeks further clarification. It is then that Jesus tells the story of the man in need, who is ignored by the priest and the Levite (a Temple assistant), only to be recognized and rescued by a Samaritan. This is particularly startling as Samaritans were regarded by Jews as unclean, outcast and religious heretics. All three, priest, Levite, and Samaritan adhere to the Torah (first 5 books of the Bible) and so all three know the command to love your neighbor as yourself and each knows that if he touches a corpse he will be unclean and will have to go through purification rites.

Getting Started

Invite group members to tell a story of a time when they received an unexpected kindness from someone they did not know well.

Offer a prayer acknowledging and inviting the Holy Spirit to guide the reading and hearing of scripture.

The Lesson

Have a volunteer (or you) read the scripture in an easily understood version of the Bible. Encourage discussion by asking content questions.

Who are the players in the story?

Who asks the questions and what are they?

Who asks the question in verse 25 and who answers the question?

What is happening?

Who are the insiders/the outsiders?

After it is clear the group has a basic understanding of the story, ask questions that invite them to find themselves in the story. Some examples are:

What is the lawyer really asking Jesus? How do we ask the same thing?

Read verse 29 and verse 36 aloud again. How does Jesus rephrase the lawyer's question. Is the change significant?

What does it mean to *love your neighbor as yourself*? Why love your neighbor as yourself? What happens when we don't love ourselves?

Who were priests/Levites/Samaritans? Which do you think you are?

Why do you think it is the Samaritan that has compassion? What is the source of human compassion?

Who are the *wounded* in our time? How do we respond to them?

How might our lives/our church be changed if we responded differently to those who are wounded?

Closing

Close the hour with prayer, gathering up the concerns expressed in the conversation. You may do this or have another person prepared to do so.

Materials Needed: A Bible

Scripture: Luke 9:18-20

Question: But who do you say that I am?

Background information for leaders

Both Matthew (16:13-23) and Mark (8:27-33) include a similar confession of who Jesus is. In Luke only is this event set in prayer. This alerts the reader to its ultimate importance.

Getting Started

Ask group members to share a question asked of them that later become more important than it seemed at first. (Be prepared with your own answer, as you will probably need to get this started. The question is harder than most, but I think it will be very interesting.)

Offer a prayer acknowledging and inviting the Holy Spirit to guide the reading and hearing of scripture.

The Lesson

Have a volunteer (or you) read the scripture in an easily understood version of the Bible.

Encourage conversation by asking content questions.

What is Jesus doing?

Who is with him?

Who asks questions and what are they?

After it is clear the group has a basic understanding of the story, ask questions that invite them to find themselves in the story. Some examples are:

Do you think the disciples at first misunderstood the question or simply didn't have an answer?

In baptism (as an adult) or at confirmation (in our tradition), we have all answered the question of Jesus, **Who do you say that I am?** when we are asked "Who is your Lord and Savior?" How do you understand the question more fully/differently than you did when you first answered it?

What difference does your response to the question make in the way you lead your life?

Closing

Close the hour with prayer, gathering up the concerns expressed in the conversation. You may do this or have another person prepared to do so.

Materials Needed: A Bible

Scripture: Luke 18:18-30

Question: What must I do to inherit eternal life?

Background information for leaders

Matthew, Mark and Luke agree that the man is rich. In Luke, the story follows the blessing of the children and as such, suggests the idea of status reversal that is consistent throughout this gospel. As the Pharisee in a previous story could not trust his good deeds, this ruler cannot trust his wealth. Giving his goods to the poor is consistent with the teachings of Jesus about wealth throughout Luke and Acts.

Getting Started

Ask each group member to describe one way he/she enjoys spending money.

Offer a prayer acknowledging and inviting the Holy Spirit to guide the reading and hearing of scripture.

The Lesson

Have a volunteer (or you) read the scripture in an easily understood version of the Bible.

Encourage conversation by asking content questions.

Who are the players in the story?

Who asks questions and what are they?

What is happening?

After it is clear the group has a basic understanding of the story, ask questions that invite them to find themselves in the story. Some examples are:

How is the answer of Jesus to the question, *What must I do to inherit eternal life?* different/the same as in week 3?

What is your reaction to verse 22? (Re-read the verse when asking this question)

Does it feel like he is meddling when Jesus speaks about possessions? Is it possible Jesus may mean what he is saying? Why or why not?

The scripture does not tell us how the rich ruler responded to Jesus, except that *he became sad*. How do you think he responded?

What have you *left* for the sake of the kingdom of God?

Re-read the words of Jesus in verses 29-30. What do you expect/hope to *get back* in this life and in the age to come for the things you have *left*?

Closing

Close the hour with prayer, gathering up the concerns expressed in the conversation. You may do this or have another person prepared to do so.

Materials Needed: A Bible

Scripture: Luke 18:1-8

Question: And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night?

Background information for leaders:

In ancient Israel, the judge's responsibility within the covenant community was to declare God's judgment and establish *shalom* (peace) among God's people. Those who felt wronged by a judge often pleaded for God to intervene and vindicate them. There was a clear expectation regarding the care of widows in ancient Israel. Widows were deprived of the support of a husband, yet they could not inherit their husband's estate. Regard for those in need like the widow, was grounded in God's mercy on the Israelites when they were in bondage.

We may assume that the widow has a legitimate grievance and is likely a matter of money or property that is owed her by a third party. The judge is her sole hope of securing justice, and persistence is her only recourse. The parable uses the common "from lesser to greater" technique: If even an unjust judge will... how much more so will God...

Getting Started

Ask each group member to describe a time when they "prayed without ceasing."

Offer a prayer acknowledging and inviting the Holy Spirit to guide the reading and hearing of scripture.

The Lesson

Have a volunteer (or you) read the scripture in an easily understood version of the Bible.

Encourage conversation by asking content questions.

Who are the players in the parable?

What are we told about them?

What is happening?

Who asks questions and what are they?

After it is clear the group has a basic understanding of the story, ask questions that invite them to find themselves in the story. Some examples are:

In verse 1 Jesus tells us what the parable is about. With that in mind, what does the parable say about prayer?

Do you identify with the persistent widow? In what ways? In what ways can you not identify with her?

What is the widow seeking? What does justice mean? Do you suppose the parable would be told differently if her pleas were self-centered or irrelevant to God's redemptive purposes?

What, do you suppose, gave the widow her persistence and kept her from giving up hope that the judge would ever help her?

Have you ever experienced what felt like a long period of silence from God? How was your hope in God sustained, or how was your hope restored?

How can we, as Christians, witness to our hope in Christ even when injustice seems to be having its way in our communities and in the world?

Closing

Close this session with a prayer, asking each person who is comfortable to participate with a spoken word or response.