

OCTOBER 2011

DISCIPLESHIP

JESUS SAID, "FOLLOW ME."

INTERNALLY STRONG EXTERNALLY FOCUSED

WE ARE A COMMUNITY OF FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST
CALLED BY GOD AND GIFTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT
TO LIVES OF AUTHENTIC *WORSHIP*,
EXPRESSED THROUGH
FELLOWSHIP, DISCIPLESHIP AND APOSTLESHIP.

SMALL GROUP LIFE TOGETHER GUIDE OCTOBER 2011

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SPOKANE

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OTHER ADULT FORMATION OPPORTUNITIES THIS FALL AT FPC

ALL-TOGETHERS THIS FALL: 10AM SUNDAYS

October 23	Stewardship	December 18	CoffeeHouse
November 20	Global Fellowship	December 25	Christmas Pancake Breakfast

COMMON HOUR: 10AM SUNDAYS

SEPTEMBER 18—OCTOBER 16

What is Worship?	Jeremy Sanderson, Jerry Sittser, Ben Brody
2040	Surrendering Your Life for God's Pleasure, DVD Series on Worship
The Bible in Context	Bruce Gore
Life Together Discipleship	Brenda Norton

OCTOBER 30—NOVEMBER 17

Life Together	Jerry Sittser, Biblical Insights for True Community
2040	A Conversation about Discipleship in the Family/Church Partnership
The Bible in Context	Bruce Gore

THURSDAY NIGHT LIVE

Biblical Sexuality	October 6—October 27	John Sowers and Jeremy Sanderson
Life Together Discipleship	November 3—17	Brenda Norton

SMALL GROUP LEADER WORKSHOPS

10am Sunday, October 30—November 6

INTRODUCTION

Dear Small Groups,

This month we are focusing on another one of the “four ingredients” in our church mission statement: Discipleship.

The guide for each week includes a Discipleship Box. The information in these boxes comes from a book called “Sacred Roads: Exploring the Historic Paths of Discipleship” by Heather Zempel. Heather defines five models of discipleship that were developed and emphasized through five phases of history. She concludes that we are at a unique time when we can learn to integrate these as aspects of discipleship to become well balanced followers of Christ. So, through this guide we will consider these aspects of discipleship along with the scripture texts for each week.

Because of the relationship between discipleship and apostleship you’ll be starting to plan a service project that your group will do together this fall. You’ll find information in the Appendix to help you with this task.

Below is a reminder of the 3 important attitudes to have while using this guide.

One more thing . . . You can download copies of this guide at www.spokaneipc.org/Community Life/Small Groups. While you are there also look to see if we have added any other helpful resources. We are working on creating and tapping into articles, videos, websites, etc. that will support growing, healthy life in your group.

Sincerely,
Brenda Norton, Director of Community Life

#1—The Study Guide Serves the Group; the Group Does Not Serve the Study Guide

We don’t expect your group to work through every question in this guide. The goal is to grow in your relationships with God and each other and to become more mature in your faith. Use your wisdom to focus on the questions and activities that resonate most with your group.

However, we do expect you to take risks. Be careful not to just skip over an activity because you’ve never done anything like it before or a question because you are afraid of it. Pursuing growth needs to include a willingness to try new things. Be challenged to experience God in new ways and to be thoughtful in your discussion. Sometimes the questions in this guide will lead your group to ask even more questions. Be a group that values the discussion rather than looking for quick answers.

#2—Encourage Times of Reflection

It is good to encourage reflection which includes periods of silence. Space when no one is talking gives people time to discover deeper thoughts and feelings. Reflection activities are included in this guide but times of silence may also occur in the midst of discussion or prayer. Let them be. Watch for how God is present in the silence as much as in the words.

#3—Keep a Proper Perspective of Your Purpose

“The best and most healthy groups understand that being a small group is not about being a small group; it’s about pursuing relationship with Jesus Christ and relationship with one another. Call this experience whatever you like; Bible Study, Dinner and Conversation Group, Community Group, Discipleship Team, Starlight Vocal Band, etc. The point is not to gather according to some particular formula, the point is to create for yourselves an Intentional Christian Community where you can study together God’s Word and support one another as you live that out day by day.”

- Jeff Lincicome, Sr. Pastor at Sammamish Presbyterian Church

**Quite simply,
we will not become
the people
God wants us to be
or the church that
God wants us to be
unless we are living in true
Christian community.**

- John Sowers

WORSHIP LIVED OUT IN DISCIPLESHIP

ROMANS 12:1-2

CONNECTING POINT

Choose one of the following questions to get things started as you gather or share a meal or refreshment with one another:

- What do you appreciate about the fall season?
- Share a blessing you received this past week.
- Share one idea from the Worship Series in September that has stuck with you.

OPENING PRAYER

Ask God to renew your minds so that you will be transformed through the scripture reading and discussion you have as a group.

READ & DISCUSS THE WORD

Read Romans 12:1

Discuss:

- Talk about the relationship between worship and discipleship.
- Talk about the relationship between sacrifice and discipleship.
- In what ways is sacrifice an important part of your ongoing discipleship? In what ways might you struggle with sacrifice leading you down a path of legalism?
- What does it mean to you to present your “body” as a living sacrifice?

“body” = the whole of you; more than your mind, heart and physical being

The Discipleship of Our Renewed Minds

In the Christian life, our bodies and our minds are not separated. Both have value because both are fashioned in the image of God. In the second part of his introduction to Romans 12, Paul calls us to a life of mental discipleship. We engage our minds with the mind of God – in contrast to the thinking of the world. We declare, by merging our minds and souls with God, that we believe that God’s truth is the real truth and greater, deeper, more loving, and more evident of God’s mind and heart than that of the world.

In this discipline of engaging our minds with the scriptures, centrally with the story of Jesus, we invite the Spirit to mold us into God’s will, which is “good, acceptable, and perfect.”

John Sowers

Read Romans 12:2

Read “The Discipleship of Our Renewed Minds” - see box above

Discuss:

- The Greek word for “mind” used here is “nous.” This originally referred to the sense of smell. How does this meaning help you understand this verse in a new way.
- What practices do you have as a regular part of your life to seek the transformation and renewing of your mind?
- Who is someone that challenges your thinking? Consider how conversations with both Christians and non-Christians help you grow in your ability to discern the will of God.
- Read “Intellectual Discipleship” (see box on next page). Discuss what is presented here.

“mind” = nous (Greek); originally referred to sense of smell

REFLECT

Leader: Choose a set of 2 or 3 questions below or plan to use all 7 depending on your group's needs and how much time you have. Read the questions pausing between each to give your group a short time of silence to reflect before you have discussion. (These questions are similar to the ones John used for the guided prayer time in worship on Sunday.)

- Where has God been merciful to you?
- Where has God taken you from death to life?
- What are you called to “give up” or sacrifice according to God’s mercies so that you are not conforming to this world?
- What are you being called to “take on” as a daily practice that will give God an avenue to transform you?
- How can this small group support you in this commitment to “give up” something and “take on” something?
- Who has been a mentor in your life? Take a moment to thank God for that person.
- Let God bring to mind someone in your life that you could mentor in discipleship.

Could you use some help with practical suggestions about what you are called to “take on”? Each week has a “Discipleship” box with Practices to “Take On.”

RESPOND

Begin planning something you will do together as a group this fall to be a living sacrifice; to serve and love people beyond your group. Consider the connections, talents, gifts, resources, passions, etc. within your group. Consider how you will sacrifice your time, ego, possessions, etc. Take a look at the Appendix for further instruction and ideas.

GROUP PRAYER

Share praises & concerns with one another. Pray as a group.

NEXT

Remind everyone when and where you will meet next.

Do you have any assignments or plans for in between meetings. If so, make sure everyone is clear about what these are. Are there some care needs your group should coordinate?

INTELLECTUAL DISCIPLESHIP

You might be one idea away from a total transformation, the breaking of a sinful habit, or a new sense of awe and wonder that leads to worship. Intellectual discipleship is not about a cold, academic gathering of facts or mental assent to a set of theological propositions. Rather, it’s about changing the way you live by changing the way you think. It’s about rediscovering the life-changing power of the Bible, building on a solid theological foundation, and being sure of what you believe.

Examples in Scripture: 1 Kings 3, Proverbs 1:5-7, Ecclesiastes, 2 Kings 22-23, Acts 17, Ephesians 4:20-24, 1 Corinthians 2:16, 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Galatians and Romans are the most intellectually stimulating and theologically dense books in the Bible.

Practices to “Take On”

Bible Study (be motivated by Psalm 119:12)

Theological Study—helpful online resources at studylight.org, crosswalk.com, lifeway.com/bible

Memorize Scripture (be motivated by Psalm 119:11)

Cautions:

#1—Make sure you’re more interested in knowing God than in gathering facts about God. Knowing God leads to spiritual growth. Knowing facts about God without a developing relationship with Him can only lead to pride.

#2—Take care to not get stuck in controversy. I love a good debate, and find I learn and grow as a result. But sometimes we just get stuck in argument for argument’s sake. Make sure you remain involved in a community of relational discipleship and the outward expressions of service, or incarnational discipleship, to avoid unproductive and ungodly debates.

THE DISCIPLESHIP OF THE SCRIPTURES

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-7, PSALM 1:1-3, MATTHEW 5:17-20

CONNECTING POINT

Choose one of the following questions to get things started as you gather or share a meal or refreshment:

- If you could travel anywhere in the world for one month where would you go?
- Do you have a favorite scripture or book of the Bible? Why is it your favorite?
- How did you do this past week with your commitment to the things you chose to “give up” and “take on”? (Refer to the “Reflect” section of the guide for Week One: October 2.)

OPENING PRAYER

Ask God to speak to you individually and as a group through the reading of his Word.

READ & REFLECT ON THE WORD

Leader: Ask different group members to read each set of verses listed here. Before they read, ask group members to listen for a word or phrase from each set of verses that catches their attention more than others. Have them write these down.

Reader 1: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Reader 2: Psalm 1:1-3

Reader 3: Matthew 5:17-20

Leader: Ask the group to look at the words and phrases that caught their attention and reflect on what God might be saying to them specifically. Give them 2-3 minutes of silence to reflect.

Share with one another what you heard in these verses.

DISCUSS

Review your notes from the sermon on Sunday. Recall the key points and any thoughts that were especially helpful to you. Share these with one another.

What are the different ways you make scripture a part of your life?

How does engaging scripture in these different ways help you grow in a variety of aspects as a disciple?

Read “Experiential Discipleship” (see box on next page)

Discuss what is presented here.

Compare Experiential Discipleship with Intellectual Discipleship (see previous lesson).

On Thursday, October 6th John and Jeremy began a 4 week TNL class on Biblical Sexuality with a discussion about the authority of scripture.

If you didn't get to hear this and would like to you can listen to it online at www.spokaneipc.org/Education/Class Audio File.

If someone in your group was part of the discussion or listened to the recording have them share what they heard.

RESPOND

If you haven't done so yet, begin planning something you will do together as a group this fall to serve and love people beyond your group.

Take a look at the Appendix for further instruction and ideas.

GROUP PRAYER

Share praises & concerns with one another.

Pray as a group.

NEXT

Remind everyone when and where you will meet next.

Do you have any assignments or plans for in between meetings. If so, make sure everyone is clear about what these are. Are there some care needs your group should coordinate?

EXPERIENTIAL DISCIPLESHIP

As Presbyterians we tend to engage the scriptures intellectually. It is also beneficial, however, to experience God's Word through stories, art, tangible objects, our senses, illustrations, etc.

Experiential discipleship moves our faith well beyond listening to a lecture of sitting in the sanctuary pews for an hour. In experiential discipleship, our faith becomes fully integrated into the fabric of our lives. We find both reality and mystery.

Examples in Scripture: Look at how Jesus teaches about God through the experiences described in Matthew 17:24-27, John 13:1-17, Mark 9:2-13 and Matthew 26:17-30.

Practices to "Take On"

- Collect art or symbolic objects that remind you of scriptures that are especially important to you.
- Pay attention in worship services to the visuals, the songs, and the stories that are there to teach you God's word in experiential ways.
- Watch for the stories and situations in life that reveal God's truth. Look at life/creation around you with the eyes like a four year old—curious, full of awe and wonder.
- Try going through the Stations of the Cross. Through this experiential devotional tool our imaginations are engaged as we are led through the story of the passion of Christ. You can do this . . .
 - Purchase a Stations of the Cross book
 - Go through the stations online at <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/stations.html>
 - Download a PowerPoint from Westminster Presbyterian in PA at <http://westminsterpc.org/245970.ihtml>
 - Walk the Stations of the Cross at Immaculate Heart Retreat Center on the south hill
 - Watch the movie *The Passion of Christ* by Mel Gibson—based on the traditional 14 stations of the cross
- Take a virtual tour of the places in scripture by watching a documentary of the Holy Land.

Cautions:

#1—It is critical to be grounded in the Word of God to ensure that your experience falls in line with the truth of Scripture.

#2—It's imperative that the experience fuel your desire and ability to reach out to others.

THE DISCIPLESHIP OF PRAYER

MATTHEW 6:9-13

CONNECTING POINT

Choose one of the following questions to get things started as you gather or share a meal or refreshment:

- What sport or hobby or interest have you participated in that requires discipline?
- Where did you learn the Lord's Prayer?
- How did you do this past week with your commitment to the things you chose to "give up" and "take on"? (Refer to the "Reflect" section of the guide for Week One: October 2.)

OPENING PRAYER

Thank Jesus for showing us how to pray. Invite the Holy Spirit to be present as your guide while you pray and have discussion with one another.

READ THE WORD

Read Matthew 6:9-13. (You'll also pray using the Lord's Prayer later in your time together.)

DISCUSS & REFLECT

What do these verses tell us about God?

Discuss the meaning or intent of each phrase. (See next page for outline of phrases.)

What do these verses teach you about prayer?

In what ways do you experience joy when you pray?

How have you experienced intimacy with God through prayer?

Read "Personal Discipleship" (see box on next page)

Discuss what is presented here.

Compare Personal Discipleship with Intellectual and Experiential Discipleship (see previous two lesson).

Read one or more of the following articles on group prayer then spend some time talking about how you prayer as a group.

An Audience of One: Here's why it can be so hard to pray together as a small group.

<http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2010/audienceone.html>

Resource Review: "Together in Prayer"

<http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2009/resourcereviewtogetherinprayer.html>

A Proper Understanding of Group Prayer

Here are some questions to answer and ideas to consider.

<http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2011/understandgrprayer.html>

GROUP PRAYER

Leader: Pray using the Lord's Prayer by reading the following outline, pausing between phrases, allowing the group time to pray out loud and silently according to each phrase.

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the glory, and the power forever.

Amen.

RESPOND

If you haven't done so yet, begin planning something you will do together as a group this fall to serve and love people beyond your group.

Take a look at the Appendix for further instruction and ideas.

NEXT

Remind everyone when and where you will meet next and any assignments or plans you have made. Coordinate meeting care needs, if necessary.

PERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP

It is the practice of personal discipleship—the spiritual disciplines, time carved out for God, and the intentional ordering of our lives—that often spurs us on to greater spiritual growth.

Examples in Scripture: Exodus 33:7, 1 Samuel 17:32-37, Numbers 6:2-21, Daniel 1 & 6-7, Isaiah 33:2, Lamentations 3:22-28, Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16, Matthew 14:23, Acts 2, Acts 10:9, 1 Corinthians 9:25-27

Practices to "Take On"

- FPC Devotional Guide—use the daily guide we provide for you each week in the Sunday bulletin. You can also get it online at www.spokane-fpc.org/Sermons.
- Quiet Times—time you carve out to spend with God. Might include one or more of the following: reading, praying, journaling, solitude, silence, confession, music, art, scripture . . .
- Spiritual Disciplines: prayer, fasting, meditation, journaling, solitude, simplicity, hospitality . . . (If you want to learn more there are plenty of resources available. Some authors to look at: Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, Marjorie Thompson, John Ortberg.)
- Rule of Life—a plan for the structure and rhythm of your life that forms your discipleship (see same authors above for more on this.)

Cautions:

#1—Don't avoid social responsibility as you focus on personal discipleship. Seek for your inward transformation to find outward expressions of love.

#2—Be careful not to devalue intellectual discipleship or neglect community with other believers.

OCTOBER 23

THE DISCIPLESHIP OF CHEERFUL GIVING

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

CONNECTING POINT

Choose one of the following questions to get things started as you gather or share a meal or refreshment:

- Share about a favorite, funny or memorable gift you have received.
- How did you do this past week with your commitment to the things you chose to “give up” and “take on”? (Refer to the “Reflect” section of the guide for Week One: October 2.)

OPENING PRAYER

Pray for a spirit of compassion and joy.

READ THE WORD

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15.

Giving is another of the disciplines. It is a discipline to trust in the generosity of God by being generous in return. But God has proven himself endlessly as worthy of that trust. He gives greatly – first in the gift of his Son, then in the gifts that sustain us.

Our generosity is the evidence we give to the world of our thanksgiving to God, our belief that through Jesus we live in a new kingdom, a kingdom that abounds in God’s generosity and our generous participation. Because of the greatness of God’s grace, we not only give but we give cheerfully and abundantly.

- John Sowers

DISCUSS

In what ways have you seen these verses to be true in your life.

What do you find most difficult about practicing the discipline of cheerful giving?

Describe a time when you had an opportunity to give and you were surprised to receive much as well.

Read “Incarnational Discipleship” (see box on next page)

Discuss what is presented here.

Compare Incarnational Discipleship with the aspects of discipleship presented in previous lessons.

Talk about the stories shared at the All-Together on Stewardship during the Common Hour on Sunday, October 23rd.

What did you hear that you’d like to thank God for?

Share how you’ve seen God’s living presence at FPC in the past year.

“Put love on display in the world.”

- M. Scott Boren

RESPOND

Group Giving Activity

Walk out the door as a group and be cheerful givers as a part of your group time.

Here's some ideas:

- Find a Laundromat nearby. Pass out quarters to people doing laundry.
- Buy cookies at the local grocery store. Stand outside the store and pass them out. (Check in with store manager first.)
- Pick up litter at a neighborhood park.

Just smile and say, "We are a group of friends who just wanted to have fun doing something nice for others today.

Engage people in conversation if they are willing. Listen well to the stories they tell you.

REFLECT

Return back to your meeting place or land at a coffee shop nearby. Reflect on what you just experienced. How did people react? What feelings did you experience? What worked well?

GROUP PRAYER

Pray for the people you encountered in your Group Giving Activity.

Give thanks to God for the things shared at the All-Together on Stewardship.

NEXT

Remind everyone when and where you will meet next and any assignments or plans you have made. Coordinate meeting care needs, if necessary.

INCARNATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Incarnational discipleship is physical, active, and tangible. It equates worship with activity. . . focused on the outward instead of the inward. Through it, people grow in their knowledge and relationship with Christ by seeking to become His hands and feet through service and outreach to others.

Examples in Scripture: Amos 4:1, 5:7, 5:21-24; Isaiah 58:6-7; Matthew 25:31-40; John 13:1-5; Acts 2, 4, 5; Galatians 5:13-14; James 2:14-26

Practices to "Take On"

- Missions—*cross-cultural communication of the gospel in both word and action*
- Service—*sharing the love of Jesus through action in the communities in which we live*
- Hospitality—*inviting people into your life, sharing your everyday and intimate experiences . . . embracing uncertainty and risk and welcoming the stranger in the hopes of bringing the power, presence, protection, and provision of God to their lives as well as ours.*
- Activism—*speaking up to give a voice to those who have no voice and acting to make a difference where there is social injustice.*

Cautions:

#1—*Be careful that your action doesn't become separated from a Christian worldview. Don't become more political than Christian.*

#2—*Don't neglect your own spiritual growth because you are so busy helping others.*

#3—*Make sure that you are pursuing incarnational discipleship because you want to become more like Jesus, not to manipulate your own reputation—because it's trendy to care about people right now.*

RELATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

SCRIPTURE

CONNECTING POINT

Choose one of the following questions to get things started as you gather or share a meal or refreshment:

- If you could spend a day with an historical person, other than Jesus, who would it be? Why?
 - Have you ever been in a mentoring relationship as the mentor or the protégé? How did this bless you?
 - How did you do this past week with your commitment to the things you chose to “give up” and “take on”?
- (Refer to the “Reflect” section of the guide for Week One: October 2.)

OPENING PRAYER

Ask God to be present through each other as you read his word, have discussion and pray together.

DISCUSS

Read “Incarnational Discipleship” (see box on next page)

Discuss what is presented here.

Compare Relational Discipleship with the aspects of discipleship presented in previous lessons.

Talk about how all 5 aspects of discipleship are incorporated to bring balance for each of us and to our church body.

Review your notes from the sermon on Sunday. Recall the key points and any thoughts that were especially helpful to you. Share these with one another.

Discuss how discipleship and apostleship relate to one another.

Who has been a mentor to you?

Who have you been able to mentor?

“church” = ekklesia (Greek)
a gathering of a group of people

READ, REFLECT & RESPOND

Read John 2:1-11

Leader Read:

When you think about [this miracle] in terms of real significance, it's pretty mundane. This incident doesn't seem to have much of an impact other than to keep the party going. It doesn't change the trajectory of a person's life. It doesn't reverse a curse or heal a lifelong debilitating disease.

What was Jesus doing here?

He was simply preserving a guy's dignity.

Jesus was invited to this wedding, which means He must have known the bride or the groom or most likely both. The wine started running low, a potentially humiliating thing for a party host in that culture, so Jesus came in to rescue a buddy in need.

*While many of Jesus' miracles corrected people's physical limitations, it seems He had another goal in mind at times. Jesus was concerned with people's standing within their communities. Sometimes the greatest thing we can do is not related to **what** we can change in life but **whose** life we can change. We grow closer to Christ as we seek to invest in the lives of others. And we grow closer to Christ as we grow closer to one another.*

Relationships, people, were obviously a priority for Jesus. According to the model we see in Jesus through this miracle story, how can you focus on preserving the dignity of the people you encounter this week? Think of specific individuals you interact with on a daily or weekly basis.

GROUP PRAYER

Pray for your relationships with one another and for other discipleship relationships represented in your group.

Pray for Randy Brothers as he moves into ministry with a new group of people. Give thanks to God for His work through Randy here at FPC.

In this time of transition, pray for our Student Ministry leaders, Brad and Ross and the adults who work with them to mentor students.

NEXT

Remind everyone when and where you will meet next and any assignments or plans you have made. Coordinate meeting care needs, if necessary.

Consider planning a group activity to watch a movie that shows what it means to be on a team. *Miracle* or *Hoosiers* are good examples. Make it a fun, relaxing evening together. Don't forget the snacks. After you watch the movie talk about how they portray what life in community is all about.

RELATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Relational discipleship is predicated on the idea that we grow closer to Christ as we grow closer to one another. Spiritual growth happens when we actually live in community as the body of Christ and become the answer to His prayer that we would be "one."

Examples in Scripture:

Moses & Joshua—Exodus 17 & 24, Numbers 27, Deuteronomy 31:7
Elijah & Elisha—1 Kings 19:19, 2 Kings 2
Naomi & Ruth—the Book of Ruth
Jesus—Mark 3:14, John 13, John 17—Jesus taught the crowds, discipled 12, mentored 3
Early Church—Acts 2:42-47
Paul—2 Timothy 2:2, 1 Thessalonians 2:8

Practices to "Take On"

Small Group

One-on-one Mentoring

Accountability Group . . .

Accountability Groups are typically 3 to 4 people who gather to ask one another questions designed to work on particular area of growth or a habit we are looking to change.

Other people see what we don't see, and we need people in our lives who are willing to educate us about ourselves in order that we might grow completely into the person God created us to be.

John Wesley formed accountability groups called "class meetings." The following are some of the questions they asked one another:

- Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am a better person than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
- Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
- Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence?
- Can I be trusted?
- Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?
- Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
- Did the Bible live in me today?
- Do I give God time to speak to me everyday?
- Am I enjoying prayer?
- When did I last speak to someone else of my faith?
- Do I pray about the money I spend?

SHOULD YOUR SMALL GROUP PARTICIPATE IN SERVICE PROJECTS TOGETHER? ABSOLUTELY.

Sometimes relationships are developed through face-to-face interaction. That's the kind we get in a typical small-group meeting where we face one another and share food, stories, and prayer requests. But relationship is also developed by shoulder-to-shoulder interaction—the kind where we turn side to the side and extend a collective hand outward on mission together.

There are many reasons why we should serve together. First, I believe wholeheartedly that it is actually a community building catalyst. Community can develop more in one day of serving together than in months of talking together. It's also important from the standpoint of discipleship. It puts our knowledge into action. Many of us are educated well beyond our level of obedience, and serving together turns our Bible study groups into Bible doing groups.

In terms of how to get started, here are a few ideas:

- **Look to a biblical vision.** Help your group develop a biblical view and theology of community on mission. From the cries of the prophets to care for orphans and widows to the ministry of Jesus to the role of the deacons, God's people have been marked by compassion. Ultimately, it's not about doing service projects but living a life of service.
- **Look for passion themes in your group.** Serving together can encompass much more than paintbrushes or soup kitchens. Be creative about service opportunities. What are you passionate about? What needs to do you see? What makes your group angry or cry or bang your fist on the table?
- **Look at your neighbors.** Consider who your neighbors are—at the places you live, work, and play. How can you love them? How can you make their day? Send your group out on a prayer walk around your neighborhood one night and then come back to the group meeting to share what you observed. Creative ideas are birthed in prayer.
- **Look for places your church is already involved.** Often the hardest part of serving together is finding the time to intentionally and strategically plan the service project. You might be surprised to find that there are pre-packaged and scheduled service opportunities within your church where your group can plug in.
- **Look for a service coordinator.** Remember that your role as a leader is not to do it all. Your job is to discover gifts and unleash potential in your members. Look for a group member that has a gift of service, mercy, administration, or hospitality, and appoint them as a service coordinator. Communicate clearly your vision for service in the group, how often you would like to see the group serving together, and how you would like to see them lead the group towards that goal.

Service brings us closer together and closer to the heart of Jesus. Those are the aims of any biblical small group. So don't view service simply as an outgrowth of your community, but as a viable and catalytic means towards community. The group that serves together will grow together and grow in their relationship to Christ.

This article is by Heather Zempel, Pastor of Discipleship at National Community Church and author of [Sacred Roads: Exploring the Historic Paths of Discipleship](#).

<http://www.smallgroups.com/discussion/questionanswer/heatherzempel/q2.html>

Other articles that might be helpful as your group plans a service project:

Taking the Next Step to Serve—<http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2009/takingthenextsteptoserve.html>

Conducting Acts Of Hospitality—<http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2006/conductingactsofhospitality.html>

GROUP SERVICE IDEAS

Adopt a College Student

Are you or your small group looking for ways to love and invest in others? Do you have a passion for the college-aged folks who call Spokane home, but don't have much of a home in Spokane? Well, you're in luck. As part of our Sunday evening community, Asher Ernst and Ross Carper are developing a ministry for college students. We're dreaming about how to draw this population into worship, spiritual growth, campus-based small groups, social events, and missional opportunities. But we also want this idea of "home" to be a part of how we connect college students to our larger church family. This is where you could play a role. Please consider adopting a college student—all this means is intentionally caring for a student in various ways. Some ideas include:

- A home-cooked meal (about once a month)
- A quiet, comfortable place to get away, do laundry, and study
- Spiritual mentoring
- Care packages with notes of encouragement/scripture
- Financial support for college mission trip scholarships

Please contact Ross at rossc@spokanefpc.org if you are interested. We'll put together a list of interested folks on both sides, and then explore how we can connect people and begin these relationships. **Also**, if your home is great for entertaining and you're also interested in simply hosting some college ministry events, we're looking for that as well.

Jubilee Sale: Make it a group outing to shop for fairly trade items at the Jubilee Sale on November 11 & 12 at the church. Consider helping with setup on November 10th. You could also eat dinner together at the sale on Friday evening. There are more details in the October newsletter. Contact Sue Mushlitz at 448-5130 to volunteer. Contact Mary Frankhauser at 448-0805 for further info.

Liberty Park Child Development Center Candlelight Dinner: Attend this dinner together and help provide scholarships to give at-risk children the opportunity for early childhood education in a loving environment. This dinner will be on December 2nd or 4th. The November newsletter will have more information or you can contact Jeremy Sanderson at jeremys@spokanefpc.org or 747-1058.

Pack shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child: Every shoe box gift represents a Gospel opportunity. Information & supplies will be available in the Fellowship Hall on October 30 & November 6. Please bring in your shoebox gift on November 13 or 20. Have questions or want to join this amazingly blessed ministry? Please contact Lisa Steger, Area Coordinator, at lsteiger2@comcast.net or 290-1170.

Do something in your neighborhood or the neighborhood near the church—clean up a bus stop, pick up trash, take cookies to neighbors, do yard work for an elderly neighbor, wash cars, host a soup dinner for neighbors, etc.

Feed the hungry: Everyone in the group agrees to skip a meal a week for a month. Agree to a given amount of money you would have spent on each meal. Pool this money and donate it to someone you know who could use help buying food.

Adopt a Cause: Discuss social issues (unfair labor, human trafficking, slavery, racism, prison reform, education, environment, healthcare, hunger, political oppression, homelessness, etc.) and determine one that the group feels especially passionate about. Learn more about the topic. Pray about the situation and what you might do to respond. Research to find a reputable organization working on the issue and join their effort in the ways they suggest.

If your group would like some help determining a service project please contact Brenda Norton at brendan@spokanefpc.org or 747-1058 x220.

