



Discipleship

Ideas for the Iowa District West

Introduction

The following “Discipleship Ideas” from the readings are not intended for any other purpose than to provide ideas of application from each reading that may be included in the taught and preached Word for this particular Sunday to help teach a life of discipleship. L.C.M.S. pastors are gifted at preaching Law and Gospel, but often lack in the matter of personal applications to the Word. This tool is for no other reason than to offer some seeds of thought to do that.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST - SERIES C

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From C.P.H. About the Cover: We seek to be God’s people and members of His kingdom. Often we work to try and earn that membership. However, we cannot earn membership into God’s kingdom, for that comes only through humble faith in Him and in the love of Jesus for us. With unassuming love and a servant’s heart, we become members of His kingdom.

First Reading: **Genesis 4:1–15**

¹Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.” ²And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. ³In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”

⁸Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” ¹⁰And the LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. ¹¹And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹²When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” ¹³Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. ¹⁴Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be

hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”
¹⁵Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.

1st Reading Discipleship Notes: Cain and Abel are the epitome of the deplorable condition of mankind. Jealousy, anger, covetousness and selfishness abound in all of us and as a result, we fall deeply into sin. It is interesting that Cain did not show that he regretted his sin, but rather that he was afraid of being a fugitive and being alone. It is also interesting that Cain’s name means “possession” because Eve thought he was the one possessing the promise God had given in Genesis 3:15, but what did he ultimately possess other than loneliness and contempt. As modern disciples of Christ we have a calling to recognize our sinful failures and to repent. Furthermore, with the help of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we can also find ourselves willing to love and serve God with a proper sense of loyalty and devotion giving God the first and finest of our lives as offerings of thanksgiving and praise. By the grace of God this can also be done with joy and a willing spirit.

Epistle Reading 2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18

⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

¹⁶At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! ¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion’s mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Epistle Discipleship Notes: In this reading we find Paul making a wonderful testimony of God’s goodness and mercy in his life as well as his own personal confidence of heaven because of the Lord Jesus Christ and the blessing of the Gospel in his life. Paul isn’t so unique in this regard. Even today, as followers of Christ, we are given grace to make just as wonderful testimonies of God’s goodness and mercy in our lives and of our own certainty and confidence of heaven because of our Savior’s willing sacrifice for our salvation.

Gospel Reading Luke 18:9–17

⁹[Jesus] also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt:

¹⁰“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man

went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

¹⁵Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. ¹⁶But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. ¹⁷Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

Gospel Discipleship Notes: This Gospel reading confirms the mercy of God for us both in the parable of the Pharisee and Publican and in Christ's blessing of the children. God's mercy is supreme! As modern day disciples, we have a wonderful opportunity to make that mercy known not only through the testimony in the Church, but also outside of it through our personal testimony to others. Even through our support of mission work, God's mercy is being made known in places distant from us. How vital it is to make that supreme mercy of God known to all people and by God's grace, we can do our part in making it happen.

Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline

Read **Genesis 4:1–15**

¹Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." ²And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. ³In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

⁸Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" ¹⁰And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. ¹¹And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹²When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." ¹³Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. ¹⁴Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." ¹⁵Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.

1. Cain's name means "possession". Why might Eve have given him that name and how was it totally unfitting for him?
2. Describe the difference in the offerings brought to the Lord and what was behind the difference?
3. How does sin "crouch" at the door?
4. The account fails to indicate any remorse or contrition on the part of Cain. What does it indicate about him?
5. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

Read **2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18**

⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

¹⁶At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! ¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued

from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

6. What did Paul mean about being “poured out as a drink offering”?
7. What is meant by a “crown of righteousness”?
8. What does verse 16 say about Paul's faith and Christian character?
9. What did Paul mean about being “rescued from the lion's mouth”?
10. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

Read: Luke 18:9–17

⁹[Jesus] also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt:

¹⁰“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

¹⁵Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. ¹⁶But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. ¹⁷Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

11. What is meant by “some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous”?
12. How might this parable have been perceived by such a person?
13. What does this parable actually demonstrate?
14. How did verses 15 – 17 elevate the value and worth of children?
15. What application of this Gospel reading will you apply to your life as a result of hearing it today?

Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline (Leader's Guide)

Read Genesis 4:1–15

¹Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." ²And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. ³In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

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1. Cain's name means "possession". Why might Eve have given him that name and how was it totally unfitting for him?

Eve may have thought Cain was the result of the promise God made in Genesis 3:15 and therefore the possessor of the promise. But in the end, Cain possessed nothing other than the punishment of his deed and the mark of his sin. He was alone and disgraced.

2. Describe the difference in the offerings brought to the Lord and what was behind the difference?

Abel's offering was from the finest of his flock coming as the firstborn and from the fattest and best of the flock. Cain brought "an offering of the fruit of the ground." Cain's offering was more of a token and perhaps an obligation rather than a heart-felt offering to God as a means of thanksgiving and praise for the goodness and mercy of God. It was the attitude behind the giving that made the difference.

3. How does sin "crouch" at the door?

Answers will vary but allow discussion that addresses the concern.

4. The account fails to indicate any remorse or contrition on the part of Cain. What does it indicate about him?

He failed to admit his need for God's mercy and thus his dependency on God for salvation.

5. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

Read: 2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18

⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

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6. What did Paul mean about being “poured out as a drink offering”?

A sacrificial offering of wine poured out at the foot of the altar, to accompany a burnt, fellowship or grain offering. This was not the main offering which in this context would have been Christ, but an offering to accompany the main offering which is the life of the Child of God.

7. What is meant by a “crown of righteousness”?

Crowns were given to people for victories and special events. An athlete received a crown of laurel after victoriously competing in an event. The crown was to identify the special person. A crown of righteousness is not something that can be worn since righteousness is a condition rather than an object, but as a crown of laurel is awarded a victor, righteousness which is a condition of holiness is awarded the believer. Scripture also refers to the “robe” of righteousness which is another metaphor of the same thing.

8. What does verse 16 say about Paul's faith and Christian character?

Paul allowed the grace of God to work in him. As grace had been given to him offering forgiveness and eternal life, so also he was willing to extend grace forward to others who had sinned against him.

9. What did Paul mean about being “rescued from the lion's mouth”?

This likely means that he was delivered from Nero who was compared with a lion, but some scholars think it could also be reference to the matter of being thrown into an arena of lions as was done with Christians and others as a spectator sport.

10. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

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¹⁰"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

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11. What is meant by "some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous"?

These were people who supposed that they were righteous. They did not trust God or the Messiah for righteousness, but to their own works. They vainly supposed they had themselves complied with the demands of the law of God.

12. How might this parable have been perceived by such a person?

Allow for discussion but if properly understood, this parable would have likely been perceived as strong law and condemnation of such a person.

13 What does this parable actually demonstrate?

It actually demonstrates the one is justified or found acceptable in God's sight through mercy only as shown to us as we humbly repent and believe in those mercies of God in Christ.

14 How did verses 15 – 17 elevate the value and worth of children?

Children were more perceived as possessions rather than people. If you had sons, they would grow to serve you and the family business. If you had daughters, they would grow to earn you a dowry. Christ was showing how valuable children are not because of what they do for you, but because they are loved by God. This alone is what elevates a person's value or worth, child or adult.

15 What application of this Gospel reading will you apply to your life as a result of hearing it today?

Discipleship Bulletin Blub

How sad that Cain killed his brother Abel because of his jealousy of Abel's faith and God's acceptance of him. How sad that there were those who desired to persecute Paul for his faithfulness to Christ. How sad there are those who claim their own righteousness as the reason for their justification before God as Jesus drew attention to in the Gospel reading for today. How sad that these sins still exist in the world today and fill hearts and lives with all that is contrary to the will of God and His mercy. As modern disciples of Christ, how vital it is to not only receive God's abundant mercy but also to reflect it in our lives toward others. We can extend mercy because mercy has been extended to us.

Discipleship Prayer Thought

Almighty and most merciful God, grant us grace that we might love You with heart, soul and mind and fill us with such mercy that we would willingly extend the same mercy toward others. Grant wisdom and courage to make known your love to all around us in such a way that the kingdom of God may be seen and extended to others. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**