**“Engage the Life of Jesus…**

**…In My life”**

“Then (Jesus) said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

Luke 9:23

**Segment 3 of 4**

**(8 Sessions)**

**Bible Storying Guide**

Adapted from [www.blackhawkministries.org](http://www.blackhawkministries.org/) and relationaldiscipleshipnetwork.com

**Is this making any difference?**

If you’ve embarked through the first two segments, your group has met at least 4 months and you may be wondering, “how can I tell if this small group is making a difference in anyone’s life?” In other words, “are my people becoming disciples of Jesus?”

Gabe Kolstad, pastor of Westside Community Church, offers six interesting indicators that someone is growing spiritually.

**1) Making Better Choices. Spiritual growth is revealed in our choices.** Jesus put a lot of emphasis on obedience. The more we grow, the closer the alignment between God’s will and our activity. And we can see this in habits, associations, schedules, conversations, and all the practical pieces of our daily lives. Have you noticed anyone making better choices that deny themselves and align themselves with God’s priorities? Has daily personal worship and other spiritual disciplines become a habit? And are they experiencing joy as a result? That’s progress!

**2) Developing Determination. It’s the willingness to press on in doing what’s right when our circumstances aren’t supportive.** According to the apostles, determination (or perseverance) is a quality that God is working out in all those who call themselves followers of Jesus. It’s the ability to keep going when others would quit. Is anyone leaning on God’s faithfulness and trusting in God by doing the right thing, even when tempted not to?

**3) Feeling for Others.** Jesus felt passionately moved by the situation of those he encountered.Growing in love is part of God’s agenda for each of us. Have you noticed persons in your group moved to action because of the dire circumstances in someone else’s life?

**4) Desiring to Learn. Growth feeds curiosity, and curiosity feeds growth.** Spiritual eagerness and curiosity naturally increases over time if persons are growing. Have you noticed someone asking deeper questions, studying on his or her own, reading additional materials? Jesus referred to it as a hunger and thirst for righteousness ([Matthew 5:6](https://www.bible.com/bible/59/mat.5)).

**5) Influencing People. If you want to know whether someone is growing, look at the people around them.** There’s an undeniable transference of attitude and action when we step out to do something bold. If everyone around is negative and stagnant, it might be time for us to look in the mirror. On the other hand, if the people in our circles are becoming more open to God’s work in their lives and taking steps toward Jesus, we may have something to do with that. Whose attitudes and actions are inspiring others?

**6) Improving Relationships. A sign of spiritual maturity is investing in deeper relationships.**  A growing disciple is more interested in developing really good relationships, instead of proving their point or insisting on being right. Who in your group spends extra time trying to build up relationships and make new ones outside of group time?

**“Engage the Life of Jesus…In My Life” Overview**

This guide follows the story of the disciples as they meet Jesus, follow Him, get to know Him and begin to grow. Overall, there are 34 chronological stories from all four gospels, divided into four segments to give your group the option to take breaks and/or explore other topics. Jesus took these disciples on a journey together so they could become like Him and be His sent ones (“apostles”) to the world. If you face each situation they faced and respond like they did, you will be more like Jesus every day. Remember, for thousands of years God’s people have used “story telling” or the oral tradition of telling the Word of God.

**What you need to know about Segment 3**

The goal of a small group is to *become* more like Jesus. This guide is a simple method that gives every participant an opportunity to engage the scripture in a deeply personal way, allowing God’s Word to be a means of grace in their lives.

Segment 3 gives you an opportunity to challenge your group to *grow* *in* *grace*. By now, your group wants to meet together. If not already, begin assessing your participants’ spiritual needs, and starting thinking of ways to address them. Do not be afraid to challenge your group to reflect on how God is changing them as a result of being in this group. If they are not sensing growth, encourage them to explore why that may be. Push them to ask themselves (and each other) the hard questions of what may be holding them back from fully surrendering to Christ.

**Here’s how Bible-Storying works…**

1. Each week, assign someone to learn next week’s story. (Learn so the story is told in one’s own words without reading it, but not word for word.)
2. While the storyteller tells the story, the group follows along in their Bibles.
3. When finished, the group rebuilds the story, by asking questions such as:
   1. Did our storyteller leave anything out? Add anything?
   2. Let’s rebuild from the beginning…
   3. What happened first? Then what?
4. Then, have a volunteer or volunteers read the story aloud.
5. Once the story has been told, rebuilt, and told again, this week’s facilitator asks questions to help participants intersect scripture with her or his life.
6. Each person identifies application points for their *own* life, and the group helps each person live it out.

**Small Group Ground Rules**

This is the “operating system” of a small group--the most important piece to building an authentic community. These rules provide the boundaries of a space that is safe to be real, authentic and vulnerable so that Holy Spirit can work. We live, act, and talk differently in a small group! Developing this kind of environment takes time, team-work, and a lot of trust.

**Review the Rules**

At the first gathering, have the group take stock of these ground rules. Pass out copies. You may be tempted to skip over this, or give lip service to it. But don’t. Ask specific questions such as: *Has this been a safe environment for you?*  Go over these rules *in detail* and why they are important. Make sure they understand and agree to them. It is *critical* that you remind and ensure the group to follow these rules, and give them permission to hold you to them as well!

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *1.* ***Safe Environment*** *– This is a judgment free zone! Feel safe to be your authentic self.* | *6.* ***Pause****—Allow a pause after someone finishes to provide room to consider what was said before responding.* |
|  |  |
| *2.* ***Accountability****—Everyone’s help is expected to make this safe.* | *7.* ***Silence****—Expect and welcome silence. Consider it sacred space for God to speak.* |
|  |  |
| *3.* ***Confidentiality****—What is said in the group stays in the group, unless permission is given.* | *8.* ***Respect****—Don’t try to solve or fix each other. Just receive what they share (even if you disagree) as a gift. Offer encouragement, speak truth, point to Jesus.* |
|  |  |
| *4.* ***“I” statements****—Speak for yourself-your beliefs, feelings, responses. It’s easy to talk about the issues of others, but we want you to put* ***yourself*** *on the table.  Use “I” statements rather than “them,” “the church,” “us,” “we,” “you.”* | *9.* ***Honor****-- Honor the different ways God works in individuals. Resist the temptation to console or offer condolences, as it may lead some to stop sharing, or try to fix.* |
|  |  |
| *5.* ***Listen****—Try to avoid thinking about what you are going to say next. Avoid “cross-talk” and interrupting.* | *10.* ***Sharing****—Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Recognize that all group members are invited to share aloud only what and when they are ready to share.* |

# Transitional Gathering. Group Check-in

### John 15:1-5 NRSV

*(This is the same exercise at the start of the last segment) A “Check-in” is a great tool that helps participants to re-frame and re-focus their commitment to the purpose of the group. It can be used at any time—between studies, when things get tense, when emotions run high, or when behavior becomes an issue (non-participation, chronic lateness or no-shows). It ensures that people are truly present. Verbal sharing, especially a brief story, weaves the interpersonal net. Check-in usually starts with a volunteer and proceeds around the circle. If an individual is not ready to speak, the turn is passed and another opportunity is offered after others have spoken. Sometimes people place individual objects in the center as a way of signifying their presence and relationship to the purpose.*

**Opening (10 mins):**

What is something that fills your bucket, spiritually? (What refuels you? What activities or engagements restore your energy levels? What do you do to replenish yourself when you feel depleted? What relationships inspire you? What do you read that elevates you? What in your life is actually a bucket filler for you?)

**Prayer**

**Scripture focus:**

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. **2**He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. **3**You have already been cleansedby the word that I have spoken to you. **4**Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. **5**I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

**Reflect (2-3 minutes)**:

*What is the Lord showing you?* Invite the group to silently reflect on the story noting anything that the Lord points out as important, confusing, interesting, or challenging *for their life*.

**Group “Check-in” (30 mins)**

1. **Safe Community**. Remind the group that the purpose of a small group is to build a safe place where each one can explore the purpose and power of Christ in their lives, in order to live more like Christ. This check-in is an opportunity for us to be honest with ourselves and each other on how well we are living up to our purpose. Pass out copies of the ground rules and explain them. Take turns reading each one.

* How safe has this small group been for you? How well are you holding to the ground rules?
* Next -

1. **Take Away Challenge.**

* Begin the sharing by asking one volunteer to share something with the group that the Holy Spirit is revealing to them as a result of being with the group so far.
* Then, the person who just shared picks someone else in the group and does ONE of the following (It is VERY important to look the other person in the eye and speak directly to each other, rather than to the group):
  + Ask the person for forgiveness for something.
  + Encourage or affirm the person.
  + Challenge the person (personal growth, leadership, etc.)
* The person responds ONLY with “Thank you.”
* Then the next person share’s their take away and challenge…until everyone has had the opportunity to share their take-away and speak to someone in the group.

**Put it Into Action (5 mins)**

Assign partners to connect up with over the coming week. (You may decide to do a weekly rotation). Invite them to try to “connect” with either by meeting for coffee or lunch, taking a walk, a phone call. Challenge them to also send each other an encouraging text or email during the week.

**Next Week (1 min):** Decide who will be the facilitator and who will be the storyteller for next week. (Email next week’s story to the group.)

**Prayer (5 mins)**

# 17. The Cost of Being a Disciple

### Luke 14:25-35

**Opening (10 mins):**

Are you more like a spiritual “thermostat” or a spiritual “thermometer”?

**Prayer**

**Small Group Ground Rules:**

Quickly go over the ground rules. Ask how we can do better at following them.

**Today’s Scripture Context:**

Jesus wept over Jerusalem and their missed opportunity to receive Him as the Messiah. Once again Jesus talks to the disciples about what it costs to follow Him. He demands that He be the first priority over persons, purposes or possessions. Here is the story from God’s Word:

**Tell the Story (10 mins):**

**Tell the Story:** Don’t stop and teach, try not to make points, just tell the story in your own words the best you can. Have the group follow along in their Bibles looking for anything left out or added.

**Rebuild:** Chronologically rebuild the story by asking questions (see page 3).

**Read:** Read the story directly from God’s Word.

**Reflect (2-3 minutes)**:

*What is the Lord showing you?* Invite the group to silently reflect on the story noting anything that the Lord points out as important, confusing, interesting, or challenging *for their life*.

## Suggested Discipleship Questions (30 minutes)

1. What is Jesus teaching you personally?
2. How can you disciple people as Jesus did in this story?
3. When has a close relationship been a hindrance to your wholehearted devotion to Christ?
4. How do you keep Jesus first in your life?
5. What has it cost you follow Jesus?
6. What would be the cost if you did not follow Jesus?
7. In what circumstances do you think you would be willing to die for your faith?

**Put it Into Action (5 mins)**

Challenge each other to memorize the theme scripture of Segment 3: Luke 9:23

**Next Week (1 min)**

Assign a facilitator and a storyteller for next week. (Email next week’s story to the group.)

**Prayer (5 mins)**

# 18. Sheep, Silver, Prodigal

### Luke 15:1-32

**Opening (10 mins):**

Describe a time you lost something valuable. Anyone want to practice reciting our theme scripture from memory?

**Prayer**

**Small Group Ground Rules:**

Quickly go over the ground rules. Ask how we can do better at following them.

**Today’s Scripture Context:**

Jesus moved from the cost of discipleship to the task of a disciple--seeking the lost. The scribes and Pharisees had just criticized Jesus for eating with sinners. He told three stories to set them straight on what mattered to Him. Here is the story from God’s Word:

**Tell the Story (10 mins):**

**Tell the Story:** Don’t stop and teach, try not to make points, just tell the story in your own words the best you can. Have the group follow along in their Bibles looking for anything left out or added.

**Rebuild:** Chronologically rebuild the story by asking questions (see page 3).

**Read:** Read the story directly from God’s Word.

**Reflect (2-3 minutes)**:

*What is the Lord showing you?* Invite the group to silently reflect on the story noting anything that the Lord points out as important, confusing, interesting, or challenging *for their life*.

## Suggested Discipleship Questions (30 minutes)

* 1. What is Jesus teaching you personally?
  2. How can you disciple people as Jesus did in this story?
  3. What’s one thing that really strikes you as important?
  4. Which of the characters in the stories do you most clearly resemble? Why?
  5. Have you ever wandered from the faith? What brought you back?
  6. Do you have a friend or family who is “lost?” (Reminder to the group to not try to “fix” each other; just listen and receive.)
  7. How open are you to inviting someone who is seeking Christ to visit your group? Are you willing to divide your group to make room, and yet stay small? Why or why not?

**Put it Into Action (5 mins)**

Select one person, not in your group, with whom the Lord is nudging you to have a ‘spiritual conversation.’ This is not a time to tell your story, but only to listen. So ask lots of questions, and listen for the Holy Spirit. Be prepared to report back to the group next week.

**Next Week (1 min)**

Assign a facilitator and a storyteller for next week. (Email next week’s story to the group.)

**Prayer (5 mins)**

# 19. Lazarus Raised from the Dead

### John 11:1-49

**Opening (10 mins):**

If you could raise one person from the dead, who would it be? Why?

Who had a spiritual conversation with someone this week? Share with us what went well, and what didn’t? If you were to do this again, what would you do differently?

**Prayer**

**Small Group Ground Rules:**

Quickly go over the ground rules. Ask how we can do better at following them.

**Today’s Scripture Context:**

Jesus faced going to Jerusalem for the last time. His unbelieving brothers urged Him to go and do miracles there if He was the Messiah but He told them ‘no’. He told His disciples several times that He faced rejection and death. Yet they still followed Him. In today’s story we see Him make an astounding claim and do an extraordinary miracle on His way to Jerusalem. Here is the story from God’s Word:

**Tell the Story (10 mins):**

**Tell the Story:** Don’t stop and teach, try not to make points, just tell the story in your own words the best you can. Have the group follow along in their Bibles looking for anything left out or added.

**Rebuild:** Chronologically rebuild the story by asking questions (see page 3).

**Read:** Read the story directly from God’s word.

**Reflect (2-3 minutes)**:

*What is the Lord showing you?* Invite the group to silently reflect on the story noting anything that the Lord points out as important, confusing, interesting, or challenging *for their life*.

## Suggested Discipleship Questions (30 minutes)

* + - 1. What is Jesus teaching you personally?
      2. How can you disciple people as Jesus did in this story?
      3. Have you ever faced a “risk” for following Jesus (like Thomas did)? How did it stretch your faith? What would have happened if you avoided the risk?
      4. How do you feel about dying?
      5. Have you talked with your loved ones about your own death? Why or why not?
      6. How does this passage help you face death (your own or others)?

**Put it Into Action (5 mins)**

Consider volunteering, alone or as a group, at Hosparus or visiting someone who may be near the end of life. Call the church pastoral office and offer to go and pray with someone they suggest.

**Next Week (1 min)**

Assign a facilitator and a storyteller for next week. (Email next week’s story to the group.)

**Prayer (5 mins)**

# 20. Serving Others

### Mark 10:31-45

**Opening (10 mins):**

What is the best thing that has happened in your life since we last met? Anyone remember our theme scripture, recite it from memory?

**Prayer**

**Small Group Ground Rules:**

Quickly go over the ground rules. Ask how we can do better at following them.

**Today’s Scripture Context:**

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead it raised the stakes for the Jewish leaders. Every day brought Jesus closer to His death. The disciples faced each day’s new situation with fear and hope. They began to talk about how they would act when Jesus was no longer with them. They competed for leadership. We join them as they follow Jesus into Jerusalem. Here is the story from God’s Word:

**Tell the Story (10 mins):**

**Tell the Story:** Don’t stop and teach, try not to make points, just tell the story in your own words the best you can. Have the group follow along in their Bibles looking for anything left out or added.

**Rebuild:** Chronologically rebuild the story by asking questions (see page 3).

**Read:** Read the story directly from God’s word.

**Reflect (2-3 minutes)**:

*What is the Lord showing you?* Invite the group to silently reflect on the story noting anything that the Lord points out as important, confusing, interesting, or challenging *for their life*.

## Suggested Discipleship Questions (30 minutes)

What is Jesus teaching you personally?

How can you disciple people as Jesus did in this story?

What is important to you from today’s story?

Has competition ever gotten in the way of your discipleship? What did you learn?

Who has been an example to you of a Christ-like servant? What effect has that person had on your life?

How do you selflessly serve Christ on a regular basis? If you do not right now, what small step could you take?

**Put it Into Action (5 mins)**

What is the Holy Spirit stirring in you as a result of this conversation? What are thinking about doing? How can the group help?

**Next Week (1 min)**

Assign a facilitator and a storyteller for next week. (Email next week’s story to the group.)

**Prayer (5 mins)**

# 21. Triumphant Entry

### Luke 19:28-48

**Opening (10 mins):**

Describe a time when you felt the most celebrated.

**Prayer**

**Small Group Ground Rules:**

Quickly go over the ground rules. Ask how we can do better at following them.

**Today’s Scripture Context:**

In the midst of petty arguments and earth-shattering events, Jesus faced the battle of the ages. His emotions ran from exhilarating joy to sheer despair over His disciples and the rejection of the Jews. We join Him and His disciples in one of these up and down emotional days as they entered Jerusalem. Just before our story today, he told the story of the ten talents and the king who would kill enemies that rejected Him. Now, here is the story from, God’s Word:

**Tell the Story (10 mins):**

**Tell the Story:** Don’t stop and teach, try not to make points, just tell the story in your own words the best you can. Have the group follow along in their Bibles looking for anything left out or added.

**Rebuild:** Chronologically rebuild the story by asking questions (see page 3.)

**Read:** Read the story directly from God’s word.

**Reflect (2-3 minutes)**:

*What is the Lord showing you?* Invite the group to silently reflect on the story noting anything that the Lord points out as important, confusing, interesting, or challenging *for their life*.

## Suggested Discipleship Questions (30 minutes)

* + - 1. What is Jesus teaching you personally?
      2. How can you disciple people as Jesus did in this story?
      3. What stands out to you from today’s story?
      4. What person or group of people do you weep for?
      5. How do you feel about those who reject Jesus?
      6. How has Jesus “turned over tables” in your life?
      7. What has he been cleaning out lately?

**Put it Into Action (5 mins)**

Think of someone who goes unappreciated and unnoticed. What can you do to truly celebrate them this week?

Who can recite our memory verse?

**Next Week (1 min)**

Assign a facilitator and a storyteller for next week. (Email next week’s story to the group.)

**Prayer (5 mins)**

# 22. Jesus Washes the Disciples’ Feet

### John 13:1-26

**Opening (10 mins):**

What is the last job you would pick when it comes housework?

**Prayer**

**Small Group Ground Rules:**

Quickly go over the ground rules. Ask how we can do better at following them.

**Today’s Scripture Context:**

Jesus was bombarded by questions about His authority, paying taxes, marriage and the resurrection. He talked to His disciples about the signs of the end of the age. Judas agreed to betray Jesus to the chief of priests. With all this swirling around Him, Jesus wanted to eat the last Passover meal with His disciples and teach them about what was going to happen to Him. It was at this Passover meal that Jesus modeled leadership in the Kingdom. Here is the story from God’s Word:

**Tell the Story (10 mins):**

**Tell the Story:** Don’t stop and teach, try not to make points, just tell the story in your own words the best you can. Have the group follow along in their Bibles looking for anything left out or added.

**Rebuild:** Chronologically rebuild the story by asking questions (see page 3).

**Read:** Read the story directly from God’s word.

**Reflect (2-3 minutes)**:

*What is the Lord showing you?* Invite the group to silently reflect on the story noting anything that the Lord points out as important, confusing, interesting, or challenging *for their life*.

## Suggested Discipleship Questions (30 minutes)

What is Jesus teaching you personally?

How can you disciple people as Jesus did in this story?

What stands out to you from today’s story?

Have you participated in a foot washing service? Describe how you felt.

In your spiritual life, who is one person who has demonstrated what it means to “wash feet?” What has this person done for you?

Is serving hard for you? Why?

What does “washing feet” look like in your life? Does it come from obligation or love?

**Put it Into Action (5 mins)**

What is one way you can put into practice Jesus’ example this week?

**Next Week (1 min)**

Assign a facilitator and a storyteller for next week. (Email next week’s story to the group.)

**Prayer (5 mins)**

# 23. Jesus, the Way to the Father

### John 14:1-18

**Opening (10 mins):**

Describe a time you got lost (or a loved one got lost)? What happened? Let’s practice our memory verse.

**Prayer**

**Small Group Ground Rules:**

Quickly go over the ground rules. Ask how we can do better at following them.

**Today’s Scripture Context:**

Jesus not only said that one would betray Him but that Peter would deny Him. They were all shocked, especially Peter, who denied it. Then Jesus began to help them understand more clearly who He was and where He was going. He also introduced the Holy Spirit to them as His replacement. Here is the story:

**Tell the Story (10 mins):**

**Tell the Story:** Don’t stop and teach, try not to make points, just tell the story in your own words the best you can. Have the group follow along in their Bibles looking for anything left out or added.

**Rebuild:** Chronologically rebuild the story by asking questions (see page 3).

**Read:** Read the story directly from God’s word.

**Reflect (2-3 minutes)**:

*What is the Lord showing you?* Invite the group to silently reflect on the story noting anything that the Lord points out as important, confusing, interesting, or challenging *for their life*.

## Suggested Discipleship Questions (30 minutes)

* + - 1. What is Jesus teaching you personally?
      2. How can you disciple people as Jesus did in this story?
      3. What moved you from today’s story?
      4. If Jesus is the Way, do you feel you are on a bumpy dead-end street, or on a four-lane highway, or something else? Why?
      5. How do you respond to someone who says, “There are many ways to God?” (Reminder to not judge one another if there is a difference of thoughts. Review the rules, p. 4)
      6. Have you witnessed the truth of v12?
      7. Describe your relationship with the Holy Spirit?

**Put it Into Action (5 mins)**

Give everyone a copy of page 2 of this guide. (Is this making any difference?) Tell your group to reflect on the guide over the coming week, and identify one *specific* way they noticed growth in each member of the group. The more specific, the better. Next week, be prepared to share.

**Next Week (1 min)**

Assign a facilitator and a storyteller for next week. (Email next week’s story to the group.)

**Prayer (5 mins)**

# 24. Jesus, the True Vine

### John 15:1-17

**Opening (10 mins):**

(Reserve plenty of time to do the Segment Closing activity below).

What plant best describes you right now in your life?

**Prayer**

**Small Group Ground Rules:**

Quickly go over the ground rules. Ask how we can do better at following them.

**Today’s Scripture Context:**

After Jesus clarified that he was the way the truth, and the life and that everything He did came from the Father. He moved on to help the disciples understand that their life was in Him. Jesus taught them the secret of how to live in Christ by comparing their lives to the vine, the branches and the fruit. Here is the story from God’s Word:

**Tell the Story (10 mins):**

**Tell the Story:** Don’t stop and teach, try not to make points, just tell the story in your own words the best you can. Have the group follow along in their Bibles looking for anything left out or added.

**Rebuild:** Chronologically rebuild the story by asking questions (see page 3).

**Read:** Read the story directly from God’s word.

**Reflect (2-3 minutes)**:

*What is the Lord showing you?* Invite the group to silently reflect on the story noting anything that the Lord points out as important, confusing, interesting, or challenging *for their life*.

## Suggested Discipleship Questions (20 minutes)

1. What is Jesus teaching you personally?
2. How can you disciple people as Jesus did in this story?
3. What word or phrase stands out to you today?
4. How do you stay connected to Christ and who He made you to be?
5. A rose bush flourishes if it is pruned. What needs to be pruned in your life so that you are free to flourish?
6. Describe the fruit that you are bearing, if any (v8, 16)? Is it the kind of fruit that will last?
7. Fruit is a way for a tree to reproduce. Do you yet see yourself discipling others? If not, why not?

**Put it Into Action (15 mins) “Segment Closing Activity”**

Invite one person to sit in the center of the circle. Then have each member of the group share directly with that person how they’ve noticed him or her growing in the time you’ve shared together. (See page 2 for a general guide). Encourage your group to be BRIEF and specific. You, as the leader, model the way.

**Prayer (5 mins)**