



*Here is verbiage that we recommend you use in your communications regarding this church-wide study:*

Broadmoor United Methodist Church, alongside the Louisiana Conference Church Development Team, has implemented the Church Transformation Process recommendations which included an arm of discipleship initiatives that more clearly communicates what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ at Broadmoor UMC. *Moving Towards Christ* is a church-wide bible study that reflects the core beliefs of discipleship and a clear understanding of how we make them in our particular context. We must be intentional, like-minded, and work together in order to build God’s kingdom in the community of Broadmoor, Baton Rouge, and beyond.

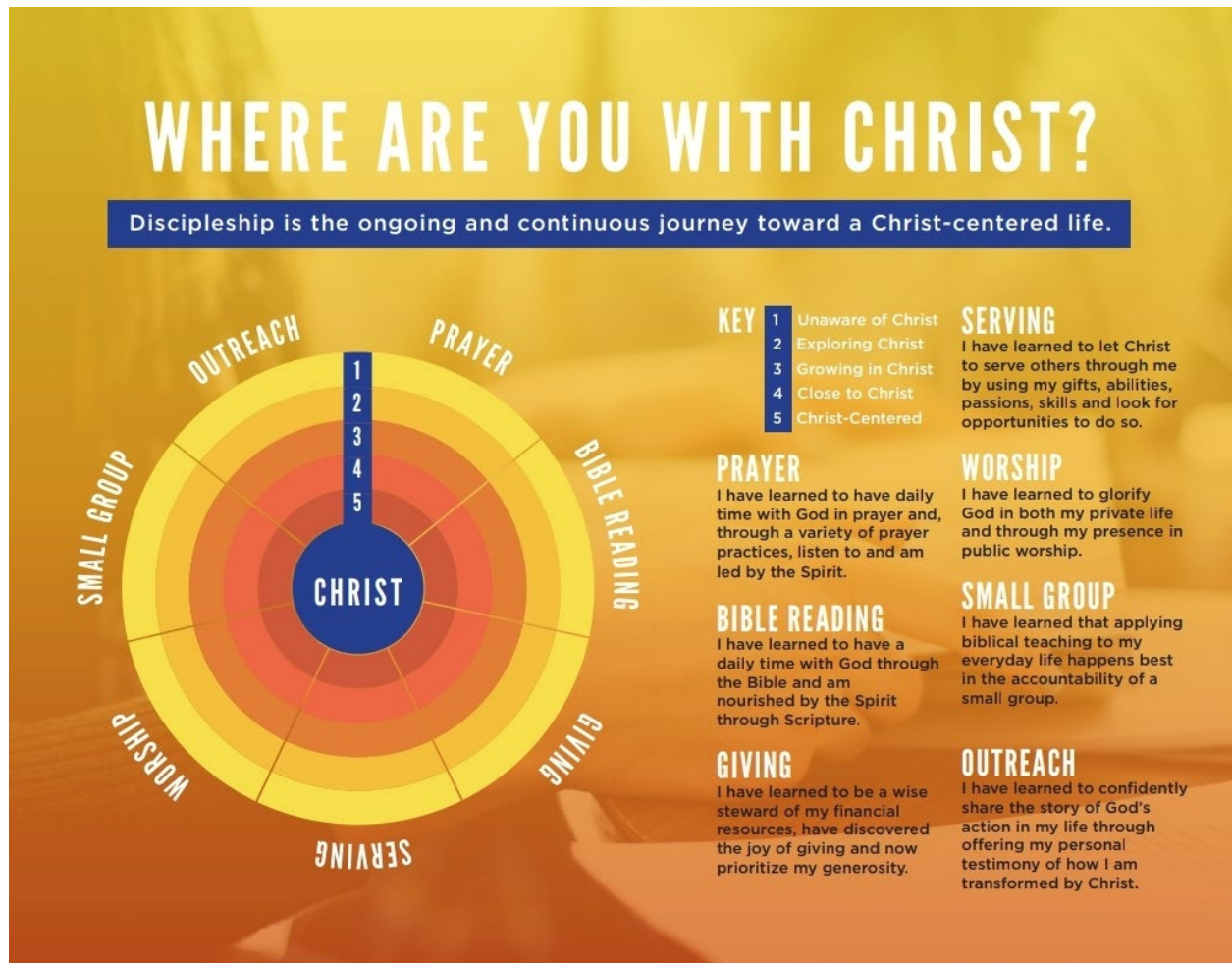
Please provide participants of this study two handouts:

## Discipleship Pathway



The Discipleship Pathway shows the expectation for people at Broadmoor UMC to mature as disciples. This fall, Next Steps Classes will be offered that help familiarize our members with our new process and the core practices that we hold as a United Methodist denomination and as a local church. These include *prayer, Bible reading, giving, serving, worship, small group, and outreach*. We firmly believe that high expectation of membership in these key areas make the most effective disciples of Jesus Christ for building the kingdom of God.

## Discipleship Wheel



The Discipleship Wheel is a detailed explanation of what we mean by gather, grow, and go. It is a tool one can use to determine where they are in relation to Christ right now, related to our core practices, and help them to take their next steps towards living a more Christ-centered life. Christ certainly loves us exactly where we are and for who we are; and, Christ loves us enough not to leave us this way. When we resolve to make Christ the Lord of our lives, we open ourselves to being made new from the inside out by Him. This is what it means to be transformed and to become a world transformer, in the name of Jesus!



## Week 1

*(Show Opening Video)*

### *Leader's Opening Prayer*

Holy God, whom we serve with our whole hearts in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ, Your Son, see how constantly we remember You in our prayers at all times. In Jesus name, Amen.

### *Leader's Opening Remark*

The God-breathed mission of Broadmoor United Methodist Church is to *meet people where they are and help them take their next step towards a Christ-centered life*. It is important that we work together to provide our church with a plan that we all use in order to most effectively accomplish this mission. The *Moving Towards Christ* church-wide study is the roll out of our new plan to unite Broadmoor UMC in our work of making disciples of Jesus Christ in this community.

Each week, we will be discussing a core practice that we hold as essential to being met by Jesus and taking steps toward making Him the Lord of our lives. Therefore, we open this week with a discussion on prayer. Prayer is simply the way we communicate with God. Maturing disciples pray for themselves. The most mature disciples also pray for others. This type of prayer is called intercessory prayer.

*Leader asks these questions, giving a few moments between each one; the group does not discuss their answers.*

- How do you celebrate answered prayers that you pray for yourself and others?
- Do you think it is important to continue to intercede in prayer even when you feel like situations get worse the more you pray?
- Do you think that intercessory prayer is powerful and pleasing to God? Why?

### **Intercessory Prayer**

Praying for another person is like touching God with one hand and touching the person with the other. That's what intercessory prayer is all about.

### **Bible Discovery**

The early Christians not only believed in the power of, and need for, intercessory prayer – they thrived on it! And, when they prayed, God responded in some really amazing ways.

*The leader has people in the class read the following passages. After each individual scripture reading, have the class identify what the prayers of intercession were for, specifically:*

Acts 8:14-15, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. 15 The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit

*What, specifically, were the prayers of intercession for? (Discuss)*

Romans 15:30-31, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

30 I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in earnest prayer to God on my behalf, 31 that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my ministry to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints

*What, specifically, were the prayers of intercession for? (Discuss)*

Ephesians 1:17-19, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, 18 so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

*What, specifically, were the prayers of intercession for? (Discuss)*

Ephesians 3:16-19, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

16 I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, 17 and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. 18 I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

*What, specifically, were the prayers of intercession for? (Discuss)*

Ephesians 6:19-20, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

19 Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

*What, specifically, were the prayers of intercession for? (Discuss)*

2 Thessalonians 1:11, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

11 To this end we always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call and will fulfill by his power every good resolve and work of faith

*What, specifically, were the prayers of intercession for? (Discuss)*

## Philemon 6

6 I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ.

*What, specifically, were the prayers of intercession for? (Discuss)*

### *Leader's Remark*

The Apostle Paul writes to the ancient church in Ephesus, saying, “Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.” This is what Broadmoor United Methodist believes moving towards Christ in prayer looks like.

Begin to think about someone you know, who needs intercessory prayer, which the Spirit is bringing to your attention right now. Perhaps this person has a deep spiritual need, a physical healing need, or a need to calm their anxious emotions. Maybe you simply know that someone needs prayer, but do not have an awareness of any specifics. Take a moment and pray for them, and allow yourself to be led by the Spirit. Think about what Jesus might be praying for them, and join your prayers with His.



*Optional exercise: Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and picture Jesus, sitting at the right hand of God in intercessory prayer for each person in the world. Focus on His lips moving and the words that He is praying. You hear that he is praying for the person that the Spirit has placed on your heart. You begin to hear the promises of God coming from His mouth as they pertain to this person and their situation. Begin to pray what you imagine Jesus to be praying for that person and agree with Jesus on their behalf. This is intercessory prayer as it should be.*

Interceding for others through prayer is a great privilege and responsibility. Time and time again, the writers of the Bible show us the importance of intercessory prayer. Epaphras, for example, is described as “always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured” (Colossians 4:12). Although the work of intercessory prayer is often difficult, it is to be a key part of every believer’s life and spiritual discipline. As is true in all things, Jesus is both our teacher and example. He taught us how to persevere in prayer and often prayed for others. Jesus said that people ought always to pray and not give up; and, He said it with the caveat that answers do not come on our timetable. The answers come when God gives them, which is always perfect timing.

During the days and weeks ahead, continue to pray for people whom the Holy Spirit lays on your heart. Keep praying for them, no matter how bleak circumstances seem to be. Rely on God’s promises in Scripture, and remember that God, more than anyone else, desires to respond to your faith and show the power of answered prayer. That is why you should celebrate it with the same joy that you do for other great, happy moments in your life!

*Leader asks the following discussion questions, time permitting:*

- To what extent have you considered intercessory prayer to be a vital part of becoming a mature disciple of Jesus Christ?
- In what ways has the lesson today expanded and inspired you with regards to prayer?
- When we pray sincerely for others, what are the impacts for those for whom you are interceding? For you? For our church leaders? For our church congregation? For the community of Broadmoor and Baton Rouge? For the world?
- Have you ever kept a journal of your prayers and tracked them in order to celebrate answers to prayer and prayer victories?
- What might celebrating answered prayers look like for you?

*Leader's Closing Prayer*

Father, Your Word says that Your house will be called a house of prayer (Matthew 21:13). Help us to seek you in new, more meaningful and intentional ways. Help us to apply the truth we have learned today in our lives with the guidance and help of your Holy Spirit. In Jesus name, Amen.



## Week 2

*(Show Opening Video)*

### *Leader's Opening Prayer*

Holy God, please mature in us the practice of seeking you. Your Word and counsel whenever tough situations arise, whenever we need to know how to respond, whenever we struggle to love, is an invaluable resource as we live into what it means to be Christ-centered. Please help us to have Your Word guide our next steps. In Jesus name, Amen.

### *Leader's Opening Remark*

The Holy Bible is not a single book; rather, it is a collection of books, much like a library, whose texts are read as scripture. People of different faith commitments continue to read these in our modern world. The books of the Bible are the products of a particular time and

place and scripture is rooted in the culture of the ancient Near East. Since scripture includes history, it must be studied for accurate interpretation. But the Bible is more than history.

The history-like appearance of the biblical narrative should not be confused with historiography in the modern sense. The books must be understood to represent a certain genre, whether it be poetry, wisdom literature, allegory, or more. In some cases, biblical material is ethically inspiring, like liberation from slavery, the prophets preaching social justice, and the Ten Commandments to name a few. But there are also issues relating to topics like slaves, women, and homosexuality that are highly controversial to say the least. There is no shortage of questions that might be raised about the “clear teaching of scripture.” The important thing to remember is that no one person, no one denomination, no one political party has all the answers. The more important thing concerning the Bible is our attempt to honestly and thoughtfully wrestle with the difficult questions it raises about life as a follower, journeying towards Jesus Christ.

At Broadmoor UMC, we hold reading the Bible as a core practice. We do that in a number of ways including sermon series that flush out books of the Bible, daily reading plans that are released from time to time and more. One of the most effective, meaningful ways to dive deeply into God’s Word, is in the context of a small group. This might be a Sunday School class, an evening group in a church member’s living room, or a breakfast group that meets at a restaurant in the community just to name a few. Both reading the Bible and participating in a small group that develops your relationship with God and others in the church helps build an accountability for what is learned. These practices are essential in taking your next step towards living a Christ-centered life.

*Leader asks these questions, giving a few moments between each one; the group does not discuss their answers.*

- How often do you interact with the Bible? A daily reading from the book? An app on your phone? A morning devotional?
- Do you think it is important to read the Bible, even when it is hard to make it a priority in your busy schedule?
- Do you see God transforming you when you are discussing God's word with others? Why?

### **Bible Reading & Small Groups**

Reading your Bible is one thing. Reading your Bible and being accountable for living its teaching within a small group of people is another thing; and, there is a big difference.

### **Bible Discovery**

The Bible was not written at a single time. The Bible was written over thousands of years. The early Christians only had the Old Testament and the experience of a life with Christ. Today, we have the New Testament, too, which includes the stories of Jesus; and, like the early Christians, we also have a continued experience of a life with Christ! That is why the witness of a small group is important in becoming a mature disciple. The groups begins to “see” that we are all a continuation of the story of God moving in the lives of God's children.

*The leader has people in the class read the following passages. After each individual scripture reading, have the class identify what the Bible and small groups were for, specifically:*

Psalm 119:105-106, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to observe your righteous ordinances.

*What, specifically, is Bible reading for? (Discuss)*

Romans 10:17, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

*What, specifically, is Bible reading for? (Discuss)*

Hebrews 4:12, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

*What, specifically, is Bible reading for? (Discuss)*

Matthew 18:20, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.

*What, specifically, is Small group for? (Discuss)*

Hebrews 10:24-25, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

*What, specifically, is Small group for? (Discuss)*

*Leader's Remark*

The Apostle Paul described scriptures as “God-breathed.” He said that the Bible is inspired by God. For Scripture’s power to be fully manifested here as Good News for today, it must continue to be “breathed” by human agents in order to accomplish reproving, correcting, training, and equipping every believer for every good work, as Paul explained to Timothy in their second letter.

Begin to think about how you might take a next step towards Christ in your Bible reading. Do you need to begin to read the Bible? Do you need to establish the practice of more regular reading? Do you need to increase the frequency of your reading of the Holy Scriptures? Then, push yourself to consider how you are being held accountable for the Bible’s teaching by others. Are you part of a small group? If no, check with your pastor and ask for a recommendation to a group or class here at Broadmoor UMC. If yes, ask yourself how your small group is holding you accountable for how you might take your next step in reading the Bible and applying its teaching to your life. If they are not doing that, you might need to seek out the group leader or leaders and work on developing an accountability component to your meetings.

*Optional exercise: Take a deep breath and picture Jesus, sitting in the middle of your gathering. Ask Jesus to guide an honest discussion, straight from your heart, about how you might need to grow in your Bible reading and accountability to others. Give each person an opportunity to say one sentence about what Jesus is telling them to do in order to take their next step. Then, make a commitment to each other to hold each other to what the Lord is asking of you.*

Reading the Bible and applying to our lives in a small group is an important part of what it means to be disciple and follower of Jesus Christ. During the days and weeks ahead, continue to report to each other how you are making progress toward the practice of reading the Bible. Prayer for each other. Talk about how you are wrestling with the Scriptures! It is okay to do that! Ask yourselves what the Word is teaching you about the world, about yourself, and about God. Share what you are learning about the context in which the Scriptures are written, about the evolution of life since those times, most importantly how you see yourselves as part of the continuing story of God moving in the lives of God's children. Rely on God's promises in Scripture, and remember that God, more than anyone else, desires to respond to your faith and show the power being grounded in God's Word and in the community of a small group of intimate support and love.

*Leader asks the following discussion questions, time permitting:*

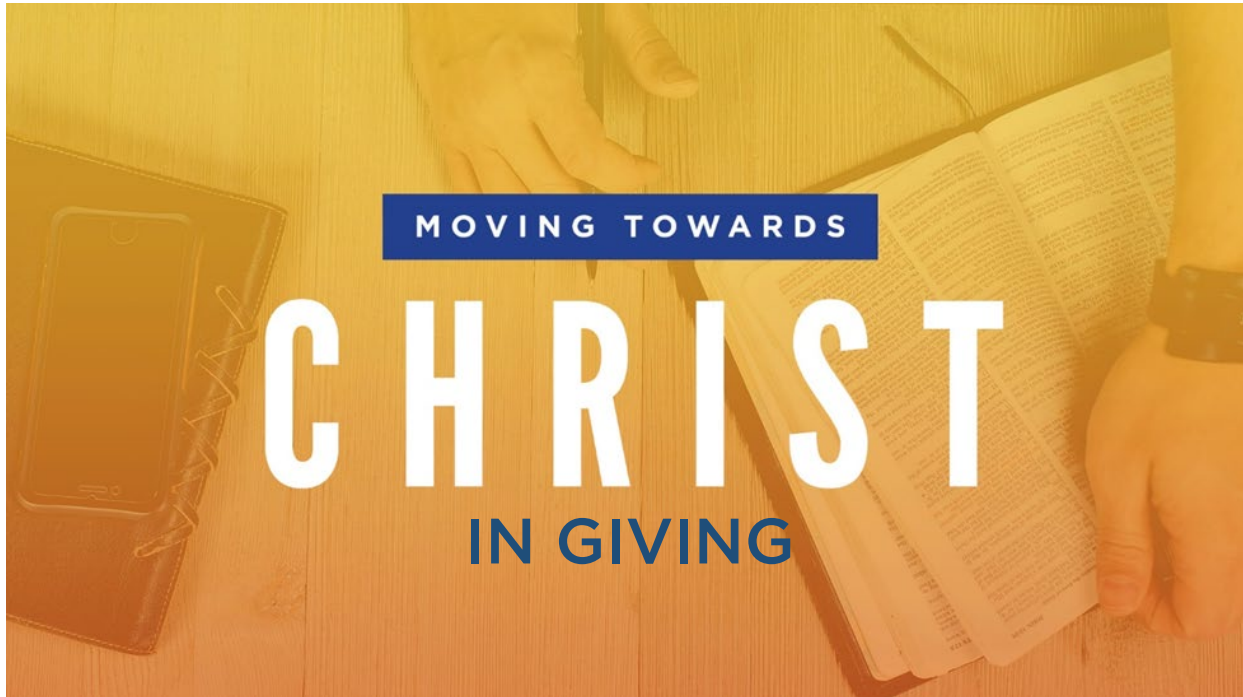
- To what extent have you considered Bible reading and small group important in following Jesus?
- In what ways has the lesson today expanded and inspired you with regards to Bible reading and small groups?



- When we study the Bible and gather in accountability groups, what are the impacts for you? For others in the group? For your family? For the church as a whole?
- Have you ever been held accountable spiritually?
- What might a next step look like for you?

*Leader's Closing Prayer*

Lord of all, with your Holy Word written on our hearts, and in agreement with one another in this gathering, help us to move towards you in our hunger for your guidance and in our willingness to be open and accountable to each other for the transformation you are moving to accomplish in us. In Jesus name, Amen.



### **Week 3**

*(Show Opening Video)*

#### *Leader's Opening Prayer*

Holy God, You have given us much: our lives, our families and friends, and a righteous command to love you with all of our hearts and all of our souls, and all of our minds, and to love all others. You have given us Your Word, which is full of guidance and help. Help us to learn to respond to Your GREAT love by making You our top priority through the giving of our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. In Jesus name, Amen.

### *Leader's Opening Remark*

When we think about giving in terms of the church, we sometimes immediately jump to a conversation about money and expectations for tithing. While that is part of the picture of a Christ-centered life, mature disciples of Jesus Christ must look beyond the obvious expectation of giving a 10% tithe to the church, and explore their additional resources such as time with God, time with people, and other gifts and resources that God has blessed us with. Mature disciples are also trained to look at their own motivations for giving. And, seasoned disciples are concerned to manage their possessions, relationships, and time in a way that honors and pleases God. Our motivations are a matter of the heart – the very thing that God says to love with ALL of it. This can become problematic for even the most dedicated Christians.

The temptation to leverage money, possessions, and relationships for the sake of power is great. It is one of the reasons that Jesus spends a major part of his ministry on teaching about giving. Just as it was for the ancient church in their context, our modern world continues to place an emphasis on self-promotion. We think we know what is better for the world, for our nation, for our city, and even for our church; and, we will even go as far as to leverage our giving to undermine its mission if we are not careful and spending time to intentionally look at our personal motivations. Christ had the most powerful thing to say about giving and he did it with something far beyond words, money, or stuff. He lived his life and died on the cross for everyone but Himself. He gave it all. No pride. No greed. That's what it truly means to love with all your heart. It means giving and loving whole-heartedly.

*Leader asks these questions, giving a few moments between each one; the group does not discuss their answers.*

- How often do you prioritize your giving?
- Do you think it is important to look at Jesus and make Him the Lord of your heart? Your bank account? Your calendar? Your Worship? Your quiet time? Your service? Your story?
- Do you see any obvious place where God can transform you either in your practice of giving or in your motivations for giving?

## **Giving**

Giving tithes, offerings, and possessions are only part of what Jesus teaches. The motivations of our hearts are even more important than the size of our offerings.

## **Bible Discovery**

The Bible stories speak of giving in terms of decision making and motivations.

*The leader has people in the class read the following passages. After each individual scripture reading, have the class identify what the Bible and small groups were for, specifically:*

2 Corinthians 9:7, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

*What, specifically, are God's conditions for our giving? (Discuss)*

Acts 20:35, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

*What, specifically, is God teaching us about our giving? (Discuss)*

Malachi 3:10, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.

*What, specifically, does God promise when we give? (Discuss)*

Mark 12:42-44, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

*What, specifically, does God use to measure our giving? (Discuss)*

Proverbs 3:27, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.

*What, specifically, does God warn us not to do? (Discuss)*

*Leader's Remark*

Time after time, the stories of the people of God demonstrate that people reap what they sow. This does not mean that they get what they give; rather, it means that they must eventually face the consequences of their decisions and actions. So it is with giving, also. If you choose not to give, even though you have the power to help, or to leverage your giving so that it might cause harm or undermine God's mission for God's people, you must eventually face the costs of those choices. God is not just concerned with if we give, or if what give. God is also concerned with why we give. The motivations of our giving (and withholding) are all indicators of where one is with Christ.

Begin to think about how you might take a next step towards Christ in your giving. Do you need to begin to give? Does your bank account, your prayer closet, your attendance in worship, your calendar, and your self-promotion all demonstrate the Jesus is the Lord of your life? What can you do to move closer to Christ? The beloved disciple reminds us what God gave, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16, NRSV). Songwriter Elvina Hall wrote, "Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow. That is why we give all we have. No other reason.

*Optional exercise: Take a deep breath and picture Jesus receiving your offering. Ask Jesus what He thinks about it and what you can do to always give your whole-hearted love to Him. Then, imagine yourself being transformed in your giving and motivated only by Jesus giving all He had for you. That alone should be the only reason you give. Now, imagine responding to Jesus in gratitude and ask yourself, “Did my offering just increase?”*

In Romans 12:6, the Apostle Paul writes, “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them,” and he proceeds to give examples of this, emphasizing each time that one uses his or her gift in the best way possible. He speaks of preaching the word of God, serving, teaching, encouraging, and exercising leadership. We must consider whether our personal giving and motivations are leading gifts that other disciples should follow. Paul lands on this: “the one who contributes should do so in generosity.” “Contributes” is a word in the Greek that means “shares” and certainly refers to the sharing of money – those who have it to give help meet the needs of those who have none. “Generosity” is a term that signifies “sincerity.” Paul chooses this word to underscore motivation. When this word is used, it always carries overtones of transparent goodwill being expressed.

*Leader asks the following discussion questions, time permitting:*

- To what extent have you considered giving important in following Jesus?
- In what ways has the lesson today expanded and inspired you with regards to giving?
- When we give (or withhold), what are the impacts for you? For others? For the church as a whole?

- What struggles do you have with giving and motivations for giving?
- What might your next step look like in giving?

*Leader's Closing Prayer*

Savior God, you have given us everything: new mercies and grace daily, the salvation offered through Jesus Christ, Your Son, and a promise of eternity with you. Help us to move towards you in our in giving all we have in response to Your great love; and, help us to do that from an awakened, righteous heart. In Jesus name, Amen.





## Week 4

*(Show Opening Video)*

### *Leader's Opening Prayer*

Triune God, we gather in Your name. You are a loving parent who knows best for us. You give us all that we have, including our salvation through Christ and Your promise of an eternity with you. You breathed life into each of us by the power of your Spirit. Who, Triune God, are we, that You would be mindful of us? And yet, you love us so much that you are. Great are You, Lord. We give you thanks. In Jesus name, Amen.

### *Leader's Opening Remark*

We arrive to the church parking lot on Sundays from many different places and situations. Some of us are barely recovered from a challenging work week, or doctor's appointments that have worn us out mentally and physically; some are weary from being alone or from the pressures of school to do well and fit in. And even some others of us are struggling financially to the point where we just want to throw our hands up in the air. Any of these things that may have gotten the best of us and any of them can easily become what captivates our hearts. Our schedules, our kids, our spouses, our extended family, our bosses, our coworkers, our finances, our age, our looks, our failures, our loneliness, our depression, our anxiety, our addictions, our gpa's, - any of these people or things become like gods, with a little "g." By the time we get here on Sundays, far too often, the main issue is not are we worshipping, the main issue is are we worshipping the right thing? Are our precious lives, of which we only get one of, spent adoring, and revering, and loving the right God? This all pertains to idolatry; but, the truth is, idolatry is just part of the problem.

Another part involves our own stubborn-headedness, and our own hard-heartedness, and our own predisposition for self-pity. But when we arrive and gather as a worshipping community, we are no longer anonymous. We can no longer get away with these attitudes because we are called into account by God, each other, and the truths exposed by our Christian witness. It is not so easy having to admit, ultimately, that God was right... about everything. But that is exactly what worship is. Worship is admitting and declaring that God is right about everything.

*Leader asks these questions, giving a few moments between each one; the group does not discuss their answers.*

- What place and situation did you arrive to our gathering today?
- What gods, with a little “g,” are captivating you?
- As the Spirit of God searches you, do you perceive any stubborn-headedness, heard-heartedness, or self-pity in yourself?

## **Worship**

Worship refocuses us on the truth and righteousness of God, and resets God’s commands to love as our main priority. Worship also helps us to replace ourselves with God as the Lord of our lives, who deserves our obedience and loyalty.

## **Bible Discovery**

The Bible speaks of worship in terms of praise for God’s righteousness and of our own self-sacrifice.

*The leader has people in the class read the following passages. After each individual scripture reading, have the class identify what the Bible and small groups were for, specifically:*

### 1 Samuel 15:22, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obedience to the voice of the Lord? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.

*What, specifically, does God want even more than our gifts? (Discuss)*

Isaiah 29:13-14, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The Lord said: Because these people draw near with their mouths and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their worship of me is a human commandment learned by rote; so I will again do amazing things with this people, shocking and amazing. The wisdom of their wise shall perish, and the discernment of the discerning shall be hidden.

*What, specifically, does God say is the cost of heartless worship?  
(Discuss)*

Romans 12:1, NRSV

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

*What, specifically, does God accept as spiritual worship? (Discuss)*

Revelation 7:9-10, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

*What, specifically, does the worship of God look like in heaven?  
(Discuss)*

Hebrews 12:28-29, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; for indeed our God is a consuming fire

*What, specifically, does worshipping God result in on earth (as it is in heaven)? (Discuss)*

*Leader's Remark*

Jesus did not stay to himself, claim to be “spiritual but not religious.” He regularly connected to the worshipping masses both inside and outside of the synagogues. When Jesus did this, in every single instance, he declared God to be right. And, by doing so, He often flipped the understanding of the religious leaders and the gathered church on its head!

Just like us, they had allowed other things, other gods, to captivate them. But Jesus forced them to consider if they were worshipping the right thing! He would teach the crowds, his disciples, and the children, and the result was worship that could not be contained by the synagogue; rather, the worship spilled out of the doors and windows and into the streets, where Jesus healed, performed miracles, and pushed the people even harder on whether other gods had captivated their hearts! He forced them to look at their very lives honestly.

Jesus knew we all have what we have because of God, not because of anything we did. If Broadmoor UMC is going to fulfill our mission of

*meeting people where they are and helping them to take their next step toward a Christ centered life, we have to do that in a safe community of believers that calls itself on the carpet for idolatry, stubborn-headedness, hard-heartedness, and self-pity. Our worship has to be more than music, and emotions, and consuming. Our worship must be our grateful response to all that God has given us and declaring God to be right about everything!*

*Optional exercise: Take a deep breath and picture the worship in heaven described in the passage from Revelation 7. A great multitude from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Jesus, crying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Consider what needs to happen in order for us to bring the worship of heaven to Broadmoor UMC? Ask God to move and help us bring heaven to earth in our worship.*

We must be a people of obedience who declare God to be right. We need to say it on the way in the door, on the way out the door, and every moment in between. We did not come here today to continue to lust. We did not come here today to continue to be prideful. We did not come here today to continue to be distrusting, cynical, and pessimistic. We did not come here today to remain weary. We did not come here today continue to give in to our worst fears. We did not come here today to just consume. We came here to give ourselves over to God and to be transformed by the power of God's Spirit. We respond in joyful obedience to God, with gratitude in our hearts, and our renewed minds that operate in truth. We are living sacrifices.

*Leader asks the following discussion questions, time permitting:*

- To what extent have you considered worship as important in following Jesus?
- In what ways has the lesson today expanded and inspired you with regards to worship?
- When we worship out of routine instead of gratitude, what are the impacts for you? For the church as a whole?
- What next step towards Christ challenges you regarding worship?

*Leader's Closing Prayer*

Righteous God, You make us new through Jesus Christ, Your Son. Help us to increase in wisdom and discernment and do not hide our eyes from the truth of Your Word. Help us to be living sacrifices: loyal, obedient, and grateful in all things. Help us to reset You as our main priority. Help us to leave this place joyful, transformed, and filled with a sense of Your goodness and a willingness and energy to share it with others. In Jesus name, Amen.



## Week 5

*(Show Opening Video)*

### *Leader's Opening Prayer*

Awesome God, throughout history you have used the low to bring down the high. Servanthood and humility are the trademarks of your Son, Jesus, who came to us in a manger yet saved us from our sin. He made your name famous by dying on a cross. He lead his disciples by washing their feet and serving them the Lord's meal. Help us to be like Him and bring you glory and honor. In Jesus name, Amen.



### *Leader's Opening Remark*

One of the greatest obstacles to sharing our Christian faith by telling our story of how God has changed us, or by serving other in our community and world, is our tendency to make excuses and do whatever we want, instead of doing what God asks us to do. We tell ourselves things like other, more gifted people can do it, it is too embarrassing, too time consuming, too far outside of our comfort-zone. We make it about our age, our lack of strength or talent, our availability and our inconvenience. This destroys the freedom that Christ gives us to love God, and others, through loving outreach and service.

Without Christ, we are slaves to sin and consumerism, unable to do what is right. Loving outreach and service is about someone else's need, not yours. Oh the lies we tell ourselves: I don't have time. I don't know what I would do. I don't have any special skills to contribute. They don't *really* need me. The truth is the Lord doesn't call the equipped; The Lord equips the called.

God has used people with similar doubts to change the course of history. Moses didn't think he was a leader or speaker, but God worked through Moses to bring Israel out of slavery. David was the youngest (and therefore most insignificant) of all his brothers, but God worked through David to defeat a giant and eventually made him a king. Paul used to kill Christians before he met Jesus, but he went on to become one of the most highly-regarded and prolific writers/church planters in history. If God could use Moses, David, or Paul, what will it take for you to understand that God doesn't want only to work through you, God wants to work in you?

It is through Christ and our church that we have the freedom to move beyond what we want and embrace what God has called us to: loving outreach and service.

*Leader asks these questions, giving a few moments between each one; the group does not discuss their answers.*

- What story do you have that could help someone else?
- What ability do you have that could help this church meet people where they are and help them take their next step towards Christ?
- What has Christ done in you that would inspire other to do good?

### **Loving Outreach and Service**

Loving outreach and service means living into the freedom the Christ gives us to do things beyond our perceived abilities with confidence. We can stop making excuses and leverage the power of what God has done, and who God is calling us to emulate – Jesus Christ himself.

### **Bible Discovery**

The Bible speaks of worship in terms of praise for God’s righteousness and of our own self-sacrifice.

*The leader has people in the class read the following passages. After each individual scripture reading, have the class identify what the Bible and small groups were for, specifically:*

Mark 15:16, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation.

*What, specifically, does Jesus instruct his disciples to do? (Discuss)*

Jeremiah 1:7, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.

*What, specifically, does God say for those making excuses? (Discuss)*

Acts 1:8, NRSV

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”.

*What, specifically, does God promise as help for our perceived shortcomings and insecurities? (Discuss)*

Galatians 5:13-14, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

*What, specifically, does God consider as real freedom? (Discuss)*

Matthew 25:33-40, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

“Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

*Who, specifically, does Jesus say we are reaching out to and serving when we do it for those experiencing separation from God, hunger, sickness, homelessness, nakedness, and imprisonment? (Discuss)*

*Leader’s Remark*

Jesus does not tell us to do whatever we want; rather, Jesus frees us to walk in relationship with God and tell that story. He freed us to be the kind of people He created us to be – those who love, reach out, and serve others. Jesus redeemed us on the inside and gave us the ability to obey God and choose God’s will for our lives. When we reach out to others and lovingly serve them, we live into our identity in Christ, which transcends self, sin, and even death. We live an abundant life of powerful witness and servant leadership. With Christ, we are free to witness and serve as a loving response to God, who loved us first.

*Optional exercise: Take a deep breath and picture someone who could benefit from the story of who you were before Christ and how He has transformed you. Look into the eyes of someone you imagine would benefit from your loving service, whether it be knitting them a blanket, changing the oil in their car, or helping them to prepare their taxes. Think of your gifts. Then, allow their image to transform into the face of Jesus. How much more are you willing to offer your witness and service to them? Imagine Jesus' gratitude and him saying to you, "Well done, my good and faithful child. I love you. Thank you."*

Christ's death on the cross set us free from making excuses. His life modeled offering himself in purposeful witness and loving service to others in need. He made a difference at significant personal cost and inconvenience to his own life. And, he's calling us to do the same – to extend his witness and ministry to the people of our community and world. How will you be world changer and help transform it, in the name of Jesus, by your loving outreach and service?

*Leader asks the following discussion questions, time permitting:*

- To what extent have you considered outreach and service as important in following Jesus?
- In what ways has the lesson today expanded and inspired you with regards to worship?
- When we testify and serve, what are the impacts for you? For the ones you serve For the church as a whole?
- What next step towards Christ challenges you regarding your outreach and service?

*Leader's Closing Prayer*

Loving God, you gave us Jesus who modeled testifying to Your greatness and power, and who humbly served those whom you created. Give us a desire to do the same – to share with others the hope of your transforming power and to meet their needs as if we were serving Jesus himself. In Jesus name, Amen.