

Paradigm Discipleship

CC @ UNM FOUNDATIONAL RESOURCE SERIES

The purpose of this resource is to provide some guidance for you as you encourage your disciple to develop a life of love for and service to God and His Church.

We encourage you to do your own study, using this resource as a guide, to develop a learning experience for you and your disciple that will help you both move deeper in your understanding of the Church. The goal for this study is to help your disciple better understand God's will and design for His people.

THE CHURCH

Study Question: Why does the Church exist?

*Side Note: Before we can understand what the Church is and does, we must first understand why the Church even is at all. Much like a person who takes up exercise may believe it's good for them, but can quickly give up without proper motivation and perspective for continuing when things become difficult, so too can we become disillusioned and bored without a correct, biblical understanding of the Church. And how much more important is God's Church than jogging!

*Discuss with your disciple why the Church exists, then read (see also Acts 15:14, Titus 2:14)

Study Question: What is the Church?

*Discuss what you and your disciple's answers, as well as how different groups might respond to this question (believers, unbelievers, different denominations, the government, family, friends, classmates, etc.). Some examples might be: "a social club," "a therapy group," "a force for social reform," "an institution to control the masses," "the body of Christ," etc. What do you think is the most common view? Do any of these views contain elements of truth? Why do people (including you and your disciple) hold these views?

Study Question: What does the Bible say about the Church?

*God uses various descriptions or word pictures to describe what the Church is like. Read the verses below and discuss them with your disciple. How do these compare to you and your disciple's answers in the previous question?

Ephesians 4:4-6 The Church is unified in identity and purpose.

John 10:11-16 The Church is a flock of sheep, Jesus its head shepherd (pastor).
1 Peter 2:4-9

Ephesians 4:11-16 /
1 Corinthians 12:12-27

The Church is a body, comprised of individual parts, each serving a purpose, with Christ as its head.

Revelation 19:6-9 The Church is a bride with Christ as her Groom.

The Bible was not written to confuse people; nor to deceive people; nor to send people into boredom or burden them with rules. Isn't that exciting? Do you believe the original purposes for which the Bible was written hold true today?

Isn't it wonderful that God didn't leave us on our own to figure out what the Church is supposed to be? Of course, much of what these verses talk about is in reference to believers and their identity in general, what we might call the "universal church." How then do we move from this general understand to a specific application of what it means to be a Church, a local gathering of Christians. Is any gathering of

two or more believers “Church?” Why aren’t organizations such as the BSU Christian Challenge considered a Church?

Study Question: What then does the Church do?

The Church and the Gospel

* The purpose of this section is to provide a new way of thinking about the Bible by relating it to the different parts of the Gospel. This is considering the Bible through a “Gospel lens” to see its real worth!

Study Question: Do you remember the main tenets/parts of the Gospel from the beginning studies?

*God is Holy and Loving, the Transcendent and Immanent Creator, Sovereign, and Redeemer.

*Man is created in God’s image, but is sinful.

*Christ is Savior and Lord; he completed the work of glorifying God and rescued his people through his death and resurrection; he ascended to the Father and still lives to intercede for us; he will return to judge the world and put everything right.

Study Question: Think about the character of God. How does the character of God (who he is, what he does) relate to the Bible (what it is, how we respond to it)?

*Here is a pattern for answering: “If God is X, then his Word is Y.” For example, if God is truth, then his Word is true and we can trust it. Below are some scriptures that correspond to the original gospel studies:

Genesis 1 If God is the Creator, and He created by His Word, then His Word is powerful and able to create life in us (see **2 Corinthians 4:6**).

Isaiah 55:8–11 If God is transcendent and yet immanent, then one way God is near us is through the going out of His Word.

Can you think of other “If God is... then his word is...” statements that relate to God’s character? You might look at the second “God” study that included many of God’s attributes.

Study Question: What are some ways that the Bible relates to the character of Man and our response to God?

Hebrews 4:12–13 The Word exposes the deepest realities of our hearts.

James 1:22–25 The Word is a mirror that shows us our true selves.

Study Question: What are some ways that the Bible relates to Jesus? **THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT SECTION IN THIS STUDY!!**

*Some answers may be that Jesus knew the Word (Luke 4:4, 16–17) or that the Word speaks about Jesus. But the purpose of this question is to blow our minds with a larger truth: the whole Bible is about Jesus, and if we are reading the Bible without thinking of Jesus, we are missing out.

John 20:31 The Word was written so that we might believe in Jesus and by believing have life in his name! But is this only in reference to John’s Gospel or to the whole Bible?

1 Corinthians 15:3–4 The Scriptures (not just some of them) are fulfilled in Jesus’ death and resurrection. Jesus himself believed and taught this (see also **Mark 14:21; Luke 24:25–48**). Jesus is the main subject of Scripture!

John 5:46 Jesus said that Moses wrote about him. Even the Old Testament is ultimately about Jesus (can you think of some examples?).

2 Corinthians 4:14–16 It is possible to miss Jesus and thus to miss the true meaning of the Scriptures (see also **Acts 13:27; Hebrews 4:2**). We need the Spirit to open our eyes, hearts, and minds, so let’s ask Him to do so. If we honestly search the Scriptures we will find how precious Jesus is (**Acts 17:10–15**).

To conclude this study, read together with your disciple either **Psalm 19** or **Psalm 119:1–16** (or read both). Discuss any ways that the Bible seems sweeter or more

powerful to you after this brief study. Is there anything unclear that you could clarify through prayer, research, and talking later? How has your understanding of the Bible changed? How might this encourage you to pursue a lifelong abiding in God's Word?

Pray back to God the words of Psalms 19 or 119. Ask Him to help you experience Scripture as a joy and not a burden. Thank Him for what He has taught you and repent of any sinful thoughts, feelings, or actions that He has revealed. End in praise that God has spoken and is not silent! He has revealed Himself in Scripture as a Gracious God.

Additional Resources:

Sermons:

https://www.desertspringschurch.org/messages/Date/NOV_27_2011.php

Other verses on the Church

Hebrew 10:24-25

1 Thess. 5:11

Galatians 6:2

Hebrews 3:12-14