

Lesson Plan & Study Guide



Exploring Spirituality:

Global Values and the Sabbath

iFOLLOW

Meeting with Jesus

The iFollow Discipleship Series



About the iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition

Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

Credits

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iFOLLOW

www.ifollowdiscipleship.org

Global Values and the Sabbath

This presentation is designed for people who have not yet come to a point in their spiritual journey where they have decided to become a follower of Jesus.

Learning Objectives

1. Review the environmental problems our world faces
2. Take a new look at the Story of Beginnings
3. Understand what God's mandate of stewardship means
4. Make a new commitment to care for the earth and its inhabitants
5. Discover the connection between the Sabbath and global values

Content Outline

- A. Today's Environmental Challenges
- B. The Story of Beginnings
- C. God's Job Description for Human Beings
- D. What if?
- E. An Unexpected Resource
- F. One Simple Man

Background Material for the Presenter

Ziggy, clothed in his swim suit, is standing on the beach. He's holding a big shell up to his ear, listening. A voice from inside says, "Good afternoon, sir. I represent the Crustacean Liberation Front"

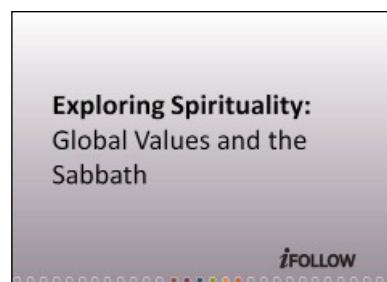
Let's face it, more than just crustaceans need liberating on this planet. Several years ago, dead porpoises were washing up on the Atlantic beaches. Someone theorized that a virus was killing them, maybe even AIDS. After all, used medical syringes and hospital waste were washing up on beaches near the major metropolitan areas along

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the east coast.

But biologists rejected the AIDS theory. When asked what was killing the porpoises, they said, “environmental stress.” In other words, the way we all live now. Our planetary life-style is killing our planet.

Factories and power plants with belching smokestacks work around the clock to prepare all kinds of creature comforts we think we can’t do without and meet our insatiable demand for electric power. In the process lethal toxic waste is pumped into the atmosphere and dumped into our waterways, with dead fish washing up on the shores.

In the United States alone, about 142 million tons of toxic and noxious fumes are dumped into the atmosphere every year by smokestacks and tailpipes. This is contributing to the global warming which, according to scientists, will result in a three- to eight-degree (Fahrenheit) increase over the next 40 years, which will contribute to extreme weather patterns and intensive drought, which will lead to massive starvation and death.

The problem of deforestation and stripping of the land has led to an increase of deserts by 150 percent during the past hundred years, so that almost 50 percent of the earth’s land surface now exists in desert or semiarid conditions.

A single acre of trees puts 20,000 gallons of clean water vapor back into our dirty air every day. Unfortunately, a single Sunday edition of the New York Times consumes 150 acres of trees. In fact, according to one researcher, fourteen acres of forest are being destroyed in the world every minute. Professor Rowland Moss suggests that “if every human being bought a daily newspaper, all the earth’s forests would be destroyed within 30 years.”

No wonder recycling is so important. And yet, every week more than half of the newspapers are never recycled. That is a waste of 375,000 trees every week.

The average North American generates and dumps 160 pounds of hazardous household waste each year. We throw away enough glass bottles and jars to fill two Empire State buildings in New York City every two weeks. We throw away enough aluminum to rebuild the entire United States commercial air fleet every three months. We throw away enough office and writing paper annually to build a wall twelve feet high stretching from Los Angeles to New York City. We throw away enough iron and steel to continuously supply all the nation’s automakers. We discard 2.5 million plastic bottles every hour.

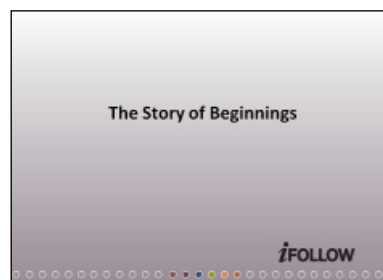
We are a nation of garbage producers. And so it seems rather ironic that, according to one news report, 73 percent of Americans see themselves as environmentalists. A few years ago at the Earth Day celebration in New York City’s Central Park and in Washington, D.C., the 875,000 “environmentalists” left behind 161.3 tons of garbage. It is a lot easier to preach than to practice! Even the contemporary guru of environmentalism, the winner of the 2007 Nobel peace prize, Al Gore, devoured 20 times more gas and electricity than

the national average in 2006, spending \$30,000 a year, enough to power 232 average households for a month.

The obvious point is, we have a problem! We have a problem not only knowing the issues but especially a problem of doing the right thing in response. Our planet desperately needs liberation. The question is, are we up to the challenge? Are we willing to leverage our resources to helping solve this problem?

The Story of Beginnings

The Old Testament scriptures begin with the story of Beginnings. God brings planetary life into existence, including human beings. And then God gives to humanity a very serious responsibility. “God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’” (Genesis 1:26-28, NIV)



Notice what God tells humans to do. One, fill the earth. Two, subdue the earth. And three, rule over the earth. The problem with these action words is that they have been interpreted by religious people through the centuries in ways that produced terrible injury to the environment by well-meaning people who in the name of God have exploited and destroyed His creation.

This has led secular historians and scientists to place the blame for today’s ecological crisis largely on the shoulders of Bible-believing religions. Dr. Lynn White, a historian at the University of California, in an article in Science magazine titled “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” puts it this way: “Christianity not only established a dualism of man and nature, but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends. So Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt.”

Even more outspoken is Ian L. McHarg. He’s a Scot who became a town planner, an ecologist, and the founder and chairman of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1969 he wrote that the Christian interpretation of the Genesis story “in its insistence upon dominion and subjugation of nature, encourages the most exploitative and destructive instincts in man rather than those that are deferential and creative ... Indeed, God’s affirmation about man’s domination was a declaration of war on nature.”

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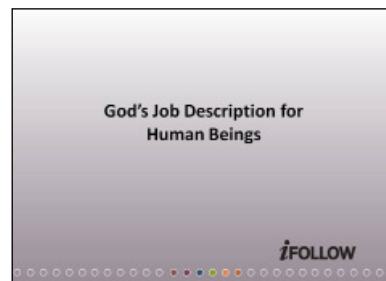
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The issue at stake in this Genesis story quoted earlier is how one interprets those responsibilities God gave to human beings. Words like “fill,” “subdue,” and “rule” certainly carry very negative connotations. People like Genghis Khan, Nebuchadnezzar, Julius Caesar, Atilla the Hun, Stalin, Hitler, Idi Amin, and Sadam Hussein provide a perspective on “ruling” that denotes violence, power, self-centeredness, control and exploitation. Is this what God had in mind when He gave humanity stewardship over the globe?

God’s Job Description for Human Beings

The context of those Genesis 1 verses is significant. Before God gives humans these commands, he says, “Let us make human beings in our image and likeness.” (Verse 26) The nature of humanity’s dominion or rule over the earth is in direct connection with being created in God’s image. In other words, to know what kind of subduing and ruling humans were to do, we must first see what kind of subduing and ruling God does. What is the nature of God’s dominion? Biblical perspective provides the following picture.



First, when Jesus came on the scene, he revealed a **God who rules creation with intimate knowledge and caring** beyond the stereotypical imagine. Jesus made the statement, “Two sparrows cost only a penny, but not even one of them can die without your heavenly Father knowing it.” (Matthew 10:29)

Apparently, God attends the funeral of every fallen bird. God pays tribute to each road kill. Why? Because, as biblical perspective reveals, it’s all God’s creation. And creation is special to God. There’s an intimacy of tenderness and concern with all creation. So if human beings are going to rule and subdue the earth in God’s image, that is the same intimate care and concern they must bring to the task.

Here’s the way one author describes it: “There seems to be a relationship of real intimacy between the Creator and his creation. We get the impression that God loves the world of nature and cares for it with a tenderness and concern that we might expect in a gardener caring for his prize roses.” (Cottrell, p. 127)

What a profound metaphor to use in describing God’s relationship to creation. Have you ever watched a gardener who is passionate about roses care for them? There isn’t any part of the rose plant’s existence that isn’t meaningful and attended to by the gardener. The “subduing” and “ruling” involves deferential treatment and profound care and respect, admiration not exploitation.

Second, Jesus further defined God’s rule and dominion with this radical description: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you

must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:25-28, NIV)

What does this tell us about the way God rules? God’s mandate is that **the one who rules is the one who serves**. Ruling is defined by the way one serves the needs of those within the domain of the ruler. And Jesus gave that ultimate description of service when He gave up his life for the ones He came to serve. In act of unselfishness, of pure compassion and mercy, He sacrificed His own self-interest for the sake of empowering the best in others.

This certainly suggests significant implications for what God had in mind when he gave human beings the responsibility of stewarding creation on his behalf. Instead of treading upon creation in order to serve ourselves and our own egotistical needs through acts of greed and gratification, we work to live in balance and mutual service to all of creation. We pay intentional attention to how we can serve our environment so that it, too, can become all that God originally intended it to be.

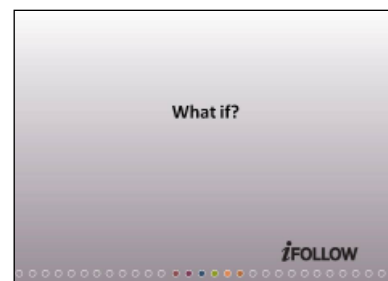
So actions like reducing consumption, recycling, renewing natural resources, limiting deforestation—all of which upset our sensitive ecosystems—are not simply policy choices of liberal environmentalists and tree-huggers. They’re responsible choices by people given a mandate from the Creator God to steward and manage the planet in ways that serve rather than destroy.

That’s why God continues his job description for human beings by adding, “The Lord God put humans in the garden of Eden to care for it and work it.” (Genesis 2:15). The Hebrew phrase can accurately be translated, “to serve and preserve it.”

What If?

So what might that look like, if we took this managerial mandate seriously? Imagine yourself and your friends sitting in the back yard, engaged in casual conversation. Suddenly God in human form walks through the gate. A power beyond description emanates from this form that approaches you. It is obviously God. He drops to one knee and scoops up a handful of dirt. He moistens the soil in His hand and forms it into the shape of a creature, one that has never been seen before. He draws it close to His face and breathes on it. Instantly, a miracle takes place before your very eyes. The lump of soil springs up a living creature, a new creation added to the panoply of life.

Then God turns to you and places this little creature in your hand. He says, “Would you name it, please, and take care of it for me?” And then as quickly as He came, His shadow



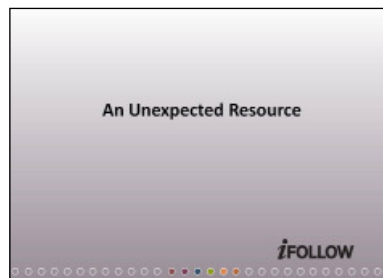
has passed through the gate and He's gone. You are there holding this little creature in the palm of your hand. It makes a tiny sound as it looks up at you. A new life, vulnerable, pulsating with energy, the beginning of potential, a part of the ecosystem you have yet to discover its place in.

So what would you do? Get it plump for food later on? Skin it so you can wear it? Use it for target practice? Throw it the ground and disregard it, letting it find its own way in the world? Would you let it starve from neglect? Would you let your neighbor abuse it? If you lost it from sight and later saw it smashed beside the road, would you think anything of it?

Or would you value this creation because you saw it come from God's hand? Would you hold it, care for it, provide for it, serve and preserve it, get to know it in every way you could so you could nurture and protect it to achieve its highest potential in its earthly existence; all of these things because the last thing you heard God say to you was, "This belongs to me. But I want you to take care of it for me. Please?"

An Unexpected Resource

It's significant that in the Story of Beginnings, after God creates human beings and gives them the responsibility of stewarding creation, God provides a resource to help them do this well. "Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." (Genesis 2:1-3, NIV)



God provides a weekly Sabbath—a time to stop, rest, and engage in spiritual activities—as a reminder of creation and His creative activity. In the beginning, God created. God “deputized” human beings to care for that creation. And then God stopped; God sabbathed. That weekly Sabbath was given as a gift, an opportunity for humanity and all creation to enter into God’s rest, God’s wholeness. Every seven days human beings were given a reminder of their stewardship on God’s behalf for the sake of creation. Preservation and rest and caring concern and nurture and protection are gifts the Sabbath memorializes for all of creation. Wholeness was given by God for everyone and everything. And the weekly Sabbath was God’s gift to not only remind but also to empower that kind of life.

Here’s the way one author puts it: “The distinctive Sabbath lifestyle, characterized not by exploitation but by admiration of the earth, not by devastation of nature but the exaltation of its Creator, provides a valuable model of responsible stewardship in an otherwise irresponsible society. It teaches a person to view herself not as a predator but as a curator

of God's creation." (Bacchiochi, p. 213)

Bacchiocchi describes how the Sabbath is key to the solution of the ecological crisis facing humanity. On the Sabbath day we must leave nature untouched. To change it by building on it or by destroying it would be a violation of the Sabbath rest. The Sabbath is the day not to alter nature, but to admire it as an expression of the beauty and glory of God's handiwork, Psalms 19:1. (Bacchiochi, pp. 204-214)

Instead of plundering natural resources, the Sabbath teaches us to cease pollution, to appreciate and respect God's creation, and especially other human beings. "Sabbath keeping is an exercise in responsible stewardship of the whole earth. ... The acknowledgement of God's ownership, expressed on the Sabbath by surrendering the right to use gainfully human and natural resources, affects the Christian's general attitude toward God and the world. It teaches a person to view himself not as a predator but as a curator [guardian, protector] of God's creation."

Long after creation, God repeated this responsibility to the Jews when he said, "You are aliens in this land I have given you. You are my tenants. Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land." (Leviticus 25:23-24)

Tenants are not the owners. They are simply temporary dwellers in a space owned by another. Their responsibility is to treat that space in harmony with the wishes of the owner. Those of us who rent apartments or homes understand this dynamic well.

Significantly, in these verses God is telling the people that not only are they to treat others with respect and care (bringing redemption to those in need of it) but they are also to bring redemption to the land. The rest of scripture reveals that God has a comprehensive restoration plan not only for people but also for the rest of creation. And God is calling for human beings to be a part of that redemptive plan. That is the stewardship job description God gave to human beings from the beginning.

So our continual questions as responsible stewards must be, What can we do to restore the earth to its intended state? How can we cooperate with the environment in achieving greater wholeness? What does "highest potential" mean for species in the natural world? How can we nurture and protect that? What steps can we take to be curators rather than predators? How can we manifest genuine respect for all creation? What would sincere Sabbath-keeping look like in this context? How could the weekly Sabbath be a resource for our stewardship of creation?

One Simple Man

Elzeard Bouffier was a simple shepherd living in the mountain heights of the French Alps. Back around 1913 the area



was a barren and colorless land where nothing grew but wild lavender. Former villages were desolate, springs were dry, and over this high unsheltered wasteland the wind blew with unendurable ferocity.

While mountain climbing, a man named Jean Giono began searching for water and came to a shepherd's hut. He was invited in for a meal and to spend the night. Giono tells of his host's curious activity after the meal. "The shepherd went to fetch a small sack and poured out a heap of acorns on the table. He began inspecting them, one by one, with great concentration, separating the good from the bad. When he had set aside a large enough pile of good acorns, he counted them out by tens, meanwhile eliminating the small ones or those which were slightly cracked. When he had selected one hundred perfect acorns he stopped and he went to bed."

Giono discovered that the shepherd had been planting trees on the wild hillsides. In three years he had planted 100,000 acorns of which 20,000 had sprouted. Of the 20,000 seedlings, this quiet man expected to lose half to rodents or to the harshness of alpine nature. So there remained 10,000 oak trees to grow where nothing had grown before. At this time in his life, Elzeard Bouffier was 55 years old. But he said his work was just beginning.

Returning to the mountainside after World War I, a couple years later, Giono discovered an incredible forest and a chain-reaction in creation. The desolation was giving way to wild growth; water flowed in the once empty brooks, the wind scattered seeds, and the ecology, sheltered by a leafy roof and bonded to the earth by a mat of spreading roots, became hospitable. Willows, rushes, meadows, gardens, flowers were born. The desolate villages were re-inhabited. Life had been resurrected everywhere.

Giono returned again to the region after World War II. Thirty kilometers away from the battle lines, the simple shepherd had quietly and peacefully continued his work, ignoring the war of 1939 just as he had the war of 1914. The reformation and restoration had continued. Here's how Giono described it:

"On the site of the ruins I had seen in 1913 now stand neat farms. The old streams, fed by the rains and snows that the forest conserves, are flowing again. Little by little the villages have been rebuilt. People from the plains where land is costly have settled here, bringing youth, motion, and the spirit of adventure. Along the roads you meet hearty men and women, boys and girls who understand laughter and have recovered a taste for picnics. Counting the former population, unrecognizable now that they live in comfort, more than 10,000 people (and an entire mountain creation) owe their joy and happiness and productivity to one simple man, Elzeard Bouffier."

If one human being could make that kind of a difference in the restoration of the environment and the mutual nurturing of life, imagine what could happen if all of us took our stewardship that seriously.

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Handouts in this Package

1. Participant's Notes



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Additional Resources

Bacchiochi, Samuele (2001). *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness: A Theological Study of the Good News of the Sabbath for Today*. Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives.

Cottrell, Jack (2001). *What the Bible Says about God the Creator, The Doctrine of God*, Volume 1. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers.

Stassen, Glen H., and David P. Gushee (2003). *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Zydek, Heather (2006). *The Revolution: A Field Manual for Changing Your World*. Orlando, FL: Relevant Books.

Film and DVD

Bender, Lawrence and Burns, S. Z. (Producers) & Guggenheim, Davis (Director). (2006). *An Inconvenient Truth [Motion picture]*. United States: Lawrence Bender Productions.

Pixar Animation Studios (Producer) & Stanton, Andrew (Director). (2008). *Wall-E [Motion picture]*. United States: Walt Disney Pictures.

Websites

Adventists for the Environment represents the efforts of a number of Seventh-day Adventists around the world who are concerned about environmental issues. It is not an official entity of the denomination, but carefully adheres to the teachings of the Church. It includes quick news of Adventist publications and activities related to environmental issues, as well as opportunities to post questions and comments and a number of resource materials. It is on the Web at: <http://sdaenvironmentalism.wordpress.com>

The Evangelical Environmental Network publishes Creation Care Magazine and provides many other informational and Bible-study resources. Their materials can be seen at: <http://www.creationcare.org>

Interfaith Power and Light is a Christian organization not affiliated with any denomination but founded by an Episcopal priest, Sally Bingham. It has a full time staff and provides many informational resources related to a religious response to global warming and related issues. It is located on the Web at: <http://interfaith-powerandlight.org>

Restoring Eden is a parachurch Christian ministry “dedicated to serving Christ by working with God’s people to be a voice for God’s creation and all those who depend on it.” This group lives out the Bible mandate to “speak out for those who cannot speak for themselves” (Proverbs 31:8). It supports activities of three kinds; nature appreciation, environmental stewardship and public advocacy on behalf of conservation. Their web site includes many resources, both biblical and practical: <http://restoringeden.org>

You can calculate your own carbon footprint or impact on the global environment at any one of the following three web site: www.carbonfootprint.com or www.nature.org/initiatives/climatechange/calculator or www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind_calculator.html

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Discussion Questions

1. What can we do to restore the earth to its intended state?
2. How can we cooperate with the environment in achieving greater wholeness?
3. What does “highest potential” mean for species in the natural world?
4. How can we nurture and protect that?
5. What steps can we take to be curators rather than predators?
6. How can we manifest genuine respect for all creation?
7. What would sincere Sabbath-keeping look like in this context?
8. How could the weekly Sabbath be a resource for our stewardship of creation?

Group Activities

Purpose: To make decisions together about the ways we can come closer to God's ideal for our stewardship of the natural environment.

Preparation: You will need enough tables for your group to divide into teams of four or six each. Each group should have a table of its own with writing materials on the table. On a chalk board or flipchart, write, "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without."

Assignment: Divide the total group into teams at the tables. Point out that we all can probably do more in the way of walking more gently on the earth. Have each team take the four parts of the saying on the board and come up with a minimum of five specific things that each person can do. In other words, five things each one can use up, that they presently tend to be wasteful about. Five things each one can wear out instead of buying a new one. And so on. After a period of time, ask each team to report to the larger group.

Debrief: Share ideas with each other and ask for other suggestions or help. Then place the papers on which each team has written together and pray over them. Commit to making these steps real, rather than well-intentioned ideas. Within a day or so after the activity, the leader should take the responsibility to have all of the ideas typed up and distributed to everyone who participated and others who may be interested.

Time: Allow ten to 20 minutes for the teams to work at the tables, and at least 15 minutes for reports and discussion with the larger group. Then take at least five minutes for serious prayer about the subject.

Additional Activity: If computers are available, participants can calculate their carbon footprints at any of a number of Web sites such as: www.carbonfootprint.com or www.nature.org/initiatives/climatechange/calculator or www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind_calculator.html This adds a very specific element to the discussion and brainstorming.

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Handout 1

What it Means to be a Christian

Participant Guide

1. God is Watching

What are the theological problems inherent the view that “we’d better be good, or God will get us!”

2. Jesus’ Role in Revealing God

A. “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you really have known me, you will know who my Father is. From now on you know him and have seen him!” (John 14:6-7, NLT)

B. Jesus is the _____.

3. Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life

A. “After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, ‘Do you understand what I was doing? You call me ‘Teacher’ [Rabbi] and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because it is true. And since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you ... You know these things, now do them! That is the way of blessing.” (John 13:12-17, NLT)

B. What is the Way Jesus is talking about? _____

C. “You know that in this world kings are tyrants, and officials lord it over the people beneath them. But among you it should be quite different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must become your slave. For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give

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my life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:25-28, NLT)

D. Contrast the picture of God of the Greeks, the Romans, and Jesus.

E. “The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.” (John 10:10, NLT)

4. The Cross as Symbol of the Way

A. “When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.” (Romans 5:6-8, NLT)

B. Paul’s story

C. The Meaning: _____

5. The Cross as Revelation of the Truth

A. “This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (John 15:12-13, NLT)

B. John’s story

C. The Meaning: _____

6. The Cross as Empowerment for Life

A. “10 This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.” (1 John 4:10-12, NLT)

B. Love _____ .

C. “We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.” (1 John 4:16, NLT)

D. The Meaning: _____

7. What it Means to Follow Jesus

A. A Life of _____

“And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world. Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.” (1 John 4:17-18, NLT)

Jesus’ example: “Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples’ feet.” (John 13:3-5, NLT)

What gave Jesus his confidence? _____

B. A Life of _____

“We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God’s love be in that person? Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.” (1 John 3:16-18, NLT)

C. Principles of Following Jesus:

“I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.”

Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’” (The words of Jesus in Matthew 25:35-40, NLT)

Handout 2

The Cross as Symbol of the Way, Truth, and Life

The Cross as Symbol—“the Way”

The Cross is forever a symbol of God’s way of grace, God’s embrace of all people no matter what their background or lifestyle or failures or rebellions or delusions or illusions. Jesus’ death on the cross portrays this counter-intuitive Way of life in stark contrast to a world based upon conditional acceptance and measured value. The Cross is a radical symbol of this good news that God is friends with everyone no matter what their religious views or lack of religion.

The Cross as Revelation—“the Truth”

Jesus went to the cross to reveal the truth about God’s love—that divine love knows no bounds, no limits, no conditions—God’s kind of love gives unselfishly and sacrificially. No cost is too great for love.

The Cross as Empowerment—“the Life”

Love gives birth to love. The more we’re around real Love, the more we’re drawn to that kind of love and the more we begin to live that kind of love. That’s why Jesus wanted to show us such a powerful demonstration of God’s love – so we could more easily trust God, knowing how God really feels about us and what God really wants for us. Love gives birth to love.

So the Cross ends up being more than just a symbol or a revelation. It can also empower what it symbolizes and reveals, unselfish and inclusive love. It both defines and facilitates the way to God’s kind of life. If you wear the Cross, you’re saying that you not only believe and value what It stands for, you’re choosing to live it, too. The Way of the Cross is the Way of True Love and the Way of Real Life and the Way of Energy for that Life.

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