

YEAR OF
BIBLICAL
LITERACY

1. Week 41: A Community Following Jesus, Part 1 - Reflection on the Gospels

2. Recap & Preparing for CG:

Daily Reading for Week:

- Acts 1-2, Psalm 119:153-176
- Acts 3-4, Psalm 120
- Acts 5-6, Psalm 121
- Acts 7-8, Psalm 122
- Acts 9-10, Psalm 123
- Acts 11-12, Psalm 124
- Acts 13-14, Psalm 125

Resources for Week:

- Watch Read Scripture Video: Acts 1-12 and Acts 13-28
- Bring: Bible, pen, and paper

3. Focus of our time together:

To reflect on our time in the Gospels and recall our favorite stories of Jesus.

4. Weekly ground rule / goal / value:

Goal: The goal for this week is to practice sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. In times of silence, prayer, discussion, or reflection, try to pay attention to what the still small voice of the Spirit could be saying, inviting, or encouraging you into.

5. Connection and Unity Exercise (Mutual Invitation, 15 minutes):

What one word best describes your experience engaging with Jesus in the Gospels over the past several weeks, and why?

6. Opening Prayer:

Take a few minutes to corporately talk to Jesus, offering any feelings of thanks, reverence, confusion, doubt, etc.

7. Intro to Discussion:

For the last 6 weeks, we have explored the New Testament Gospels. Specifically, we have observed the ways that the Gospel writers told the story of Jesus through the language of the Old Testament. The Gospels, indeed the entire New Testament, is seeped in the stories, characters, language, and narrative of the Old Testament. This week, we begin reading Acts, which tells the story of what happens to Jesus' disciples immediately after His ascension. Acts is a fascinating look at the beginnings of the Church. In the following weeks, we will read through Acts and the many epistles, diving into the complex and sometimes tense world of the community of early Jesus-followers. As we do, we'll try to see how the early disciples related to God and one another, what they valued, how they understood Jesus, and what the Holy Spirit did among and through them.

This week, however, we wanted to pause and reflect on our time in the Gospels. Like the apostles in Acts who are left pondering the implications of their years with Jesus — His teachings, actions, death, and resurrection — we want to take time to ponder and reflect on these wonderful and mysterious stories. Specifically, we want to remember the moments, words, and stories of Jesus, which particularly impacted or compelled us, surprised or invited us. Like rewatching our favorite movie or rereading our favorite book, we will recall our favorite parts and share them with one another.

8. Questions for Large Group Discussion (75 minutes):

The Gospels Reflection Exercise

Guidelines:

This exercise is about retelling your favorite stories of Jesus to one another. It is not meant to be a time to exegetically unpack every nuance of a given story. Try to avoid preachiness or moralizing a story of Jesus. Instead, share what is meaningful to you and how the Holy Spirit used it to encourage, provoke, convict, or compel.

Reflect (5 minutes):

To begin, sit for 5 minutes in silence and think about the stories of Jesus you have read through over the past weeks.

Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind a story, teaching, nuance, or description of Jesus that particularly stood out when you read it. Open your Bible to this story and reread it quietly to yourself.

Write (5 minutes):

Then take 5 minutes to write down your answers to the following questions:

1. What is it about Jesus in this story that you find compelling or memorable?
2. What is it about this story that particularly connects with you, given where you are now in your life?

Share (60 minutes):

Using the discussion technique of Mutual Invitation, give everyone a chance to share the story and the answers they wrote down.

When sharing, paraphrase in your own words what happens in the story and read the key verse or verses that particularly stand out.

After each person shares, the group can ask up to *two* clarifying questions to invite the person to share deeper.

9. Questions for Small Group Discussion:

There will be no small group discussion this week.

10. Closing (5 minutes):

Close your time together with a unity prayer. Remember that in the unity prayer, we offer up short petitions before God based on the experience/emotions/things shared during our time together. For example, "Jesus, hear our gratitude as we read about you tonight," or "Jesus, hear our joy and laughter together."