

THE PURPOSE OF **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

Through Christian education we invite people and communities of faith to be transformed as they are inspired and challenged to:

- Know and experience God through Jesus Christ,
- Claim and live God's promises, and
- Grow and serve as Christian disciples.

Foundations: *Shaping the Ministry of Christian Education in Your Congregation*

Our expression when we look at another person may show that person more than our words say. Often in these days of smart phones and other screens, we have to repeat ourselves to get another person's attention. We find it discouraging or frustrating to compete with a device for friendship. When the person you are speaking to looks you right in the eye, you feel affirmed and recognized. Truly seeing someone and taking the time to listen to him/her is a gift that validates that individual's importance.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we want to show other people the love of Jesus in the way we regard them. Each of us is called to look in love at the people who are closest to us: our family and friends. We can start where we are, pausing to talk face to face. At our different ages and stages of life, we seek to be fully present and undistracted, listening and responding with care for the other person. Jesus calls us to treasure people and the time we have to share together.

Jesus shows us how to see and respond to a stranger through eyes of love. A man

ran up to Jesus and knelt. Drawn to Jesus' kindness, the man eagerly wanted to learn from him. Although he had many possessions and had obeyed God since he was a kid, he worried about how to inherit life in heaven. Instead of judging the man, "Jesus, looking at him, loved him." Then Jesus said the man was missing something: the simplicity of trusting God. If he would sell his stuff and give to the poor, he would be free to follow Jesus. The man wasn't ready for that yet. Yet Jesus teaches that when we struggle, God is able to do what is impossible for us!

"See All the People" is a dynamic movement in The United Methodist Church that is designed to help us connect with all the people in our neighborhoods. We want to see people with the loving look of Jesus. By reaching out to build relationships with those in our wider community, we can help them draw closer to God as part of our community of faith. By strengthening relationships with one another, we may continue to grow in the life of Christian discipleship.

¹⁷ As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.'" ²⁰ He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." ²¹ Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." ²² When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. ²³ Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴ And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁶ They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."

Mark 10:17-27 (Common English Bible)

This resource is designed to help you plan your Christian Education Week/Sunday celebration. Check with your annual conference to determine if a date has been set for this occasion and an offering was received to support educational ministries in your conference. This celebration can be combined with the launch of new opportunities for learning, service, and fellowship. It is a great time to emphasize and celebrate your congregation's settings for discipleship. You're invited to make this celebration a joyful recognition of God's love in your midst and God's call to share that love with one another and with all the people beyond the walls of your church.



Call to Worship:

One: It is good to give thanks to you, O Lord, and to sing praises to your name.

Many: We declare your steadfast love in the morning and your faithfulness by night.

One: We praise you, O Most High, with music and melody.

Many: For you, O Lord, have made us glad by the works of your hands.

One: Those who follow your way grow strong like a cedar.

All: Those who trust in the Lord will flourish in the courts of our God.

Scripture:

- Deuteronomy 29:1-9 “You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes...”
- Psalm 119:129-144 “Make your face shine on your servant, and teach me your statutes...”
- Mark 10:17-27 “Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing.”
- Hebrews 12:1-13 “... looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith...”

Hymns:

“Come, Let Us Use the Grace Divine,” *UMH 606*

“Let Us with a Joyful Mind,” *TFWS 2012*

“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” *UMH 384*

“O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing,” *UMH 57*

“Open My Eyes, That I May See,” *UMH 454*

“We All Are One in Mission,” *TFWS 2243*

“We Will Glorify the King of Kings,” *TFWS 2087*

UMH = United Methodist Hymnal TFWS = The Faith We Sing

A Disciple’s Prayer by John Wesley:

“Send down your heavenly grace into my soul to enable me to worship and serve you as I ought. Enable me to believe in you, to reverence you, and to love you with all my heart, mind, soul and strength, so I may honor your holy name and word, and serve you truly today and all the days of my life. Amen.”

Prayers for Children, 1772 (quoted in *Wesley’s Daily Prayers*, p. 119, edited by Donald E. Demaray, published by Bristol House, Ltd., 1998)

Offertory Prayer

Gracious God, your lovingkindness shines brightly through your Son Jesus. We are so grateful that you welcome us into a lifelong relationship with you. Thank you for sending your Holy Spirit to help us become more like Christ in our thoughts, words, and actions. Sometimes we are like the man who was sad when he thought about releasing his possessions. Help us to trust in you more each day and to know the joy of giving freely for the sake of others. We dedicate our offerings and gifts so that our neighbors will feel your love and draw closer to you. We pray through Christ, the light of the world. Amen.

A Litany of Dedication for Christian Educators, Leaders, and Learners

LITANY OF DEDICATION:

One: Your word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

All: Thank you for guiding us with wisdom so that we may know the way we should go.

One: How sweet are your words of life, O God, sweeter than honey!

All: We praise you for the good news you bring us in Jesus Christ.

One: Thank you for the women and men to whom you have given gifts for teaching and leading.

Teachers: We thank you for calling us to teach, and we dedicate ourselves to this ministry.

One: May you bless them abundantly, O God, and increase their joy as they serve you.

Adults: May we all continue to grow in faith, hope, and love as Christ’s disciples.

One: God gathers us together as the church, where each person is loved by the Lord.

Children and Youth: Thank you for teachers and leaders who help us to know Jesus better.

All: Help us to share faithfully the love of Jesus with all the people in our community.

Sending Forth:

Go in peace to love and serve God. When you meet people, look at them and speak to them with the love of Jesus. Every day, trust our risen Lord, who is working in us by his Spirit. Amen.

Time: 75-90 minutes

Purpose:

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- describe Jesus' approach to talking with people
- identify and lift up prayer concerns for people in their wider community
- incorporate prayer practices into their teaching settings and life.

Materials:

- Name tags
- Markers, crayons, pens, and pencils
- Several colors of Post-It notes
- Oil pastels and thick white paper
- Brown, blue, black, and dark green construction paper
- Newsprint/easel pad or whiteboard and markers
- A color print out of Rembrandt's "Head of Jesus" painting
- Copies of handouts
- Copies of instructions for learning centers
- Refreshments (optional)
- Bibles
- Copies of *The United Methodist Hymnal*

Preparation:

- Publicize the workshop and its purpose.
- Pray for those who will attend.
- Gather the listed materials.
- Make copies of the double-sided handout as well as instructions for the art project and prayer postures. Arrange chairs as desired, in a circle or around round tables, for total group time.
- Prepare the learning centers. Ideally, each center will have its own table or space. If you have a large group, you may want to adjust as needed or prepare two stations for each center.
- Place the instructions, handouts, and supplies for the learning centers on the tables. When you set up the space for responding to "The Loving Look of Jesus," place the copy of the painting in a location where the gaze of Christ suits the surroundings.

Getting Started (About 15 to 20 minutes)

Invite participants to make nametags. If you have provided refreshments, point them out to people as they arrive. Welcome everyone and ask them to briefly introduce themselves by telling their names and what class or small group they will lead. (If the group is very large, you may need to break into smaller groups to complete the introductions in a timely manner.)

Invite them to sing a "centering" song. Ask them to get into a comfortable position in their seats, with their feet on the floor. Explain that we will sing the song as our prayer. This peaceful song helps us to draw near to the Lord and focus on what God would have us do. The words are based on Psalm 5:8 and Psalm 4:8. We ask the Lord to show us clearly the path that we should take. We also affirm our trust in God, our guide who stays with us and keeps us safe. This song was written by Charles Wesley's grandson, Samuel Sebastian Wesley, in 1861.

Centering Song/Prayer: "Lead Me, Lord" (*United Methodist Hymnal*, 473)

*"Lead me, Lord, lead me in thy righteousness; make thy way plain before my face.
For it is thou, Lord, thou, Lord only, that makest me dwell in safety."*

Sing the song once to demonstrate, then gesture to the group to join you in singing it three times. This song may be accompanied by a pianist. Click here to play the Piano Accompaniment Recording by Discipleship Ministries, www.UMCdiscipleship.org/worship/piano-accompaniment-recordings. The complete list of recordings is organized by the theme of Advent, then alphabetically for all other songs, www.gbod3.org/sorter/index3.html.

Tell the participants that the church is grateful for their commitment to worship, discipleship, and service as leaders in faith formation ministries. Through their ongoing Bible study, devotional reading, and prayer life, they will continue to grow in faith. This will bless their students and families and enhance the shared experience of their teaching team through their time together.

Introduce the Bible passage. Say that we want to get to know Jesus better by paying close attention to how he looked at people and responded to them. Jesus shows us how to see a stranger through eyes of love and how to speak when the message may be difficult for them to hear. Read aloud Mark 10:17-27. (Say aloud the page number so that they may read along.)

Encourage participants to consider the meaning of this passage for us in our context. Was it surprising when a man ran up to Jesus and kneeled? Drawn to Jesus' kindness, the man eagerly wanted to learn from him. Although he had many possessions and had obeyed God since he was a kid, he wondered if he would inherit life in heaven. Instead of judging the man, "Jesus, looking at him, loved him." Then Jesus said the man was missing something: simple trust in God. If he would sell his stuff

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and give to the poor, he would be free to follow Jesus. The man wasn't ready for that yet. Yet Jesus teaches that when we struggle, God is able to do what is impossible for us!

Distribute copies of "The Jesus Prayer" and review it briefly with the group. Then distribute copies of "The Loving Look of Jesus" and point to the location of the copy of Rembrandt's "Head of Christ" in your space. Ask each participant to write responses to the open-ended statements. Describe the learning activities available for exploration. Tell the group the amount of time you have planned for them to explore the activities of their choice. Participants may also take a break and enjoy refreshments as needed.

Learning Centers (About 35 to 45 minutes)

Coloring with Oil Pastels

As you reflect on the song "Lead Me, Lord" and Scripture, what does God's path or way look like in your life today? Draw a picture of it. For this creative expression, you may want to try using your non-dominant hand (your left hand if you usually write with your right, or your right hand if you usually write with your left). Provide thick white paper and construction paper in dark colors such as brown, blue, black, or green to heighten the contrast with the oil pastels.

The Jesus Prayer

Use the handout to learn about and respond to this Christian prayer based on Luke 18:9-17.

The Loving Look of Jesus

Use the handout to write your reflections on a Rembrandt painting intended to represent Jesus.

Prayer Postures

People of all ages and abilities may be more mindful of how they use their body when they pray. Sometimes called "body prayers," these postures may help us to become more attuned to the presence of the risen Lord Jesus with us when we pray.

- **Orans (or-AHNZ):** This is a posture of prayerful pleading. It was used during the first several centuries of the church. You may stand up, or remain seated, and bend your arms at the elbows and lift up your open hands in a steady position. This is a gesture of asking for help for yourself or an intercession, earnest prayer for someone else. Sample prayers include: "Please help the person/people in that situation." "God, you alone know what is best." "Let your will be done."

- **Kneel or Bow:** Like the man Jesus spoke to in Mark, we want to give honor to God and submit to God's will. You may kneel on a pillow on one knee or both knees, or simply bow your head, or close your eyes. Sample prayers include: "God, my life is in your hands." "Please give me patience." "Jesus, let me hear what you would say." "Lord, help me to wait for your timing."
- **Holy Spirit Hug:** In our baptism, God sends the Holy Spirit to live in our heart. God is as near as our breath. Sample prayers include: "God, thank you for being right here with me now." "Help me to trust you with my whole heart." "Send your love to the people I love."
- **Victory in Jesus:** Sometimes we are so grateful, we just have to praise the Lord! Raise one or both arms straight up beside your ears in an energetic posture of rejoicing over good news. Sample prayers include: "Thank you, Jesus!" "Yes!" "God, you are so good!" "Yay, God!"

Prayers for All the People

Imagine the children, youth, and adults whom you will be "on the look-out" to see and build relationships with in the community around your church. Use colorful Post-It notes to write a specific prayer for their needs and hopes. Place the Post-It notes on newsprint or easel paper, each of which lists a nearby place, such as a school, restaurant, store, park, library, or other site.

Total Group Sharing (About 15 minutes)

Ask participants to reassemble in the total group space. Invite people to share any insights they had or questions that were raised in the learning-center activities. Write responses on newsprint or white board. Go to the "Prayers for All the People" center and pray aloud each prayer. Let the group members know that you will send them a copy of the ideas and prayers in the coming week.

Closing (About 5 minutes)

Invite participants to sing a hymn as we seek to show the love of Jesus to others. For a hymn in the spirit of discernment, sing "Open My Eyes, That I May See" (*UMH* 454). For an energetic hymn, sing "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" (*UMH* 384). This link goes to the list of piano accompaniment recordings: www.gbod3.org/sorter/index3.html. Close with a prayer of thanks for the experiences shared today and for all that God will do to bless the children, youth, and adults in our community through our faith formation and discipleship ministries this year.

How should we approach God? Jesus taught that we should have a humble heart, trusting in God's grace and not relying on our good works. In fact, Jesus explained that adults must be as humble and trusting as a child to receive the kingdom or reign of God.

⁹ [Jesus] also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: ¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted." ¹⁵ People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. ¹⁶ But Jesus called for them and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁷ Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God [like] a little child will never enter it."

Luke 18:9-17

In the era of the early church, a personal prayer was developed based on this parable of Jesus. One version of this prayer includes the role of Jesus as our Savior:

"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior, be merciful to me."

This prayer is meant to be used in meditation as a way to draw closer to the Lord. It may be used to transform a repetitive task into a time of Christian contemplation.

One way to focus on the words of the Jesus Prayer is to pray it as a "fingertip prayer." Sit with your hands resting on your legs with the palms open, facing up. Tap your thumb lightly on each finger as you pray one word at a time. Begin with your left hand and move to your right hand to symbolize moving forward to God's future, as we read in English from left to right. Adapt your own practice as you prefer.

Tap your left thumb and forefinger together as you pray, "Lord." Tap those fingers again and pray, "Jesus." Tap your thumb to your middle finger as you pray, "Christ." Tap your thumb to your ring finger and pray, "Son." Tap your thumb to your pinkie as you pray, "of God." Then concentrate on your right hand. Tap your right thumb to your pinkie and pray, "Savior." Tap your thumb to your ring finger as you pray, "be." Tap your thumb to your middle finger and pray, "merciful." Tap your thumb to your forefinger as you pray, "to." Tap those fingers again and pray, "me."

A later version of the Jesus Prayer added the description "a sinner" at the end. To include that in your fingertip prayer, simply combine the final two pairs of words to pray, "on me," "a sinner."

Another way to use the Jesus Prayer is as a walking or running prayer. Decide if you want to start on your right or left foot. As you take each step, pray one word. Include pauses to balance your breathing and praying with your level of exertion. For example, you may prefer to take three steps as your pray, "Lord Jesus Christ" and include a silent pause as you take the fourth step and a breath. Continue striding forward as you pray, "Son of God, Savior," with a silent pause and breath on the next step. Conclude the prayer with "have mercy on me," using one-syllable words for each step. If you want to add the description "a sinner" that may fit on the final step. Then take another breath and silent pause for several beats before repeating the prayer.

Respond to the following questions by writing or drawing.

1. Many of Jesus' titles or roles are included in the Jesus Prayer: Lord (Guide), Jesus (Humanity) Christ (Anointed One, Messiah), Son (Child) of God (Divinity), Savior (Rescuer, Forgiving One). Which description of Jesus do you feel most drawn to now? Write about it or draw a symbol of it.
2. What comes to mind when you think of having mercy on or being merciful to someone?
3. How do you respond to the description "a sinner" in the later version of this prayer?
4. In what ways would you like to embrace God's grace now and during this week?

How do you imagine Jesus looked when he spoke to people about the kingdom of God?

Use a copy of Rembrandt's painting "Head of Christ" to consider the feelings of love and concern that Jesus conveyed to the people he met. Rembrandt painted this as part of a series of paintings that are meant to help us imagine Jesus' face in a range of emotions. Rembrandt hired a Jewish man who lived in his neighborhood in Amsterdam to serve as a model for the paintings. These paintings may have been important in Rembrandt's devotional life, since a few were listed in his bedroom when he faced a debt crisis and had to quickly auction his possessions.

You may access a picture of the painting at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head_of_Christ_\(Rembrandt\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head_of_Christ_(Rembrandt)).

Questions for Reflection

1. What is your initial response to this painting by Rembrandt?
2. As you look closely at this version of the face of Jesus, what do you notice?
3. Does it look similar to, or different from, the image of Jesus in your mind? In what ways?
4. How would you describe the way a person's face looks when that person loves someone?
5. Let your face reflect or mirror the loving look of Jesus. How does that make you feel?
6. What would you like to remember about this experience?

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, each of us seeks to become more like him. Susie Peach Foster was a Methodist missionary to Korea for ten years before World War II. She upheld a personal commitment to discipleship: "I choose to hold within my heart the image of Christ and to strive to grow into that image more each day" (cited in *Living Your Heart's Desire: God's Call and Your Vocation* by Gregory S. Clapper, Upper Room Books, 2005, p 120). May this exploration help us to be more intentional in setting apart time to focus on reading Scripture and listening to the risen Christ, who always makes time to listen to our prayers and be present with us.

These resources are available for download here: www.SeeAllThePeople.org/resources-downloads.

- *Developing a Discipleship System: A Guide for Congregations (Spanish and Korean translations)*
- *Engaging Your Community: A Guide to Seeing All the People*
- *Developing an Intentional Discipleship System for Children*
- *Developing an Intentional Discipleship System: A Guide for Youth Ministry*
- *Devoted: Discipleship Around the Globe*
- *How to Start Small Groups*
- *La Formación de Grupos Pequeños*
- *Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts*
- *Descubra Sus Dones Espirituales*
- *Prayer Practices for Disciples: Creating a Life with God*
- *Raising Generous Disciples: Shifting Our Stewardship Focus*
- *Sharing Our Faith & Reaching Out Beyond Our Walls*

You may order the following resources from the Upper Room online bookstore, Cokesbury, or Amazon:

- *Passing It On: How to Nurture Your Children's Faith Season by Season* by Kara Lassen Oliver
- *Scrambled Starts: Family Prayers for Morning, Bedtime, and Everything In-Between* by Jenny Youngman

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION WEEK is authorized by the General Conference of The United Methodist Church, but its observance is set by each annual conference. Check with your annual conference office to determine if your annual conference has set a specific date.

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