

The Serving Disciple

Sharing Christ through a Servant's Heart



Part of a Series of 6 Small Group Studies



MDPC
MEMORIAL DRIVE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH





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1 Welcome everyone and open with prayer.

!!!!NOTE: If this is your group's first meeting with any of these studies, please work through Sections 2 and 3. If you have done this before, please skip ahead to Section 4.

2 Introduce every group member (15 minutes).

Go around the group and have every member answer the following questions aloud:

- What is your name?
- What is your connection to MDPC or to another Christian fellowship?
- What in the past seven days has been really good news for you?

(Please note each member's time should be brief. If 10 members speak for five minutes, you will have taken 50 minutes to introduce yourselves!)

3 Read aloud about *The Equipped Disciple Series*, *The Serving Disciple Course*, and group expectations (5 minutes).

The Equipped Disciple is a multi-course small group curriculum developed at Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church. Each course lasts six sessions, with each session approximately 60-70 minutes. (To take up to 90 minutes, simply extend the group's participation in one or more areas of the session's lesson plan as desired.)

This course, *The Serving Disciple*, has the sub-title *Sharing Christ through a Servant's Heart*. Each session will focus on one specific aspect of service that will enable you, with the Holy Spirit's help, to be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ as you grow in the fruit of the Spirit, discover and apply your spiritual gifts, and share the good news of Jesus through your service.

Most sessions will include study and discussion on a biblical passage relevant to the spiritual practice of service. Also, each session will include opportunities to grow in your other spiritual practices, such as devotional reading and Scripture memory. Directions for those leading a group are found in the session materials themselves, not in a separate leader's guide.

So your group will be a fruitful and joyful experience, each member will strive to embrace the following:

- Commit to attend consistently.
- Contribute to a group climate of mutual trust, respect, honesty, and vulnerability.
- Discuss willingly. This is not a lecture.
- Prepare in advance for the upcoming group session, barring unexpected events. (If such events occur, come to the session anyway.)
- Write in this guide. (But remember, this is not a writing class. Brief notes may suffice.)
- Bring your Bible every time. Ordinarily, biblical passages won't be printed in the guide.
- Anticipate that the Holy Spirit will do something in you during this time of focus.

4 Prepare and discuss as a group Luke 10:25-37 and Ephesians 2:8-10 (30 minutes).

Read Luke 10:25-37 and Ephesians 2:8-10 in a Bible translation of your choice, then respond to the questions below. When you meet as a group, read Luke 10:25-37 and Ephesians 2:8-10 aloud. Then take one question at a time as a group, share your responses, and discuss with one another.

How does the expert summarize the Law in Luke 10:27? How does this summary serve as the core of Jesus' continued response in the rest of the passage?

In Luke 10:30-35, who walks by the man attacked by robbers? Who stops, renders aid, and provides for the man's welfare? How are the answers to both questions scandalous by the standards of first-century Judaism? How are they scandalous even today?

How does "love your neighbor as yourself" encourage and motivate you to serve others? In what ways is Jesus speaking to you when He says, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37, NIV)?

Ephesians 2:8-9 is one of the most beloved of all New Testament passages. What is its central message? How does this message go against the grain of our culture?

Ephesians 2:10 states we are saved by God's grace so we may become His "handiwork" (NIV), "workmanship" (ESV), or "masterpiece" (NLT). What is at least one implication for your daily life that God has designed you for His purposes?

As you look at the "big picture" of talents, desires, and opportunities in your life, what do you think you have been prepared in advance by God to do? Please be as specific as possible.

Think about putting Ephesians 2:10 to work in your life this week. What will you do? When can you do it? How can you maximize its effectiveness for the Kingdom?

5 Read aloud about devotional Bible reading and responding (5 minutes).

We just finished a Bible study. Another encounter with Scripture that growing disciples need to practice often is reading the Bible devotionally. The consistent devotional reading of Scripture is an important way to experience the continuing presence and guidance of Jesus Christ.

For our 6-week course, we will read Mark together as our group's devotional reading. (Note: if you are already a consistent reader of the Bible, well done! For the group's time together, though, please either add Mark to your present reading or substitute Mark for your reading plan.)

We will divide this meaningful Gospel book in this way:

- Before reading Session 2, read Mark 1-3.
- Before reading Session 3, read Mark 4-6.
- Before reading Session 4, read Mark 7-9.
- Before reading Session 5, read Mark 10-12.
- Before reading Session 6, read Mark 13-16.

Please note that sometimes our devotional reading connects with our Bible study passage. Other times, however, there is no connection. That's perfectly fine! We are reading and discussing our readings in the group as a means to get in the habit of meditating on Scripture.

Please do not read mechanically. Reflect upon what you read as you read, and prayerfully discern God's guidance for you. In your study guide's appendix, you will find Reading Response Forms to help you answer two questions of each reading from Mark:

- "In what I read from Mark, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?"
- "What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?"

Please write your responses in the space allotted. In the remaining group sessions, you'll have the opportunity to share how God has been working through your devotional reading time.

6 Read aloud this introduction to Scripture memorization (5 minutes).

Memorizing anything, especially Bible verses, gets little respect in our day. With the availability of search engines and smart phones, why bother? All you have to do is Google what you want, and there it is! However, Psalm 119:11 insists that storing God's word within our hearts (in other words, memorizing Scripture) can be an effective means of enabling and strengthening faithful Christian living. It's true Scripture memory will take some effort and determination. But it is well worth it.

Our memory verse for this course is Ephesians 2:10. This verse neatly and effectively sums up the importance of service for growing disciples: We are saved by grace through faith for the express purpose of doing good works to God's glory. We'll memorize this verse from the New Living Translation (NLT), as we can help one another learn them more easily with a translation we share together:

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago (Ephesians 2:10, NLT).

!!!!NOTE: *If this is your group's first meeting with any of these studies, please work through the helpful hints for memorizing below. If you have done this before, please skip ahead to Section 7.*

Some helpful hints for memorizing are:

- Write out the verses in longhand. Something about writing imprints the words on your memory. For some, repeated writing in longhand is quite helpful.
- Write the verses on a 3" x 5" card. Carry the card with you and refer to the verses often.
- Say the verses aloud as you practice. Speaking also imprints the words on your memory.
- Break up the verses into their smaller units. Start with the first phrase and work on it until you are comfortable. Then add the second phrase. Continue to add phrases as you learn the verses phrase by phrase.
- Reflect on the verses' meaning. Connect the verses with their significance for your life.
- Do not forget to include the Scriptural reference and translation at the end, such as "Ephesians 2:10, NLT."
- Practice often and review regularly. "Overlearning" is often what is needed to break through.

Starting at your next gathering, you will practice your verses with others by dividing the group into pairs or triads (groups of three) and practicing with your smaller group. You will want to work on your verses in advance in order to take the best advantage of this opportunity.

7 Talk about what's needed for next time (5 minutes).

Review the homework:

- Please prepare the Bible study found in "Session 2: Our Model for Service," and be ready to share.
- Read Mark 1-3 and complete the Reading Response Form in the Appendix.
- Start memorizing Ephesians 2:10 (NLT) and be prepared to practice at the next session.

8 Close in prayer.

- 1 Welcome everyone and open with prayer.
- 2 Greet and “check in” with group members (5 minutes).
- 3 Share from your personal Reading Response Form for Mark 1-3 and discuss (15 minutes).
- 4 Read, study, and discuss as a group Mark 10:35-45 and Philippians 2:1-11 (30 minutes).

Read Mark 10:35-45 and Philippians 2:1-11 in a translation of your choice, then reflect upon your responses to the following questions and prompts. Feel free to write down comments, thoughts, and notes in the spaces below. When you meet as a group, read aloud Mark 10:35-45 and Philippians 2:1-11. Then take one question at a time as a group, share your responses, and discuss your answers with one another.

What do James and John, the sons of Zebedee, ask of Jesus in Mark 10:35-37? How do the other disciples react in Mark 10:41? Why do you think the disciples are struggling with matters of status and power?

How does Jesus reply to James and John in Mark 10:38? How does Jesus expand upon His reply to all the disciples in Mark 10:42-45? What stands out to you in His response as you reflect upon His words?

If Jesus came to give His life and to serve rather than to be served, as He says in Mark 10:45, then what is at least one logical, inherent implication of this truth for Christian living? How is your life different because you trust and follow the Servant Savior and Lord?

In Philippians 2:1-4, Paul commends what characteristics and attitudes to the Philippians? Put these characteristics and attitudes in your own words.

What stands out about Jesus in Philippians 2:6-8? What stands out about Jesus in Philippians 2:9-11? How do Philippians 2:6-8 and 2:9-11 fit together?

In Philippians 2:5, how does Paul link the characteristics sought in Philippians 2:1-4 with the humility of Jesus detailed in Philippians 2:6-11? Why is this linkage so significant? How does this linkage guide you about the proper connection between theology and practice?

In what ways do contemporary Christian practice often fall short of the aspirations given in Mark 10:35-45 and Philippians 2:1-11? How does this reality hurt Christian witness in our day? What are some steps we can take to address the disconnect?

5 Divide into pairs or triads and practice saying the memory verse without notes (10 minutes).

(NOTE: If you are meeting via Zoom, your host will need to set up the “breakout room” feature.) No doubt you have made progress on memorizing Ephesians 2:10. Wonderful! If you are struggling, remember God is with you as you memorize this verse. Go as far as you’re able. You will have an opportunity next time to continue your work.

6 Talk about what is needed for next time (5 minutes).

Review the homework:

- Please read the Bible study for “Session 3: Fruit and Gifts” and be ready to share.
- Read Mark 4-6 and complete the Reading Response Form in the Appendix.
- Continue your work on memorizing Ephesians 2:8 (NLT), and be prepared to practice at the next session.

7 Close in prayer.



- 1 Welcome everyone and open with prayer.
- 2 Greet and “check in” with group members (5 minutes).
- 3 Share from your Personal Response Form for Mark 4-6 and discuss (15 minutes).
- 4 Read, study, and discuss as a group Galatians 5:16-23 and Romans 12:3-8 (30 minutes).

Read Galatians 5:16-23 and Romans 12:3-8 in a translation of your choice, then reflect upon your responses to the following questions and prompts. Feel free to write down comments, thoughts, and notes in the spaces below. When you meet as a group, read aloud Galatians 5:16-23 and Romans 12:3-8. Then take one question at a time as a group, share your responses, and discuss your answers with one another.

Galatians 5:16-18 names “the flesh” and “the Spirit” (NIV) as constantly opposing one another. What do these two terms mean? How are they battling within all followers of Jesus Christ?

Paul gives a number of characteristics of life in “the flesh,” with what some commentators call a “vice list” in Galatians 5:19-21. What stands out to you about this list? Discuss the importance of the warning at the list’s end in verse 21.

Galatians 5:22-23 offers nine characteristics of life in the Spirit. What is the significance of all nine being a singular product (“fruit”) and not multiple products (“fruits”) of our ongoing transformation by the Spirit? How are these characteristics grown and nurtured?

Why do you believe Paul emphasizes Christian humility in Romans 12:3? What clues do you find in Romans 12:4-8? Describe in further detail this humility and how it impacts your life.

In Romans 12:6a, Paul says, “We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. (NIV)” What can you learn by realizing your particular mix of gifts is not the same as your Christian brothers and sisters?

In Romans 12:6b-8, Paul elaborates upon several spiritual gifts and how they should be exercised. Recognizing both 1) this list is not exhaustive and 2) all the gifts are important, choose a one gift that stands out to you as being especially pertinent and needed by the Christian community today and briefly describe why.

As you compare Galatians 5:22-23 with Romans 12:3-8, you discover a distinction between fruit and gifts. If you follow Christ, you should show evidence of all nine fruit in some manner, and thus you cannot get away with something like, “I’ll focus on love, but self-control is just not my thing.” But you are never expected to possess every spiritual gift, and the norm appears to be each Christian has only a few. Reflect upon this distinction and what it reveals.

5 Divide into pairs or triads and practice saying the memory verse without notes (10 minutes).

(NOTE: If you are meeting via Zoom, your host will need to set up the “breakout room” feature.) Have you made progress on memorizing Ephesians 2:10? If so, great! If not, remember God will give you strength as you memorize these verses. Go as far as you’re able. You will have an opportunity next time to continue your work.

6 Talk about what is needed for next time (5 minutes).

Review the homework:

- Please read the Bible study for “Session 4: More about Spiritual Gifts” and be ready to share.
- Read Mark 7-9 and complete the Reading Response Form in the Appendix.
- Continue your work on memorizing Ephesians 2:10 (NLT) and be prepared to practice at the next session.

7 Close in prayer.



Session Four • More About Spiritual Gifts

- 1 Welcome everyone and open with prayer.**
- 2 Greet and “check in” with group members (5 minutes).**
- 3 Share from your Personal Response Form for Mark 7-9 and discuss (15 minutes).**
- 4 Read, study, and discuss as a group 1 Corinthians 12:1–13:1 (30 minutes).**

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1 – 13:1 in a Bible translation of your choice, then respond to the questions below. When you meet as a group, read aloud 1 Corinthians 12:1 – 13:1. Then take one question at a time as a group, share your responses, and discuss your answers with one another.

Paul writes, “Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed” (1 Corinthians 12:1, NIV). Many people today are uninformed about gifts. What level of familiarity do you have? Share your history and experience.

What is the source of our spiritual gifts, according to 1 Corinthians 12:4-6? How does this source help you as you compare and contrast your spiritual gifts with what may be called “natural talents”?

List the gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 and 12:28-30. (For extra credit, read Romans 12:3-8 and Ephesians 4:11-15 and compare the lists.) What do you make of the wide variety and expressions of the gifts? How do 1 Corinthians 12:7 and 12:11 help you as you reflect upon this?

Unity is an essential part of Christian faith and practice, according to 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 and 24-26. What struggles were the first-century Christians in Corinth experiencing regarding their unity? What struggles do present-day Christians face that reveal our need for unity?

Paul uses an analogy of a human body in 1 Corinthians 12:15-27 to illustrate the importance of diversity in giftedness. What jumps out at you from this analogy? How does this analogy help you avoid and resolve errors about the gifts?

What is the “most excellent way” to which Paul refers in 1 Corinthians 12:31? How does 1 Corinthians 15 start to make this way clear? How does this way connect with the previous discussion about the fruit of the Spirit and the dynamic between fruit and gifts?

5 Divide into pairs or triads and practice saying the memory verse without notes (10 minutes).

(NOTE: If you are meeting via Zoom, your host will need to set up the “breakout room” feature.) If you have memorized Ephesians 2:10, congratulations! If you have not memorized these verses yet, don’t worry! Say what you can. Continue to work on it. You will have an opportunity next time to show how far you have come.

6 Talk about what’s needed for next time (5 minutes).

Review the homework:

- *NEW: No Bible study for next time. Instead, you will take the Discover Your Gifts spiritual gifts inventory online on the MDPC website at the following link: spiritualgifts.mdpc.org. Read the guidelines in “Session 5: Your Spiritual Gifts Inventory” on page 13, take the inventory, and respond to the questions and prompts given in preparation for Session 5.*
- Read Mark 10-12 and complete the Reading Response Form in the Appendix.
- Continue your work on memorizing Ephesians 2:10 (NLT) and be prepared to practice at the next session.

7 Close the gathering in prayer.

- 1 **Welcome everyone and open with prayer.**
- 2 **Greet and “check in” with group members** (5 minutes).
- 3 **Share from your Personal Response Form for Mark 10-12 and discuss** (15 minutes).
- 4 **Review the guidelines for your Spiritual Gifts Inventory** (5 minutes).

There is nothing inspired or authoritative about a Spiritual Gifts Inventory. You will not find one in the Bible. Yet a solid Spiritual Gifts Inventory may provide you with helpful input as you consider (or re-consider) what gifts are part of your spiritual makeup.

The **Discover Your Gifts** inventory may be found through the MDPC website in two ways:

1. You may directly type in your browser or click the following link:
spiritualgifts.mdpc.org
2. You may go to the MDPC homepage at www.mdpc.org and click on the “Volunteer” tab at the top of the page. Then choose “Discover Your Spiritual Gifts.” You will be directed to the “Online Spiritual Gifts Inventory” page to access the inventory.

Please follow these steps to take the inventory:

- At the “Online Spiritual Gifts Inventory” page, click on the link titled “Click here to take the test.”
- You will be taken to the startup page, where you will be asked to register with your name and email address. Then you may take the inventory.
- After you finish the inventory, you will receive a report of your top five spiritual gifts results. Save and/or print the PDF file generated by the inventory. (Please note: the ranking is indicated by the order in which they are listed both from left to right in the title and as you read the report from top left to top right, then middle left to middle right, and then bottom left.)
- Print or save the list of definitions for the gifts for later use.

- 5 **After you complete your Spiritual Gifts Inventory, respond to the following questions and prompts below. Then when you meet as a group, take one question or prompt at a time, share your responses, and discuss with one another** (30 minutes).

Review the definitions for all the gifts. Does any definition stand out to you for any reason? Why?

Please write down your top five gifts in the order your PDF report gives them. Then go around the group, with everyone sharing their gifts from the report.

Any surprises about the five gifts topping your inventory? If so, what?

Is any gift conspicuous by its absence in your list? In other words, did you think a gift would be listed in your top five and it wasn't? If so, what gift and why?

Look up and survey briefly the Biblical passages associated with each gift on your top five gifts report. Any observations?

Spiritual gifts usually do not occur in a vacuum. No doubt you have experienced some or all of your top five gifts at various times in your life. Please give one example of when you put one of your listed gifts to work, and tell us what happened

6 Divide into pairs or triads and practice saying the memory verse without notes (10 minutes).

(NOTE: If you are meeting via Zoom, your host will need to set up the “breakout room” feature.) If you have not memorized these verses yet, do what you’re able. Continue to work on Ephesians 2:8-10 (NIV). You will have a final opportunity next time to show how far you have come.

7 Talk about what’s needed for next time (5 minutes).

Review the homework:

- Please prepare the Bible study for “Session 6: Service and Evangelism” and be ready to share.
- Read Mark 13-16 and complete the Reading Response Form in the Appendix.
- Continue your work on memorizing Ephesians 2:10 (NLT), and be prepared to practice at the next session

8 Close the gathering in prayer.



- 1 Welcome everyone and open with prayer.**
- 2 Greet and “check in” with group members (5 minutes).**
- 3 Share from your Personal Response Form for Mark 13-16 and discuss (15 minutes).**
- 4 Read, study, and discuss as a group Matthew 5:13-16 (30 minutes).**

Read Matthew 5:13-16 in a Bible translation of your choice, then respond to the questions and prompts below. When you meet as a group, read aloud Matthew 5:13-16. Then take one question at a time as a group, share your responses, and discuss your answers with one another.

Matthew 5:13-16 immediately follows the Beatitudes, one of the most famous teachings by Jesus (Matthew 5:3-12). How may this setting and context inform your interpretation and application of Matthew 5:13-16?

Jesus calls His followers “the salt of the earth” in Matthew 5:13 (NIV). What about salt makes this image particularly appropriate for those who follow Jesus Christ?

Jesus also calls His followers “the light of the world” in Matthew 5:14 (NIV). Then He shares two illustrations about a city on a hill and a light placed on a stand rather than hidden under a basket. What is Jesus saying here about Christian discipleship and witness?

As a Christian, how can you personally be salt and light through your good deeds in a world often not receptive to the gospel? What challenges may you face? What opportunities may you encounter?

While all good works are worth doing, are there good works that may be especially effective or beneficial in helping people see Jesus? If so, what are they? Describe at least three characteristics of these good deeds and the people who practice them.

Respond to the following statement, often erroneously attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: “Preach the gospel at all times; when necessary, use words.” Is this statement always true? What are connections between deeds and words in your faithful witness to Christ?

As we come to the end of our course, what particular good work is God leading you to focus on in the immediate days ahead? How can you maximize its usefulness for the Kingdom? What pitfalls will you need to avoid? Please be both intentional and concrete in your response.

5 Say the memory verse in unison as a group to celebrate what God is doing through this work (5 minutes).

If you have not memorized these verses yet, do what you’re able. Continue to work on Ephesians 2:10 (NLT) in your ongoing practice of Christian spiritual disciplines..

6 As you close in prayer at the end of this final session, please state to your group at least one benefit you have experienced from participating in The Serving Disciple. Give thanks to God for His grace and encouragement (15 minutes).

Reading Response Forms for Mark

For Session 2 • Mark 1-3

In what I read from Mark, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?

What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?

For Session 3 • Mark 4-6

In what I read from Mark, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?

What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?

For Session 4 • Mark 7-9

In what I read from Mark, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?

What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?

For Session 5 • Mark 10-12

In what I read from Mark, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?

What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?

For Session 6 • Mark 13-16

In what I read from Mark, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?

What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?



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