



Exploring Section 164

A Small-group Discussion Guide

Community of Christ

Introduction

The delegates of the 2010 World Conference approved Doctrine and Covenants 164. This new Community of Christ scripture presents insights and counsel on important issues facing the church around the world. It challenges each disciple to examine his or her discipleship in new ways.

The following questions are available to help groups share in discussion, and to more fully understand this counsel. These questions provide for three separate topical discussions. The questions are for use in small-group settings or for individual reflection. They focus on selected paragraphs of Section 164 as follows:

- Topic 1:** Baptism, Confirmation, the Lord's Supper (paragraphs 1–4)
- Topic 2:** Moral Behavior and Relationships (paragraphs 5–6)
- Topic 3:** Closing words of challenge and promise (paragraph 9)

We invite you to share in discussions with other disciples and friends to explore this new Community of Christ scripture. We encourage you to continue to discern how God's Spirit is leading the Community of Christ forward.

Materials Needed

The leader and discussion participants need access to:

- Doctrine and Covenants 164 (buy at Herald House or download online at www.CofChrist.org/D&C164)
- President of the Church Stephen M. Veazey's World Conference Sermon, April 11, 2010, "We Share a Vision" (May 2010 *Herald*, pp. 12–18) and www.cofchrist.org/wc2010/default.asp

More information is available:

- Question and Answer (three-part series) found at www.cofchrist.org/wc2010/default.asp

- "Conversation and Testimony with President Veazey" (April 2010 *Herald*, pp. 12–16)
- "An Interview with President Veazey" (March 2010 *Herald*, pp. 12–14)
- Online video interview with President Veazey and Linda Booth www.CofChrist.org/presidency/AprilAddress/Interview0609.asp
- "Open Us, O God, and Make Us New" (May 2010 *Herald*, p. 5) [Prayer for spiritual openness, January 31, 2010]
- *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs* (Herald House, 2010 ISBN 9780830924883)

Guidelines for Group Discussion

At the start of each session share the following discussion guidelines with the group:

- Show respect for one another and each other's responses.
- Uphold confidentiality. Information shared within the group is shared in trust. Be trustworthy with the information you learn about one another.
- One person talks at a time.
- Share the time so everyone has a chance to join in.
- Listen to understand others' perspectives.
- Be open to new understandings.
- Speak for yourself.

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Topic 1:**Baptism, Confirmation,
the Lord's Supper****Open with a prayer or song.****Review the “Guidelines for Group Discussion.”****Read Doctrine and Covenants 164:1–4 silently, or aloud, or in turn around the group.****Discuss these questions together:**

Congregations and mission centers were invited to share in discernment on “Conditions of Membership” and what is now Doctrine and Covenants 164.

1. What was your experience with discernment during the months leading up to World Conference?
2. What insights did you gain from that experience?
3. How does that experience affect your thoughts and feelings about Section 164?
4. How can we discover what the “important issues in the church’s life” (DC 164:1) are?
5. How might those issues differ from one area of the church to another?
6. What difference does culture make in deciding what makes an issue important?

Discuss some of the following questions together, in smaller groups, or pairs.

Each small group may choose to discuss two or three questions, depending on the time

available, or the discussion leader may choose to assign specific questions to each group.

7. In what ways have you witnessed “the redemptive action of God in Christ” (DC 164:2a)? How are the church and God’s redemptive action related?
8. How does understanding that “God’s grace... freely moves throughout creation... to achieve divine purposes” (DC 164:2b) affect the work and ministry of your congregation? Your mission center? Who do you know that is being led by the Holy Spirit to “further focus their response” through membership in Community of Christ?
9. DC 164:2c, d presents the importance of confirmation and preparing for confirmation. How might preparing for confirmation be different from preparing for baptism? What benefits might result from a renewed emphasis on confirmation as a sacrament of the church related to, but distinct from, baptism? How does disciple formation “strengthen the fabric of the church”?
10. How could you go about examining the “depth of your baptismal commitment”? (DC 164:3a) Why should this be decidedly introspective rather than in a group? What do you think it means to be “fully immersed in the servant life of Christ”? How can you live the meaning of your baptism each day?
11. Make a list of what you think are some of the “skills and qualities of discipleship” (DC 164:3b). How do you connect the idea of Zion with “Christ’s covenant of peace”? How is this different (or similar) to the focus of Community of Christ in times past?
12. How is the Lord’s Supper a sacrament of reaffirmation, reconciliation, or commitment? (DC 164:4b) How can the Lord’s Supper “spiritually form the church community into a true and living expression” of Christ’s life? (DC 164:4c).

Close the session with prayer.

Topic 2:**Moral Behavior and Relationships****Open with a prayer or song.****Remind group members of the “Guidelines for Group Discussion.”****Read Doctrine and Covenants 164:5–6 silently, or aloud, or in turn around the group.**

In his April 11, 2010, World Conference sermon, President Veazey said,

Paragraph 5 describes the church we will become when we discern the full meaning of baptism into Christ. It emphasizes the gospel is not just about you or me; it is about us—*all of us!*—and how we can live in community if the Spirit of Christ fully lives in us.

Do we really comprehend the meaning of these words? When baptized into Christ we embrace a new identity that transcends all other identities and allegiances that previously defined us. . . . We are first and foremost “one in Christ!”

Discuss these questions together:

1. President Veazey said that paragraph 5 “describes the church we will become when we discern the full meaning of baptism into Christ.” How do you understand this?
2. What differences might there be between the church we are now and the future church as envisaged in paragraph 5?
3. What are some ideas about the “full meaning of baptism into Christ” that might be different from your previous understanding?

4. Compare and contrast the vision of community described in paragraph 5 with social and national concerns in the area where you live and minister.
5. How is your congregation/mission center becoming “a new community of tolerance, reconciliation, unity in diversity, and love”?

In his April 11, 2010, World Conference sermon, on the complex topic of moral behavior, President Veazey said,

The way to receive the greater blessing is to ask, “What is the Spirit trying to do with us?”

Perhaps the Spirit is pressing us to better understand how we use scripture. Sometimes it takes big questions that are not easily answered for us to see the inadequacy of our current viewpoints and approaches.

Discuss these questions together:

6. Why is it important to understand behaviors and relationships, as presented in paragraph 6, more broadly than one or two current “hot button” issues?
7. Many people believe specific answers to important questions of behaviors and relationships can be found in the scriptures. Review President Veazey’s 2010 World Conference sermon where he tells the story of Joseph and Mary. With this explanation in mind what different approach to understanding scripture is given in DC 164:6c? How is this way of looking at scripture different from your own view in the past?

Discuss some of the following questions together, in smaller groups, or pairs.

Each small group may choose to discuss two or three questions, depending on the time available, or the discussion leader may choose to assign specific questions to each group.

8. What new message is paragraph 5 telling us about baptism? How is this different from your understanding when you were baptized? What do you think “new creation” means?

9. How does a changed perspective in viewing oneself and others foster “communities of joy, hope, love, and peace”? What do you think makes up the “life and mind of Christ”? How can you take on Christ’s life and mind and make it your own?
10. How does your congregation show others that you take the “community” in our church name seriously? What examples can you point to in your congregation that you are a “community of tolerance, reconciliation, unity in diversity, and love”?
11. How do your behaviors and relationships “uphold the worth and giftedness of all people”? How do your behaviors and relationships “protect the most vulnerable”? Who are the “most vulnerable” in the place where you live?
12. How does bringing “life, healing, and hope” help you view scripture differently from in the past? How does this help you “uphold the worth and giftedness of all people” and “protect the vulnerable”? How is this way of interpreting scripture related to Christ-like love and the community our church stands for?

Close the session with prayer.



Topic 3:**Closing Words of Challenge and Promise**

Open with a prayer or song.

Remind group members of the “Guidelines for Group Discussion.”

Read Doctrine and Covenants 164:9 silently, or aloud, or in turn around the group.

Discuss these questions together:

1. What does DC 164:9a mean when it talks about “God’s ultimate vision for the church”? What does it mean for your discipleship? The discipleship of your congregation, or mission center? In what ways do you sense that you/your congregation are poised to fulfill God’s vision for the church?
2. Considering 164:9b, in what ways is spiritual and relational transformation fearful for you?
3. In the closing paragraphs of his 2010 World Conference sermon, President Veazey defines Christ’s mission. Review those paragraphs, then discuss why DC 164:9f must be the priority for each member, congregation, and mission center of the church.
4. How does DC 164:9d help you understand that the name of our church must be more than just a name? In what ways can you take part in making that vision become reality?
5. In practical terms, what can you do to “embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ”?
6. How can you live sacramentally? How does your congregation live sacramentally? How does this mean more than just performing or celebrating the sacraments of the church?

Discuss some of the following questions together, in smaller groups, or pairs.

Each small group may choose to discuss two or three questions, depending on the time available, or the discussion leader may choose to assign specific questions to each group.

7. What are some of the surprises you have discovered in your “faith adventure with God”? What are your fears of spiritual and relational transformation? How do your fears prevent you from living in “sacred community”?
8. How does defining Zion as the “peaceful reign of Christ” make the idea of Zion more beautiful than your previous understanding? What must you do to respond to the call wholeheartedly?
9. What does whole-life stewardship mean to you? How can the members of your congregation live this out together?
10. Look at DC 164:9c. What other of the “church’s restoring ministries” can you add to this list? Looking at each of the ministries in this list, discuss how those are lived out personally, in your family, in your neighborhood, in your congregation.
11. DC 164:9e asks some challenging questions. You may want to answer “no” to the first. But, you’re hesitant to answer so quickly, because you do have “fears, insecurities, and competing loyalties.” What are some of these, and how can you overcome them? How can you help one another move forward, focusing on “what matters most” (DC 164:9f)?

Close the session with prayer.