FOLLOWING THE SPIRIT
Loving Like Jesus
YOUTH LESSONS

Community of Christ
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INTRODUCTION

These youth lessons explore aspects of disciple formation through discussion, reflection, spiritual practices, games, and activities. The lessons use the lens of scripture and the support of Community of Christ’s five Mission Initiatives. In these five lessons youths will explore and consider...

- the call to live as disciples.
- the use of social media in discipleship.
- Jesus’ call for ordinary people to serve others as his disciples.
- personal characteristics and calling.
- how working together in community and making a commitment to personal action increases our capacity to abolish poverty and end needless suffering in our communities.
- the importance of community in recognizing God’s presence and engaging in Christ’s mission.
- what “blinds” us from recognizing God’s presence.
- new forms of communities engaged in Christ’s mission.
- ways of finding and sharing peace with others by pursuing peace around the globe and praying for peace.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a part of today’s culture and young people have grown up with social media sites. You may choose to use these connections to share about reunion or family camp experiences, encourage ongoing exploration of lesson concepts, or to deepen relationships in community. Create a hashtag for your camp participants to use to share pictures and stories. This may not be suitable for camps that wish to “unplug” where use of the internet and phones is limited, or where youths do not have access to electronic devices. Make sure to discuss proper and safe use of social media with your group, and remember to adapt as needed to best fit the culture in your area.
LESSON 1
CALLED INTO THE FUTURE...WHERE IS THE SPIRIT LEADING?

FOCUS
Participants will explore their call to live as disciples and discuss Develop Disciples to Serve, a Mission Initiative.

OBJECTIVES
The learners will...
- consider use of social media platforms.
- explore Jesus’ call for ordinary people to serve others as his disciples.
- examine personal characteristics and call through an I Am activity.
- discuss Mission Initiatives and further explore Develop Disciples to Serve.

SUPPLIES
- Journals
- Pens or pencils
- Paper
- Mission Prayer
- Computer (optional) or smartphone (optional)

SCRIPTURE
"Jesus Calls the First Disciples"

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people. Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

—Matthew 4:18-22

Social Media Challenges
Ask group members about their social media presence. Do they use Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook? What do they do on those platforms? Share pictures, chat, “like” posts. Have any of them ever been asked to do one of the social media challenges like the Ice Bucket Challenge, the Planking Challenge, the Harlem Shake, or the Mannequin Challenge? It’s fun to look up a few of these challenges and show some clips to the group. You might also choose to assign smaller groups different challenges to act out for the larger group to guess.

In a world of individualism, social media challenges bring us together in a united (although often silly) cause. It asks us to do something and then to share it with the world—the new way of sharing with one another. There are similarities to these social media challenges and Jesus’ challenge to us to be disciples.

Invite one or more youths to read Matthew 4:18–22, or form small groups and have each group create their own version of this passage. Share with the larger group by reading or acting.

Sacred Story
It is important to understand the sacred story and our part in it. The sacred story connects us—past, present, and future—in our faith journey as individuals and as a people. The sacred story is always moving and evolving, involving each of us and our call to follow Christ.
Pass out journals. If time allows, provide supplies to decorate and personalize the journals. Invite participants to write, draw, or discuss:

- What do we know about the disciples?
- Who were they? What did they do?
- What made them so special that Jesus called them?
- What does today’s scripture passage tell us about Jesus’ call?

The disciples were an ordinary group of men. This is a powerful message about who is called to be a disciple. Jesus chose the average person rather than the rich, powerful, and influential to show that anyone can be a disciple. We are all meant to be disciples!

I Am

Youths will need journals and a pen or pencil. At the top of the page, direct the youths to write “I AM.” Below that, encourage participants to write who they are. They will do this by listing words or phrases that describe their lives such as personality, interests, beliefs, and hobbies. Work with them to tap into their emotions and who they see themselves as. Maybe they will write “I am: silly, fun, outgoing, and confused!” Whatever they come up with is okay. (Take a few minutes now and write who you are.)

Once everyone has finished, start reading from this list. If anything on the list falls into these categories, participants should cross it out.

Cross out:
- Possessions (money, iPods, guitars, clothes)
- Personality traits (funny, outgoing, crazy)
- Sports or extracurricular activities (soccer, volleyball, baseball, theatre, band)
- Things you like (music, television, movies, YouTube)
- Physical characteristics (color of hair, height, eye color)
- Where you go to school or live, your hangouts, or family situation
- Anything else that describes you still left on the page (grades, friends, other hobbies)

At this point the only thing left on their page should be “I Am.” Invite participants to look at their page and notice what’s left.

Once we realize that we are not defined by what we have, like to do, or how we spend our time, and that we cannot find our purpose in our personality or where we live, the only thing left for us is “I Am.”

We are not defined by these things, but by what Christ calls us to.

Those who Jesus called were ordinary individuals. All the things we think we are do not define who we are as children of God. The root of who we are may seem simple, but is so powerful. We are the most important us!

The ministry we can bring in the world is grounded in who we are. We may not perform miracles as Jesus did, but that doesn’t mean our part of the Sacred Story is unimportant. God loves you, and we know that love through Christ’s example of loving others! Knowing God loves us that much makes our ministry important, so we ask ourselves, “What are we going to do?”

Mission Initiatives

Community of Christ has five Mission Initiatives aligned with Christ’s mission: Invite People to Christ; Abolish Poverty, End Suffering; Pursue Peace on Earth; Develop Disciples to Serve; and Experience Congregations in Mission. These Mission Initiatives serve as compassionate action
plans for disciples. Which initiatives connect with today’s message?

Develop Disciples to Serve

*Invite youths to respond to these questions in their journals. Share responses in groups of four or five. Invite one person per question to share their response with the larger group.*

- What does it mean to develop disciples to serve?
- How might that look in your friend group? At school or church?
- Who has helped you develop as an individual? As a disciple?
- How do you serve others?
- If you could make a change in your life to help you develop as a disciple to serve others, would you do it? Explain.

Create and share an Instagram or Snapchat post that describes how you are called to serve as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Challenge participants during the reunion or camp experience to speak and act like something Jesus would Instagram. Share examples each day.

**Bless**

*Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and help (5% of lesson time)*

Mission Prayer

*Pass out the Mission Prayer printed on a card or piece of paper. Projecting it is also an option. Read the prayer together, and pause after each statement to consider responses.*

God, where will your Spirit lead today?
Help me be fully awake and ready to respond.

How will you awaken to the Holy Spirit’s invitation?

Grant me courage to risk something new...

How will you risk a new conversation, a new or deepened relationship, or a new way of serving another?

...and become a blessing of your love and peace.

What is one thing you will do to bless another person or creation today?

Amen.

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**Send**

*Explores how the lesson might be lived (10% of lesson time)*

Instagram Jesus

*Imagine what Jesus’ Instagram or Snapchat story would be like. (Examples: Today feels like a good day for a walk...on water; fed 5,000 today—man could they eat; met this cool guy Zacchaeus climbing trees.) We tend to put things on our stories or pages that we think matter or will get a lot of “likes.”*

- What does your Instagram or Snapchat story reveal about you? If you do not use these platforms, what actions or characteristics best reveal who you are?
- What would you like your Instagram or Snapchat story or actions to reveal about you?
LESSON 2
EMBRACING NEW LIFE...WHAT IS FORMING IN US?

FOCUS
Participants will explore the Mission Initiative of Invite People to Christ through the biblical “Woman at the Well” story.

OBJECTIVES
The learners will...

- share examples of the hero’s journey.
- compare the hero’s journey to the focus scripture passage.
- explore and respond to the Mission Initiative Invite People to Christ.

SUPPLIES
- Journals
- Pens or pencils

SCRIPTURE
"Jesus and the Woman at the Well"

So he came to a Samaritan city... Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”

The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?” Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.” Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!”

The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Jesus said to her...You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.” Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ‘Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?’

They left the city and were on their way to him. Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I have ever done.’ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have
heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world.’
—John 4:5-42

Gather

Activates background knowledge; prepares and motivates for lesson
(15% of lesson time)

The Hero’s Journey

Ask, “Who has heard of the Hero’s Journey?” Most hero stories go through a similar arch called the Hero’s Journey. This journey includes moments like their call to action, meeting their mentor, and returning home after the journey. Another part of this journey is the hero’s moment of revelation. The Hero’s Revelation is when they have a sudden or dramatic change in the way they think about or view life.

Some examples of the Hero’s Revelation:

- **Star Wars:** Luke decides to join the rebels to destroy the Death Star and hears Obi-Wan Kenobi’s advice to use the force.
- **Hunger Games:** Katniss and Peeta threaten to eat the deadly nightlock berries, forcing The Capitol to let them live.
- **Harry Potter:** Harry enters the room where the Philosopher’s Stone is hidden and faces Professor Quirrell who has been hosting Voldemort.
- **The Lion King:** Simba returns to the Pride Lands to face Scar after Mufasa’s spirit tells Simba to return home.
- **Lord of the Rings:** Frodo struggles to destroy the ring but is freed when Gollum bites it off his finger and falls into lava.
- **Moana:** Gives the heart back to the ocean even though she believes she can’t do it, and has her mind changed by the spirit of her grandmother, Tala.

Ask participants for additional examples. If possible, show a clip of one of the examples on the list.

Engage

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

The Everybody Committee

The Everybody Committee is the committee that lives in our heads and informs how we think others see or judge us. It confines us with social norms and the status quo. We struggle to ignore the Everybody Committee.

- What do we know about the woman at the well?
- What did the Everybody Committee have to say about her life?
- Why does she say Jesus shouldn’t take water from her?
- What about the Everybody Committee is contrary to how Jesus sees us?

Pass out journals. Invite youths to write or draw responses to these questions.

Discuss in small groups:

- Do the things you wrote in your journal describe who you want to be?
- Does your personality, or do your talents and passions, ever struggle against the Everybody Committee?
• How do you allow your life to be controlled by what others might think of you?

Respond
Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Changing Perception

When we experience Christ we experience life in a new and exciting way. We recognize our inherent worth. We are called to invite others to Christ so that they too can see life in a new way where God’s love is the driving force.

To demonstrate changing perception, you can use the Laurel/Yanny sound clip or images of the black/gold dress. In the Laurel/Yanny clip, although originally spoken the same, the names sound different to different people. The same with the black/gold dress, some see it as gold while others black. (These examples can be found online.)

Jesus helped change the Samaritan woman’s perception of herself to change what her story would be. When we keep reading her story we know that the woman then invited the rest of her town to come and meet Jesus because she saw the importance of inviting people to know the peace of Christ.

• How might Jesus’ view of us change our perception of ourselves?
• How does this story illustrate the importance of inviting people to Christ?

Form groups of four or five. Give the groups two minutes to list how many ways they can invite people to Christ. Share and discuss each group’s list.

Send
Explores how the lesson might be lived
(10% of lesson time)

Think-Pair-Share

Read each of these questions and allow time to think about, write, or draw their response. After a few moments, invite participants to form pairs and share their responses. Encourage them to pair with someone new for each question.

• What perception of yourself or another would you like to change?
• How does Christ invite you to see yourself or another in a new way?
• If you are the woman at the well, in what ways is Jesus offering you a new way of seeing your life?
• How will you respond?

Bless
Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and help
(5% of lesson time)

Spiritual Practice — Resting in God’s loving gaze

Breathe deeply and rest into awareness of the Spirit, which already is with us. Enter silence, imagining God’s loving gaze on you. If there is chatter within, recognize it gently. Know you are welcome in this space as you are. Rest with awareness of and gratitude for God’s love and presence.
LESSON 3
COMPANIONS ON A JOURNEY... HOW DO WE NURTURE WHAT IS EMERGING?

FOCUS
Participants will explore how working together in community increases our capacity to abolish poverty and end needless suffering.

OBJECTIVES
The learners will...

- read the focus scripture passage and experience the importance of relationships in community.
- discover the importance of community in abolishing poverty and ending suffering.
- commit to personal action to abolishing poverty and ending suffering in their community.

SUPPLIES
- Journals
- Pens or pencils
- Blindfolds and obstacle course items
- Copies of mandala outlines (end of lesson) and colored pencils, crayons, or markers

SCRIPTURE
"Jesus Heals a Blind Man"

They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Can you see anything?” And the man looked up and said, “I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.” Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Then he sent him away to his home, saying, “Do not even go into the village.”

—Mark 8:22-26

Today’s scripture is about a man whose story was completely changed by Jesus, but was only possible because others helped him find the way.

Invite one or more youths to read Mark 8:22-26 while others act it out.

Until Jesus came, the blind man knew what his day would be like. He was going to struggle to do things, be dependent on others. This was his daily life, the routine he was familiar with, the story he knew. But through his friends, his community, and divine encounter, the blind man was given a chance at new life.

Obstacle Course

Set up a simple obstacle course outside or in a room. Blindfold the youths and challenge them to make their way through the obstacle course. After they’ve tried it alone, make the course more challenging and have them do it again but with a friend to help guide them.

- What did you feel the first time you went through the course?
- Which time was easier? Why?

When we have friends to help guide us, it is much easier to get around. Through this experience and today’s scripture passage, we see the importance of relationships and community.
Pass out journals.

Hopes, Dreams, and Goals

*Invite youths to take a few minutes and record their hopes, dreams, and goals for the future. These can be for the world, their community, and themselves. Big, small, easy, unrealistic — anything they want.*

*Discuss the following questions in small groups, or as a larger group.*

- How are your dreams, hopes, and goals made possible by the community that surrounds you?
- Do you encounter limitations when you try to do things alone?
- If given a new opportunity like the blind man, what could you achieve?

Abolish Poverty, End Suffering

*Invite youths to share their support of this statement with thumbs up (full support), thumbs sideways (some support), or no support (thumbs down).*

*Statement: Abolishing poverty and ending needless suffering in the world is possible.*

*Invite youths to share why they hold their level of support.*

The Mission Initiative to Abolish Poverty, End Suffering might seem too big to accomplish, but with the support of community, change can happen. In the blind man’s story, his suffering ends through community and Christ.

*Invite participants to write or draw responses to these questions in their journals. Share responses in small groups or with the larger group.*

- Where is there suffering in your community? What are the causes of this suffering?
- What keeps people from responding to this need in your community?
- With whom can you partner to end that suffering?
- How can you make a difference in one suffering person’s life?

Shared Story

*Have youths form smaller groups. One person will begin a tale and stop after a few sentences. The next person will continue the story for a few more sentences then stop. The next person then adds to it and so on until the tale comes to a resolution. The story could begin with a selected title or subject to guide the improvisation.*

- Did the story end the way you thought it would?
- What did you like or not like about creating a collaborative story?

We have some control over our future and what we do, but we are also affected by those around us. Each of us is blessed with a community. It may be at school, church, the local gym, or wherever you have found your people. But these communities can help us accomplish more than we thought possible and guide our futures in new and unexpected directions.
Community of Christ

There are many stories of characters who think they need to accomplish tasks on their own, but a hero doesn’t work alone. Harry Potter has Ron and Hermione, Katniss has Peeta, Han Solo has Chewbacca, Ash has Pikachu, Moana has Maui.

Ask participants to shout out a few examples of things that are better together.

By leaning on others, we build community. Remember, the blind man encountered new life because his friends helped end his suffering by helping him experience the healing peace of Christ.

Have youths select a mandala to color. Invite them to prayerfully consider how they will respond to issues of poverty and suffering in their community.

The mandala represents the hope of ending suffering through Christ-centered community.

You may choose to play music while youths engage in this spiritual practice.

Form a large circle, or two circles if it is a large class. Go around the circle(s) and have each youth display their mandala as they complete this statement:

I will help abolish poverty and end the suffering of ______________ in my community by ____________________.

Invite one or more youths to offer a closing prayer, or recite the Mission Prayer together.
LESSON 4
GROWING DEEPER...HOW CAN WE FREE OUR FULL CAPACITY?

FOCUS
Participants will explore the importance of community in recognizing God’s presence and engaging in Christ’s mission.

OBJECTIVES
The learners will...

- consider what “blinds” us from recognizing God’s presence.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and the importance of Christlike community.
- design new forms of communities engaged in Christ’s mission.

SUPPLIES
- Journals
- Pens or pencils
- Clear plastic tub with water
- Items to float/sink
- Small bowl or hat
- Beads all same color except one
- Blindfold
- Equipment to show the video Community of Christ Commercial at www.missionalleaders.org.

SCRIPTURE
"Jesus Walks on Water"

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them.

And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” He said, “Come.”

So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

—Matthew 14:22-33

Presence of God

In a bucket of beads, all are red but one. Ask a blindfolded youth to find the one blue bead. Most likely it won’t be found. Remove the blindfold, and issue the same challenge. It should be much easier this time. We are using the beads as a metaphor for the presence of God in our lives. (As an additional challenge blindfold another youth, but encourage the rest of the class to guide the blindfolded youth to the blue bead.)

When we are “blinded” by things that are hard, or boring, or scary, it can be hard to find the presence of God (the blue bead). But when you take the
blindfold off, knowing that God is there, being aware of God’s presence is much easier.

This activity is a great way to understand finding God in mundane or difficult situations. It is not necessarily about finding God when we’re struggling most, but knowing that even in a sea of red, the blue of God’s presence will always be there.

Pass out the journals and invite participants to write or draw responses to these questions.

- When have I missed God’s presence because I was “blinded” by fear?
- Who helps you discover God’s presence?

Engage
Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Will it Float?

Using a clear tub of water, place items one by one in the tub and ask the group if they will float. Use items that seem obvious but aren’t. For example, a lime will sink but a lemon will float. Similarly, a regular cola will sink but a diet cola will float.

Ask one or more youth to read Matthew 13:22-33, and have additional youths act out the passage (actors representing Jesus, Peter, disciples, the form of the boat, and the wind).

The disciples showed us a prime example of how our fear can change how we react and engage with the world. When we allow fear to hold us, we aren’t able to live to our fullest potential. But when we don’t allow fear to guide our decisions, we open ourselves to find Christ’s presence in everything we do. How can we find Jesus in our lives today? In the mundane? Can we find Jesus even there? Jesus took an ordinary activity—being in a boat on water—and challenged Peter to look beyond his fears. Jesus’ life is about the possibilities we can’t see yet.

Today’s scripture lesson offers us several areas to explore—overcoming fear, trusting in God, and the revelation of Peter’s need for the community. The boat in this story is a symbol for the church and community. Peter steps away from the boat thinking he can do it on his own, only to realize that is not true. Jesus reaching out to help Peter affirms the importance of staying focused on Christ.

Form small discussion groups:

- Share an example of when you realized the importance of community (family, congregation, team, or school group).
- Describe differences you have experienced between the support of sacred communities and that of secular communities.
- Have each group select an example to share with the larger group.
- Discuss differences in sacred and secular community support with the larger group.

Respond
Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Peter’s Church

Knowing that today’s scripture is a metaphor for the importance of community and the church, we are able to look at Peter’s experience with a new lens.

Experiencing Congregations in Mission

Community of Christ affirms, “We are poised to become congregations that are the true and living expressions of Jesus Christ, woven together by the Spirit, and sent into the world as evangelistic witnesses, compassionate ministers, and justice and peacemakers.” We are called into community with a purpose, and that purpose includes all of us!

- How have you seen your congregation active in Christ’s mission?
• How could your congregation be more active?
• If you don’t have a congregation, in what community do you experience compassionate ministry and action?

In the same small groups, have each group design a church that lives Christ’s mission. Think outside the box…dare to dream!

• What is most important in making the community relevant and meaningful to your group?
• How often would you gather, and what would you do to engage in Christ’s mission?
• Where would you meet and what would the space be like?

Share design plans with the larger group. Discuss as a large group how the ideas can help reimagine what it means to be the church. Affirm the importance of young voices and ministry in the church of today and the church of the future!

Send
Explores how the lesson might be lived (10% of lesson time)

Pass out journals.

Show Community of Christ Commercial at www.missionalleaders.org. Click on the menu bars in the upper right corner and then expand the Videos button and click on Videos A-Z.

Discuss how the commercial describes community and mission. What is the importance of the doors opening outside instead of inside? Invite youths to write in their journals a statement from the video, or an original statement that describes sacred community in mission. Share responses with the larger group.

Bless
Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and help (5% of lesson time)

Being communities focused on the mission of Christ is grounded in recognition of God’s presence in all life; noticing the Divine in the ordinary. Close by guiding the practice of holy attention.

Holy Attention

All you need for the practice of holy attention is yourself and the time to really see. If you are walking in the world, then walk slower. Take a deeper look at the things you pass. Notice the details in plants, places, and people. Focus your attention on the ever-present God in all things. For a moment, see people and places, as they are, not just background in your own story. As people pass, imagine what their story may be—one that may be so different and also so similar to your own. If you are sitting down, or desire to write, claim a space where you want to give your full attention. Write down (or mentally note) every detail you see. Really look. Notice the creases in blades of grass, or the way the wind moves things, or the different textures of the dirt. Spend as much time as you desire just noticing.

If helpful, imagine the journey of each detail you see—the way it was shaped in time, the earth that it comes from and is a part of. What does it mean that you are here now too? Do you feel solidarity with this part of the world? Do you see how in this moment you are all in this place at this time, in all your detail and wonder? If you don’t see God in these things, that is okay. Just see them for what they are. Pay attention to color. Pay attention to texture and smell. If you notice long enough, you may forget yourself for a while and whatever anxieties or preoccupations you carry with you. You may find yourself totally present in the place you are in.
LESSON 5
BE COMING BLESSING...WHAT ARE THE NEXT FAITHFUL STEPS?

FOCUS
Participants will engage in the Mission Initiative of Pursue Peace on Earth and how that looks in their lives.

OBJECTIVES
The learners will...
• discuss the focus scripture passage from different perspectives.
• consider ways of finding peace and sharing peace with others.
• explore pursuing peace around the globe.
• create a combined prayer for peace.

SUPPLIES
• Journals
• Pens or pencils
• Globe or world map
• Poster paper and washable paint or markers

SCRIPTURE
"Jesus Calms the Storm"

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

—Mark 4:35-40

Gather
Activates background knowledge; prepares and motivates for lesson (15% of lesson time)

Read Mark 4:35-40, then ask for a few volunteers to reread verses 39-40. Ask each youth to read it with a different emotion (angry, calm, happy). How do they interpret Jesus’ reaction?

It is possible to read this passage in several ways. Scripture can be interpreted differently depending on how it’s read and the life circumstances of the reader or hearer. This doesn’t mean sometimes we’re right and sometimes we’re wrong, but that we need to continue to study and learn. Scripture is always teaching us new things.

When the disciples had to wake Jesus, it was because of fear—fear that Jesus was not concerned for them and what they were experiencing. They felt abandoned, and yet Jesus was with them the entire time. He changed chaos to calm and order, saying, "Peace! Be still!" The disciples were still in awe and did not completely understand that with Jesus, they had God with them.

Pass out journals and invite youths to write or draw responses to these questions.

• Who is with you when your “boat” is rocking?
• How do you find peace in the midst of life’s storms?
• When have you been a presence of peace to another?
Holding Back

Place an object on one side of the room and ask a youth to stand on the other. Then ask the youth to try to get the object. No trouble retrieving the object, right? Now ask the youth to get that object while another youth uses his or her arms and holds them back.

Sometimes our fear holds us in place as strongly as another person might hold us.

- Do you have any fears?
- What do our fears keep us from accomplishing?
- Why do our fears have so much power over us?
- Have you ever been able to overcome a fear? How did you do that?

Jesus’ Divinity

Today’s scripture passage is not just about our fears. It is about how the disciples encounter the mystery of God in Jesus. How can we relate to Jesus? Jesus, Son of God, is a big Jesus and maybe hard to connect with, but remember Jesus also was human. Born human, lived human, died human.

Jesus knew the joy and sorrow that we know. Jesus’ humanity makes him relatable. He knew love and loss. He suffered more than many of us will have to suffer and understands—lived it, suffered it, gets it—more than anyone else can. He didn’t get a pass because he was God’s son. Those days that are awful or we think we’re not enough or not worth anything, Jesus felt those things as well. When we say “I can’t,” Jesus proved that in fact we can!

We need to know to ask for help from God—God’s power can be at work in us even if we don’t get it right all the time. These are the reasons that God is revealed in the human story of Jesus.

Think-Pair-Share

Give students time to write or draw responses in their journal to these questions. Form pairs to share responses. Invite youths to form different pairs for each question. Share “ah has” with the larger group.

- What makes Jesus relatable to you?
- How would you describe who Jesus is to a friend?
- What does the peace of Christ mean to you?

Pursue Peace on Earth

One of the Mission Initiatives of Community of Christ is Pursue Peace on Earth. As disciples, we are called to experience Christ’s peace and share Christ’s peace.

Read and discuss the following statement:

We are called to restore Christ’s promise of peace through teaching and practicing nonviolent conflict resolution so we can help promote and pursue peace for all peoples and all nations across the globe.

- What is the difference between nonviolent and passive? (Nonviolent: using peaceful means rather than force; Passive: accepting or allowing what happens or what others do)
- Would you describe Christ’s peace as being nonviolent or passive?
- How have you experienced nonviolent conflict resolution?
- How have you experienced conflict that did not resolve peacefully? Where do you see examples of this in your community or in the world?
- In addition to the loss of human lives, how does violent conflict affect the environment?
Using a globe or a large map of the world, have youths take turns randomly selecting a location. Using a computer (internet if available), look up the people and culture of this place. If this is not possible, invite students to discuss these questions about their school, community, or nation.

- What are some issues that challenge peace in this place?
- What could you learn from their culture to help pursue peace in your community?
- Take a moment to pray for peace in each part of the world selected.

Next Faithful Steps

Have each youth create a footprint on a piece of paper. This can be done by tracing the foot or painting the bottom of the foot and stepping on the paper. When the footprints are done, invite the youth to write at the top, “My next faithful step for peace…” At the bottom, have them write what their next faithful step for peace will be. If you can, use these in a worship.

The Daily Prayer for Peace is practiced each day in the Temple in Independence, Missouri, USA. Each day, a different country is upheld in prayer. You can find the country and prayer each day at www.cofchrist.org. Use the search box and magnifying glass symbol in the upper right corner by typing “Daily Prayer for Peace.” On the list you see next, click the Daily Prayer for Peace link.

Invite each student to write a prayer statement for peace. If possible, hang newsprint and have youths write their prayer statements to be displayed. Combine the statements into one prayer for peace. Use the prayer in worship, and submit the prayer for use in the Daily Prayer for Peace.

Have each youth read a prayer statement as part of a combined prayer for peace.

Close with:

Let there be peace on Earth, and let it begin with the very next thing I do!