

DISCIPLE



INTO
THE WORD
INTO
THE WORLD

DISCIPLE

As You Continue DISCIPLE

You are entering familiar territory. The format of the study manual is familiar to you, though some features are new. They are explained below. Familiarity means you will be at home in the commitment you are now making of thirty to forty-five minutes a day for disciplined study, two or two and one-half hours of participation in the weekly group meeting, and ministry in the world.

This study manual is based on the New Revised Standard Version. We recommend *The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*. Other excellent study Bibles and translations are available. Keep one or two handy for comparing difficult verses or passages.

The commentary section is titled "Into the Word" and the discipleship section, "Into the World."

The daily reading assignments are shorter than in the first study, but you will be studying Scripture in more detail as you learn and practice new Bible study skills.

As you write your daily reflections on Scripture, include your thoughts about what Scripture is saying about your ministry in the world. You will use these notes later in "God's Word in My World."

Making Connections

Your understanding of Scripture will deepen as you begin to make connections between what you are reading and what you already know. New insights come in those moments when you pull from memory the name of a person or place, an event, a custom, a teaching that throws light on the Scripture you are studying. Learning and practicing basic Bible study skills will increase your ability to make such connections.

At the end of the weekly "Assignment" section is a brief, simple description of a way to study the Bible. The skill mentioned each week is not tied to that particular lesson but may be used with any lesson. Learn each skill and practice it any place it applies. Eventually you will be using many skills for every lesson.

Basic Resource Library

The Basic Resource Library is intended to broaden the scope of reading and study. Books will circulate among group members as assignments are made.

Keep track of the weeks you have a Basic Resource Library assignment by writing the name of the assigned resource in the space provided on the first page of the lessons. At the Orientation and Training session each member will receive a sheet for recording all assignments for the study.

Spiritual Disciplines

Practicing spiritual disciplines can bring order to life and keep Bible study related to witness and service in the world. The spiritual discipline suggested each week arises from the week's Scripture. Reflect on it and practice it daily.

Sabbath

Sabbath keeping is a way of sorting out priorities, of trusting God.

Each weekly sabbath emphasis will inform your decisions about how you remember sabbath and ultimately about how you will live the other six days of the week. For Christians Sunday is our sabbath. Distinguish between sabbath and Day 7 in the assignment section. Think of sabbath as Sunday. Think of Day 7 as the day you rest from your study schedule. They may or may not be the same day.

Sabbath keeping is not meant to be a new legalism; it is a gift of rest and freedom.

Into the World

Here you will find two kinds of material. The first identifies some needs in the world calling for ministry and suggests some possible responses. It is not intended that you will select a social action project to do each week, though you will surely become involved in varying kinds of ministry. Commitment to ministry in the world is a commitment to choosing a lifestyle informed by Scripture. It involves conversion of attitudes and perspectives, and it sends persons into the world as servant-ministers.

The second part of this section is titled "God's Word in my World." It invites you to summarize the Scripture message you have heard that will shape your ministry and to decide what response and commitment you will make to that message. In completing this section you will consider the statement of "Our Human Condition" as it applies to you and will make use of the daily notes you made about your ministry.

DISCIPLE



GENESIS
EXODUS

HUMILITY

“All who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

—Luke 18:14

23 Learning to Follow

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

Humility sounds weak, spineless. In an attempt to be humble, we become condescending. So many of our role models are aggressive, self-centered. We don't know how to be humble and still be strong and radiant.

ASSIGNMENT

Jesus told parable after parable about the Kingdom. Listen on several levels. Read like the crowd, happy to hear a good story. Read like the disciples, eager to understand the kernel of meaning. Read in the light of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection to discover spiritual guidance for your life.

- Day 1 Luke 14:25-35 (estimate the cost); 15 (the search for the lost)
- Day 2 Luke 16 (money: the shrewd manager, the rich man and Lazarus)
- Day 3 Luke 17 (sin, faith, gratitude, preparedness)
- Day 4 Luke 18 (the persistent widow, Pharisee and tax collector, the rich ruler, Jesus' suffering foretold)
- Day 5 Luke 19:1-27 (Zacchaeus, ten pounds); Matthew 25:14-46 (talents, Judgment)
- Day 6 Study Manual
- Day 7 Rest

Making Connections: Underline key words and phrases; watch for their repetition.

BASIC RESOURCE LIBRARY

Assignment: _____

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Simplicity. As we come to see money not as our security but as a trust from God, we will use it joyfully in behalf of others.

PRAYER

Pray daily before study:

“To you alone, O LORD, to you alone, and not to us, must glory be given because of your constant love and faithfulness” (Psalm 115:1, TEV).

Prayer concerns for this week:

HUMILITY

Day 1 Luke 14:25-35 (estimate the cost); 15
(the search for the lost)

Day 4 Luke 18 (the persistent widow, Pharisee
and tax collector, the rich ruler, Jesus'
suffering foretold)

Day 2 Luke 16 (money: the shrewd manager,
the rich man and Lazarus)

Day 5 Luke 19:1-27 (Zacchaeus, ten pounds);
Matthew 25:14-46 (talents, Great Judg-
ment)

Day 3 Luke 17 (sin, faith, gratitude, prepared-
ness)

Day 6 Study Manual

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INTO THE WORD

As Jesus moved closer to his suffering, he reminded people that discipleship demands a price. A student is not above the teacher. If the teacher walks toward the cross, disciples must “deny themselves and take up their cross daily” (Luke 9:23).

The tower (14:28-30), probably a vineyard tower, was built so the owner could keep watch for thieves during harvest. An unfinished building is always a humiliation to its builder. Every builder must first ask, “How much will it cost?”

Wars were commonplace, one king against another. Jesus probably had a specific war in mind (14:31-33). A king with a small army might decide to pay a large tribute rather than be destroyed. What are the terms of discipleship?

Salt (14:34-35) is distinctive. In the ancient world, salt was expensive. Salt crystals were found in rock formations. The whole aggregate was crushed, and either in the preparation of the meal or at the table, people would pick out the clumps of salt crystals. Finally the picked-over residue, fit for nothing, was thrown out. If you are going to be a disciple, either you will be perceptively peculiar or worthless.

Searching for the Lost

You will not understand the three stories of lostness—lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son—if you miss Luke’s context for them (Luke 15:1-3). Religious leaders were grumbling. What was the problem? Jesus was eating with sinners, some immoral and some ceremonially unclean. The law-abiding leaders gave food to the poor, attention to the injured, care to the destitute, of course; but they didn’t give them table fellowship. That implied community, precisely what the Pharisees avoided and what Jesus extended. “This fellow welcomes sinners” (15:2). A better translation might be “receives” them (RSV), for Jesus was hosting the meal. What is the first word spoken by a Near Eastern host? “You have honored me; you have honored my house by coming to my lowly dinner.” The tax collector, the woman of the evening, the Samaritan, the day laborer—all were honoring Jesus by eating at his meal? What is going on?

Now the stories.

“Which one of you, having a hundred sheep . . . ?” (15:4). Right off he humbled the professionals. Sheep were tended by peasants. No educated, cultured person, no person of status,

would be caught dead working with sheep.

There were two kinds of shepherds: bedouin and village shepherds. The image is more one of village people. Each family would own five or ten sheep, maybe twenty. The extended family, including uncles and cousins, perhaps neighbors, would put together a flock of a hundred sheep. They would then pay two or three in the family, even children, to look after the flock. One person would not be a shepherd alone.

One of the shepherds, after a head count in the wilderness, went in search of the lost sheep. One sheep, like one person, is important. The *search* is a common theme in the three stories. A shepherd, listening, would smile wryly at the word *rejoice*, for what has the shepherd found? A wounded sheep, a sick sheep, a stubborn sheep, lying exhausted in the rocks? It’s impossible to drive one sheep home, sick or well. The work has just begun. The search was only half the cost. The shepherd would pick up the animal, lay it across the shoulders legs forward, grab two feet with each hand, and walk the long way home.

The ninety-nine were brought back to the village at evening by the other shepherds. It was dangerous for one person, perhaps a woman or a child, to go in search alone. The people of the village at dusk had an eye out. Now the shepherd comes home. The sheep, a part of community property, is recovered. It is time for a second rejoicing, a community rejoicing. Can you imagine somebody unhappy over the return of the sheep? Yet the Pharisees and scribes were precisely that; they were glum because Jesus brought “lost” people back to God. He brought people who were apart back into community.

The second story (15:8-10) highlights a woman as heroine, unusual in that culture. A bedouin woman would have her dowry of ten silver coins on an ornamental chain around her head or neck. A village woman would have her coins tied tightly in a handkerchief. Cash money in a village was in short supply. Food they grew. Clothing they made. Money, little as it was, they saved.

At least she knew where the coin was; it was in the house somewhere. She looked in the corners for the tenth time. She moved the bedding, swept up every bit of dust, until she found the coin. Note the commitment and intensity of the search. Overcome with joy, she called the neighbors. The angels rejoice over one sinner who repents.

Only Luke offers us the story of the lost son, or better, the compassionate father (15:11-32). The older son would inherit two thirds of the

father's property, and the younger son one third when the father died. The younger son wanted his now, an unheard-of request. To demand inheritance in effect said, "Father, I wish you were dead." Even property given could not be sold without the father's consent. The father gave it, much to the consternation of friends and relatives and to the shame of the family. The son took the money into a distant country and squandered it in "wild living" (15:13, NIV). Hard times came, a famine. Lots of men were looking for work. The son hired out to do the lowest task a Jew could perform, feeding pigs. He would even have eaten the pods the pigs were eating if they had been offered. He rehearsed his speech in which he would apologize to his father and ask to be a hired hand. That would be a lowly job but independent. He might be able to pay his father back, and he would not have to eat at his brother's table. He still could not see the critical issue—the relationship he had broken with his father.

The father spent a lot of time scanning the horizon. When he saw the son "still far off" (15:20), he began to run. No man over thirty runs in Palestine. Boys run. Men learn to walk slowly, with dignity and honor, letting their long robes cover their feet. Picture the father, grabbing his robe, pulling it above his knees, running breathlessly through the streets of the village. Neighbors would be gasping, little boys running after him. Picture him. Kissing the son first on one cheek, then on the other, not letting him recite his speech. He called for a robe (the best one would be his own), a ring (authority over property matters), and sandals. Slaves and servants went barefoot; sons wore sandals. He called for the fatted calf, the one calf penned up to be grain-fed for holiday.

The villagers had crossed him off, this prodigal. But what indifference to shame, ridicule, and derision the father showed; for he understood the real issue. Father and son were together. The son was alive again.

Some think another parable follows, but not so. The one parable is not finished, for the whole point is restoration into community by a compassionate father. The older son was sulking, would not come into the house, bad-mouthed his brother, claiming he had devoured the money "with prostitutes" (15:30), something the story had not said. He called him "this son of yours," refusing to say "my brother." He felt sorry for himself, working steadily, staying at home. No humility or compassion in *his* heart.

Now the father, while the guests stood amazed at his loss of dignity, went outside and pleaded with the older son, not on the basis of money but on the basis of family, "Son, you are always with me"—an affirmation instead of a reproof. "Everything I have is yours." He had divided the property earlier. "Your brother"—that's the issue. The father was willing to pay the costly price of reconciliation. "Your brother."

The question left is whether the older brother was also



The woman looking for her lost coin lit a lamp to illuminate the dark corners of her house (Luke 15:8-10). The upper lamp is a style used in patriarchal times. The lower lamp is from the time of Jesus.

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willing to pay that same price so that the family could be together again.

What do you think was going through the minds of the listeners as Jesus told these three parables?

NOTES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS

The Shrewd Manager

We find this parable (Luke 16:1-13) difficult, not because we can't comprehend the story but because we don't understand the meaning. We are surprised that Jesus used a rascal to make a point. True, Jesus used the ordinary stuff of everyday life for illustrations. He has presented less-than-admirable characters before—the uncaring judge and a friend who didn't want to be bothered. But this manager, who had been either skimming or sloppy, ended up being praised by his boss and by Jesus.

The rich man of the village owned several farms, so he had an estate manager to negotiate contracts and look after things. The renters agreed to cash rent, that is, so much olive oil or so much wheat, no matter how well the crops turned out. The amounts would be paid when the crops were harvested.

The owner called his manager into his office and fired him for “squandering his property” (16:1). “Get all your records together; bring in your ledgers. You're through.” Commentators note that the owner did not put the manager in jail, nor did he curse or berate him. He simply let him go. The manager, by his silence, indicated his guilt.

But then the manager came face to face with his future. Moments before, he had position, a certain power, adequate income. Now he suddenly felt old, too old for day labor, too proud to beg. He was powerless, a man without authority, without a job. He would receive no favorable recommendations. He was at the end of his tether: no job, no friends, no future.

Like a flash, he had a clever idea. Quickly he called the renters to him. Contracts had been renegotiated before when it did not rain, when insects devoured the crop, usually at the renters' request. The renters, now, were both dumbfounded and elated. The manager said, “Take your contract and, instead of one hundred jugs of olive oil rent due at harvest, write fifty jugs.” Again, to another, “Instead of one hundred bushels of wheat rent due at harvest, write eighty.” Both signed, the renters assuming the owner knew about and approved the action. The manager may very well have hinted that he had urged the owner to relax the rent for them. The renters thought he was wonderful. He was their friend. “Come eat with us sometime.”

Probably within hours the whole village knew about the action, not as fraud but as generosity. When the manager

brought in the records, the owner already had heard his name being praised. The owner had two choices: He could try to undo the action and make everyone in the village angry with him, or he could let it go so that the renters would continue to praise him and appreciate the manager.

He chose to let the reduced contracts stand. That was what the manager was counting on. In the back of his mind, the manager knew he had one source of salvation, the good will of those whose rent he had reduced.

The owner and Jesus praised the manager. For what? For being shrewd in an emergency, for looking out for his welfare. People spend time and money planning their financial future. If only they were as perceptive in figuring out their eternal future.

The shrewd manager was praised, not because he was crooked but because he put his mind to work on this future destiny and because he trusted in the good will of those he had aided. Jesus said “the children of light” should be so shrewd (16:8). Use wealth to secure an eternal home (16:9). We do not buy a place in heaven, but secure a place by thoughtful generosity and kindness to those in need.

Children

Jesus pointed to children as examples of the Kingdom. Look at these teachings:

“The Kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Luke 18:16, TEV).

“Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it” (18:17, TEV).

The disciples asked Jesus, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (Matthew 18:1). He put a child on his lap and taught, “Unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (18:3).

Who are the greatest? Again he took a child and said, “The least among all of you is the greatest” (Luke 9:46-48).

Here is a powerful teaching: “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me” (Matthew 18:5). If we can help a child, we help Jesus. See also Matthew 25:35-40 and apply that passage to treatment of children. What is the judgment of this passage on our society?

To cause another person to sin is a grievous act. But to cause a child to sin—listen to this: “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea” (18:6). This teaching might cause conscientious parents to feel guilty. Yet terrible crimes are committed against children that drive them to sinful ways. What stumbling blocks are we putting before our children?

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What Is a Servant to Do?

Everyone loves a story about a celebrity, a rich man about to be made king (19:12). Suspense is introduced when he gives ten servants each a gold coin and says, "See what you can earn with this while I am gone" (19:13, TEV). Already we know the rich man was hated (19:14). Later he acknowledged that he was "a hard man, taking what is not mine and reaping what I have not planted" (19:22, TEV). The man wanted results.

We would like to hire the first man as an investment counselor, although we have no idea how he made ten gold coins out of the one. He said he "earned" it (19:16, TEV). With a "well done," the rich man, now king, put him in charge of ten cities.

The second man earned five gold coins (19:18). He did not receive a "Well done" but was placed over five cities.

The third man is pivotal. He made two mistakes. He misjudged his king, and he was unproductive. He should have acted bravely according to the expectations of the king. He knew the kind of man he served. Even timidly he could have put the money in the bank and earned some meager interest.

Now comes the part of the story so seemingly harsh, even to those standing by: "Take the gold coin away from him and give it to the servant who has ten coins" (19:24, TEV). The act seems doubly unfair. It takes from the one with little and gives to the most prosperous. Why not at least make it a little more even by giving it to the man with five? But no! "To every person who has something, even more will be given" (19:26, TEV).

What is the one basic teaching in this parable? Matthew's Gospel helps us, because it follows up the parable (Matthew 25:14-30) with a judgment scene (25:31-46). In the judgment as in the parable, some are rewarded and some severely punished. What was the king looking for? Risk. Productivity. Stewardship of time, energy, talent.

But doing what? That's the point. It is important to know for whom you are working. What did the king expect? In the parable, the king wanted money, lots of it. In the judgment scene of Matthew 25, the king wants the hungry to be fed, the thirsty to be given drink, the stranger to be received, the naked to be clothed, the sick to be cared for, the prisoner to be visited (25:34-40).

Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). The third servant said, "Lord, Lord," but failed to do the will of his king.

INTO THE WORLD

Usually we think of evangelism as witness leading to conversion and profession of faith. Think this week of evangelism as table fellowship. Try to eat with someone

NOTES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS

who needs to experience inclusiveness and community. How can you show genuine interest rather than obligation? How can you be sure your actions express a humble rather than a condescending spirit?

One emphasis from our Scripture study has been on children. Millions of children do not receive immunization shots. What could your group do to assist community efforts for immunization? Could your church set up a free clinic?

Some towns have a “coat drive,” sponsored by schools, radio stations, and dry cleaners, to obtain a warm coat for every child. A volunteer group usually works with school-teachers. Do you have such a plan, or might you start one?

Does your church have an after-school program for latch-key children? Or a counseling ministry for potential school dropouts?

How well supplied is your church’s food pantry where families with children can obtain emergency foodstuffs? Could you check to see how adequate it is?

God’s Word in My World

This message from God’s Word will shape my ministry this week:

I will respond in these ways:

SABBATH

In our ceasing work for one day, we are free to see ourselves in the image of God rather than define ourselves by what we produce and consume. We give up our need to compete, our drive toward efficiency, our striving to achieve. We accept God’s gifts of rest, dignity, peace, freedom.

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE

We often read about Samaritans in Luke’s Gospel. Read John 4:1-42. If this experience was the introduction of the gospel into Samaria, think of the absolute humility and vulnerability of Jesus. Think of the slow yet significant opening of the woman to Jesus’ words. Realize who it was that became the first evangelist-missionary to the Samaritans.

NOTES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS

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INTO
THE WORD
INTO
THE WORLD

Put the Study Manual to Work

Each part of the study manual has a specific function both in daily preparation and in the weekly group meeting.

Theme Word

The theme word gives a clue to the subject of the lesson and the Scripture being studied in the lesson.

- Display the word during each group meeting.
- Read the word together as a part of “Gathering and Prayer.”
- Use the theme word to refocus when discussion strays from the subject of the lesson.

Theme Verse(s)

The theme verse(s) expresses the focus of the lesson and might be read or recited from memory during the opening moment of devotion.

Title

The titles are descriptive of events or content and suggest movement and emphasis in the biblical story.

Our Human Condition

“Our Human Condition” is a statement of *who we are*, a statement about *our inclinations as human beings*. In our study of Scripture we meet the God who redirects our human inclinations into ministry. We move

- from self-recognition (“Our Human Condition”) in light of who God is
- to self-acceptance in light of God’s forgiveness (Scripture)
- to commitment of self (ministry) in light of God’s call.

Encourage persons to restate “Our Human Condition” in terms of their own experience.

Assignment

Scripture is central to DISCIPLE: INTO THE WORD INTO THE WORLD, and the gaining and maintaining of the discipline of daily reading and study of Scripture are essential to the rhythm of being in the Word and in the world.

- The “Assignment” section indicates when to read the week’s Scripture and when to read the study manual and write the responses called for.
- Insist on daily notetaking along with daily Scripture reading. The second page of each lesson in the manual provides space. Headings for the days indicate content of the Scripture to be read. The

main purpose for taking notes is to have a personal record of information gleaned from Scripture and of insights and questions about the Scripture. Many activities will call for use of the notes in group discussion and interaction.

- Ask group members to covenant together to prepare this weekly page of notes.
- Challenge members of the group through your own example of daily reading, study, and notetaking.
- Make use of the work persons have done during the week. The extent to which you recognize and use the preparation group members have made will determine the degree of commitment they continue to bring to completing assignments.
- “Making Connections” describes a variety of ways to study Scripture. Plan at least one activity each week that uses one of these suggested Bible study skills. (See pages 10–11.)

Basic Resource Library

This component provides reading and reference materials to assist deeper study of Scripture. The blank space in the study manual is for persons to write the name of the resource when they have an assignment.

- Keep the resources circulating weekly.
- Encourage persons to bring into group discussions what they are discovering through their assignments.

Spiritual Disciplines

Spiritual disciplines are avenues for coming to God in order by God’s grace to go for God. Each week a particular spiritual discipline is included for reflection and practice.

- Provide questions weekly to prompt reflection and practice. (See pages 12–14.)
- Make connections between spiritual disciplines and ministry—the inner and the outer life.

Prayer

The prayer psalm printed in the study manual is a starting point for personal prayer.

- Encourage persons to jot down concerns about which they want to pray during the week and to add concerns that arise from their daily study of Scripture.

Notes

- Establish a plan for group members to pray for one another.
- Emphasize prayer as the power undergirding ministry.

Into the Word

This section comments on the Scripture and draws meaning from it.

- Write notes in the margin as you read and during discussion in the group meeting while others are telling what they have learned.
- Decide how you will use the information persons write in the blanks in this section. Some information will be suited to response on a voluntary basis, in pairs or in threes; other information might be discussed in the entire group.

Into the World

Ministry is the focus of this section.

- Keep “Our Human Condition,” Scripture, and ministry connected and interacting. Direction for ministry emerges from viewing the human condition through Scripture.
- Emphasize listening to Scripture.
- Plan time every week for persons to declare their ministry commitment. They will do this in “God’s Word in My World.”
- Vary the approaches you use for having persons talk about what they have written in the blanks in this section.

Sabbath

This section identifies the several dimensions of sabbath keeping as a way of putting God first.

- Encourage sabbath keeping. (See pages 15–17.)
- Guide the group in working through personal priorities and family priorities that come into conflict over sabbath.

If You Want to Know More

This section encourages additional reading of Scripture and offers opportunity for using reference materials and presenting information to the group.

- Make use of the initiative of group members by providing time for them to report their individual research and study.
- Scan the information in this section. Some of it is useful at more than one point in the study.

23 Learning to Follow

GATHERING AND PRAYER

(5 minutes)

VIDEO SEGMENT 23

(20 minutes)

Presenter: Thomas Boomershine

Prepare to View Video

This segment makes the point that in order to understand Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God, we have to learn how to listen from the future back to the present.

View Video

Summary of video content:

Jesus taught about the rule of God in a way that was shaped by how Jesus saw time.

Jesus is steadily looking back on the present from the perspective of the future kingdom of God.

If you think back from the future and know what the future will bring, you can use your money differently.

Jesus taught that the use of money in the present will be evaluated in relation to its use on behalf of the poor and the lost.

Discuss After Viewing Video

What difference would it make in our lives if we learned to think back on the present from the perspective of the last things in our lives?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

(50 or 35 minutes)

Form four groups to discuss the cost of discipleship from the perspective of Luke's teachings on money and possessions. Assign one of these passages to each group: Luke 14:25-33; 16:1-15; 16:19-31; 18:18-30. Ask groups to read their passage and discuss these questions: What does the passage say? What does it mean? What does it require of us? Each group should then consider its Scripture alongside the spiritual discipline of simplicity. Use these questions: What attitudes underlie the view that money is our security? What behavior results from those attitudes? What attitudes underlie the view that money is a trust from God? What behavior results from those attitudes?

Look at the parables of the lost sheep, coin, and son. Ask persons to read Luke 15 silently, underlining key words and phrases and watching

for repetition of those. Look for themes or emphases common to the three parables and for emphases that are specific to each. Discuss this question: Why do you think Jesus told three parables about lostness, repentance, and joy when the issue for the Pharisees was table fellowship and community with sinners? Respond to the question on page 180 of the study manual.

BREAK

(10 minutes)

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

(40 or 20 minutes)

Scripture selection: Matthew 25:31-46

In groups of three or four, read the passage silently and then hear it read aloud. Together summarize the passage. Work on these questions individually: What is the primary message you hear? How do you think and feel about what you hear? Discuss together: How has the church understood, explained, and responded to this passage? Reflect individually: How does your life as you live it interact with the church's teaching of this passage? What vision does the passage put forth? What response will you make? Talk together about responses and reflections. (See shared praxis, pages 45-50 of *Teaching the Bible to Adults and Youth*.)

INTO THE WORLD

(20 minutes)

Several paragraphs in "Into the World" describe ministries to children. Consider together whether your DISCIPLE group could initiate and manage a particular ministry to children through your church or in your community.

Read to one another the message from God's Word that will shape ministry in the coming week and intended responses.

CLOSING AND PRAYER

(5 or 10 minutes)

Record prayer concerns. Distribute BRL books. Spiritual discipline questions: *What attitudes or actions foster a continuing sense of God's presence? How do I learn to pray without ceasing so that I am also listening to God without ceasing?* Close with prayer.