Week 1 Small Group: Hit the Road

**Opening Prayer:**

God of all nations, we invite you into this place.

Jesus, we light this candle as a sign of your presence.

Spirit of wisdom and understanding, enlighten us.

We pray that we keep our hearts and minds open to new ideas and that we may grow in our understanding of your ways. Amen.

*“Discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”* – Marcel Proust

**Breaking the Ice:**

* Do you always plan out your trips or do you venture out and see where the road leads you?
* What’s your favorite thing to listen to on the road?

**Wrestling with the Word:**

Read Matthew 28:16-20

* How do you define a disciple?
* How did Jesus make disciples?
* How overwhelming was the commission to “make disciples to all nations” for the disciples gathered? How does it test us today?

**Next Steps:**

* Jesus promises he will be with us, how does this change the journey?
* What do you need to do to prepare to respond to this commission?

**Prayer for The Week:**

Take a few minutes to consider how prayer can be the first step in making disciples. Praying for people helps us love them. Pray for those in your community, in your schools, first responders, businesses, government officials.

Amazing God we accept your call to go and make disciples of all nations. We begin by offering up ourselves – give us the courage to leave our comfort zone and stepping into the world. Lead us to the place where we can best serve you. Teach us to love in a way that points to your love. We trust in you. Amen.

Week 2 Small Group: Worth Stopping For

**Opening Prayer:**

God of all nations, we invite you into this place.

Jesus we light this candle as a sign of your presence.

Spirit of wisdom and understanding, enlighten us.

We pray that we keep our hearts and minds open to new ideas and that we may grow in our understanding of your ways. Amen.

*“And in the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years.” Abraham Lincoln*

**Breaking the Ice:**

* Giant rubber band ball, UFO Watchtower, The JELL-O Gallery Museum, are all real tourist attractions. What is the most unusual attraction you have ever visited?

**Wrestling with the Word:**

Read Act 2: 1-4

* This is a dramatic scene, what do you think it would have felt like to be one of the disciples in this room?
* Jesus promised the disciples that they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit. We believe Jesus still sends the Holy Spirit to empower the believer. Have you had an experience of the power of the Holy Spirit?
* How does this prepare the disciples to move forward on the commandment to “make disciples?” Does this change how you might share your faith with others?

**Next Steps:**

* How will your life be different based upon what you have learned in this week’s scripture, lesson and/or sermon?
* What would it mean to you to pray for another Pentecost? What might the igniting of Pentecost faith look like?

**Prayer for the Week:**

Consider the situations in your life where you need the power of the Holy Spirit. Are you being called to wait on the Holy Spirit? Pray a traditional prayer for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created and you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant us in the same Spirit to be truly wise and ever to enjoy your consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Week 3 Small Group: U-Turn

**Opening Prayer:**

God of all nations, we invite you into this place.

Jesus we light this candle as a sign of your presence.

Spirit of wisdom and understanding, enlighten us.

We pray that we keep our hearts and minds open to new ideas and that we may grow in our understanding of your ways. Amen.

*“No matter how long you have travelled in the wrong direction, you can always turn around.”*

**Breaking the Ice:**

* Have you ever found yourself in the wrong direction but not sure how to turn around?

**Wrestling with the Word:**

Read Acts 9:1

* Christianity at this time was known as “the way.” What do you think is the origin of this name?
* What blinded Paul from seeing Jesus all along?
* What did Ananias have to change to be obedient to God?

**Next Steps:**

* Like Saul and Ananias, what areas in your life might you need to rethink?
* Try to put yourself in Ananias’ shoes. What would it have been like to be called by God to serve in this way?

**Prayer for The Week:**

While not everyone will serve Jesus in the same way, we are all called to share our faith with others as Ananias. Who is God calling you to go to this week?

Jesus, we have heard your challenge to go and share the promise of your love. Forgive us for the times when we have not been obedient; when we have not paid attention to, seen, or helped those in our midst. Fill our steps with your love and peace, that your love might reach all those whom we encounter.

Week 4 Small Group: Road Less Traveled

**Opening Prayer:**

God of all nations, we invite you into this place.

Jesus we light this candle as a sign of your presence.

Spirit of wisdom and understanding, enlighten us.

We pray that we keep our hearts and minds open to new ideas and that we may grow in our understanding of your ways. Amen.

*“On the one hand we are called to play the good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway.” -Martin Luther King Jr.*

**Breaking the Ice:**

* The story begins with a question for Jesus, if given the chance what question might you have for Jesus?
* In many ways the “Good Samaritan” is a political story, how comfortable are you in discussing politics at church?

**Wrestling with the Word:**

Read Luke 10:25-37.

* Look at the characters in the story: the priest, the Levite, the Samaritan, the man who was beaten. Who might these people be today?
* Where in your own experience have you encountered differences which deterred you from helping others?
* What are the “twists” in the story that you feel are most significant?

**Next Steps:**

* Martin Luther King Jr. that said that the first question the priest and the Levite asked was, "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" But the Samaritan asked, “If I don’t stop to help this man, what will happen to him?” What is the difference?
* Think of the person or group of people you find hardest to love … maybe it’s because of culture, politics, religion, wealth, social status, lifestyle choice, how has this lesson challenged you to show love.

**Prayer for the Week:**

Identify the Jericho Road in your context. How do you begin to transform that place to one of safety and hope?

God of all our journeys, too often we are so consumed by our own agendas and comfort that we miss seeing those in despair around us. Give us the courage to open our eyes, open our lives, and open our churches to those who are suffering on the road of life. Help us be the difference. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Week 5 Small Group: Headed Home

**Opening Prayer:**

God of all nations, we invite you into this place.

Jesus we light this candle as a sign of your presence.

Spirit of wisdom and understanding, enlighten us.

We pray that we keep our hearts and minds open to new ideas and that we may grow in our understanding of your ways. Amen.

**Breaking the Ice:**

* Share about a “homecoming” in your own life or a time when you truly celebrated someone else’s returning home.

**Wrestling with the Word:**

Read Luke 5:1-11

* Which character in the story do you most relate to?
* The younger son headed out for a different life, when do we get caught in this same mindset?
* The older son did not find any joy in his relationship with his father, only a sense of obligation. How can we fall into the same trap in our faith journey?
* The younger son had a hard time receiving forgiveness, whereas giving forgiveness challenged the older son. Can you relate to this either of these feelings?

**Next Steps:**

* Is someone in the willing to share about a time in which you were running from God? What happened to lead to your return?
* Has there been a time when you have just don’t understand the free gift of grace God offers everyone? How does this story open your eyes to God’s love for all? How will you celebrate the one that was lost and now found?

**Prayer for the Week:**

The father offers a witness to the gift of grace. Where are you being called to offer grace in your life?

Gracious God, we come before you admit that sometimes we are the ones in need of forgiveness as well as the ones who need to offer forgiveness. Remind us that you always will welcome us home and give us a willing heart to celebrate when others return to you too. Amen.