



Community of Christ

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS

YOUTH

30 JULY 2017 — 4 SEPTEMBER 2017

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS



Lifelong Disciple Formation in Community of Christ is the shaping of persons in the likeness of Christ at all stages of life. It begins with our response to the grace of God in loving community and continues as we help others learn, grow, and serve in the mission of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, discipleship is expressed as one lives the mission initiatives of the church through service, generosity, witness, and invitation.

We invite you to use these lessons for your class, group, or congregation.

Lectionary-based: The weekly lessons connect the *Revised Common Lectionary* for worship with Community of Christ identity, mission, message, and beliefs.

Quick, easy: The lessons are designed for approximately 45-minute class sessions with two to three pages of ideas, discussion starters, and activities. Additional preparation help may be found in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament* (with focus on the gospel according to Matthew).

Lessons are available for three age groups. Recognizing each age group represents multiple stages of development, the instructor is encouraged to adapt lessons to best meet the needs of the class or group. When possible, optional activities are provided to help adapt lessons for diverse settings.

Children (multiage, 6–11): Help children engage in the Bible and introduce mission and beliefs with stories, crafts, and activities.

Youth (ages 12–18): Engage teens in scripture study and provocative questions about identity, mission, and beliefs.

Adult (ages 19 and older): Deepen faith and understanding with reflective questions, theological understanding, and discussion ideas.

Note: Unless otherwise noted, all Bible scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Bible, copyright 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 12)

LESSON 36
30 July 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52

Lesson Focus: God magnifies even the smallest gifts.

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss the descriptions of the kingdom of heaven in the focus scripture passage.
- compare the parables with Community of Christ's understanding of shalom.
- share examples of Blessings of Community.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- (Optional) Video "Peace through All People" www.CofChrist.org/resources?tags=English-Home-Resource#/930/peace-through-all-people
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition (available through Herald House or online at www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Sharing-in-Community-of-Christ-3rd-edition.pdf)

- (Optional) Supplies for demonstration
 - 1/2 cup 6% hydrogen peroxide (sold in beauty supply stores or online as 20 Volume clear developer)
 - 2 tsp. yeast (1 packet)
 - 3 tbsp. warm water
 - dish detergent
 - food coloring (optional)
 - empty 16 oz. plastic bottle
 - funnel
 - safety goggles
 - tray or container to catch the foam

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 93, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Greet the youth by name and welcome them to the space. Sing "Peace Salaam Shalom" CCS 310 or show the video "Peace through All People." www.CofChrist.org/resources?tags=English-Home-Resource#/930/peace-through-all-people

Ask:

- What Enduring Principles or Mission Initiatives are represented in this song or video? (Refer to *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, pp. 9, 12–14 as needed.)

2 ENGAGE

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

In today's focus scripture passage, Jesus uses parables to describe what the kingdom of heaven is like. Assign each youth one or more of the following paragraphs from Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52. Have them read their paragraph(s) and explain how the parable describes the kingdom of heaven. Discuss ideas with the larger group.

Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52

³¹He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³²it is the

smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

³³He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”

⁴⁴“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹“Have you understood all this?” They answered, “Yes.” ⁵²And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

Read and discuss this selection from “We Share a Vision for Creation” found in *Sharing in Community of Christ*, p. 4.

The vision we share is God’s vision of reconciliation, salvation, wholeness, justice, and peace expressed in the scriptural definition of *shalom*. *Shalom* means a fullness or completeness of peace with humankind and with all of creation.

- How would you describe shalom to a friend?
- How would you complete the phrase “Shalom is like...”?

God’s vision of peace for creation clearly was revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who proclaimed the coming kingdom or peaceful reign of God on Earth. The gospel or “good news” was then entrusted to the church—the community of disciples called to be the body of Christ. The purpose of the church is to form disciples who faithfully share the gospel of peace in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

- How does Jesus represent shalom?
- What do you think is the purpose of the church?

3 RESPOND

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

A seed cannot grow on its own; it needs water, sunlight, and soil to help it grow. Yeast cannot act alone; it requires other ingredients to activate it. Shalom cannot be created or experienced by one person working alone, but by the community working together. This is expressed in Community of Christ’s Enduring Principle Blessings of Community.

The following experiment illustrates what happens when small things work together to create something bigger.

If supplies are not available for the science experiment, ask youth to describe, act out, or draw what Blessings of Community means to them.

1. Pour 1/2 cup of the peroxide into the empty water bottle. (Hydrogen peroxide can irritate skin and eyes, so make sure you protect your eyes and skin.)
2. Add a few drops of food coloring to the bottle (optional).
3. Add 1 tbsp. of liquid dish soap and swish it just a bit to mix it.
4. In a separate cup, combine yeast and warm water. Mix for about 30 seconds until most lumps are gone.
5. Use a funnel to pour the yeast mixture into the bottle and watch the foaming begin.

The foam is just water, soap, and oxygen, so it’s safe to touch, but it will be warm because of the chemical reaction!



Source: www.cometogetherkids.com/2012/02/elephant-toothpaste-foaming-science.html



Source: www.cometogetherkids.com/2012/02/elephant-toothpaste-foaming-science.html

Ask:

- How does this experiment demonstrate Blessings of Community?
- What acts of kindness and generosity have you seen magnified when a community works together?

4 SEND

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

Invite youth to complete the following action challenge. Share responses with the larger group.

This week I will use my gift of _____ to create shalom by...

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of total lesson time)

Close by singing "Peace Salaam Shalom" CCS 310.

Invite youth to offer a closing prayer.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 13)

LESSON 37
6 August 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 14:13–21

Lesson Focus: Jesus reveals God’s grace and generosity.

Objectives

The learners will...

- collaborate in sharing food items for meals.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and Enduring Principle Grace and Generosity.
- commit to respond generously in Christ’s mission.

Supplies

- Paper and pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Chart paper or large writing surface and markers

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 14:13–21 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 94, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Greet the youth by name and welcome them to the space.

Give each youth a half piece of paper and pen or pencil. Tell them to imagine they will be taking a day trip on foot to hear a famous speaker and they are allowed to pack seven food items to last throughout the day (noon and evening meals). Make a list of what they would pack. Compare lists and have youth explain why they chose the items on their list.

Now tell the youth they can pack seven food items, but this time the whole class can work together and share what they pack to create two meals for 100 people. How does this change what you pack and how you plan? How does sharing as a community allow you to feed more people?

Read or sing “From You I Receive” CCS 611.

2 ENGAGE

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

God’s grace and generosity are at the heart of our scripture passage today. Have youth take turns reading Matthew 14:13–21.

¹³Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick.

¹⁵When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.”

¹⁶Jesus said to them, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” ¹⁷They replied, “We

have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.”
¹⁸And he said, “Bring them here to me.”

¹⁹Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. ²¹And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

The importance of this story is not the miracle of feeding 5,000 with just five loaves and two fish but what it teaches us about God’s generosity. How is generosity expressed in this story? (*People were generous in sharing five loaves and two fish; Jesus was generous in compassion for the crowd even though he was trying to be alone. The story demonstrates God’s generosity and desire for all to be fed.*)

Working as individuals or in groups of two or three, have the youth write their own version of this story set in a contemporary context. How will they demonstrate the nature of God to be generous? Share stories with the larger group.

3 RESPOND

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

One of Community of Christ’s Enduring Principles is Grace and Generosity. If possible, project or write the following descriptions of Grace and Generosity on a large writing surface for all to see.

- God’s grace, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ, is generous and unconditional.
- Having received God’s generous grace, we respond generously and graciously receive the generosity of others.
- We offer all we are and have to God’s purposes as revealed in Jesus Christ.
- We generously share our witness, resources, ministries, and sacraments according to our true capacity.

Form groups of two or three and assign each group one of the descriptions. Have them discuss how the description

is expressed in the scripture passage. Encourage youth to think critically about the deeper meaning of the story. Share insights with the larger group.

Ask:

- What does today’s passage and the descriptions of Grace and Generosity teach us about living as disciples?
- Where do you see disciples responding generously to a need in your community?
- Where do you see opportunities for disciples to respond generously to a need in your community?
- How can you be part of that response?

4 SEND

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

Read Doctrine and Covenants 165:2a.

Free the full capacity of Christ’s mission through generosity that imitates God’s generosity.

Make this verse a personal action challenge for each youth by having them write, draw, or share their response to the following statement.

This week I will respond in Christ’s mission and imitate God’s generosity by...

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of total lesson time)

Form a circle and read or sing “From You I Receive” CCS 611.

Begin the prayer statement and give each youth the opportunity to add a personal commitment to complete the prayer.

God of Grace and Generosity, help me to generously respond in Christ’s mission by...
Amen.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 14)

LESSON 38
13 August 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 14:22–33

Lesson Focus: In the midst of doubt and fear, Christ is our peace. We also are called to generously share the peace of Christ with others.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore properties of water and objects that sink or float.
- engage in the practice of Lectio divina.
- make connections between Matthew 14:22–33 and Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a–b.

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 14:22–33 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 22–33, available through Herald House.

Supplies

- Large container of water
- Variety of objects that float or sink in water
- Paper and pens or pencils
- (Optional) Instructions for making an origami boat (Search “origami boat” on the internet for easy instructions.)
- *Community of Christ Sings*

1 GATHER

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

Before class, prepare a large container of water and gather a variety of objects that will either sink or float in water.

Welcome youth by name as they enter the space and have them select one of the objects. Gather youth around the container of water. Invite each one to predict if their item will sink or float when placed in the water and explain their prediction; then have each youth place their object in the water to test their prediction.

After youth have tested their predictions, challenge them to find a way to change the results. What does it take to make a floating object sink or a sinking object float? Encourage creativity as youth think of ways to alter the outcome of their experiment.

This activity leads to our focus scripture passage from Matthew. Following the passage from last week, today’s passage takes place after Jesus has blessed and fed the crowd of 5,000.

2 ENGAGE

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

Invite the youth to find a comfortable position (sitting or lying down) for the practice of Lectio divina, which is Latin for “sacred reading.” Each reading in this practice invites youth to engage with the text in different ways and with different senses. Read Matthew 14:22–33 four times, or have a different reader each time. Introduce the description before each reading, and allow time after each reading for reflection and response. You may have youth write or draw responses, silently reflect, or share in groups of two or three.

Lectio Divina

1. **Lectio:** Place yourself in the story. Who are the characters, and what is the setting? Imagine the scene, sights, sounds, odors, emotions, and tensions involved in the story. Enter the scene and allow it to become real to you.
2. **Meditatio:** Listen for meaning and understanding. Ask questions. Why was this story recorded? What are the

surface and underlying meanings? What does this story tell me about God? If I were in the story, who would I be? Whom do I most relate to in the story?

3. **Oratio:** Pay attention to your emotional responses. What feelings surface as you hear this passage? Do you feel joy, sorrow, fear, anger, or guilt? Share your feelings with God in prayer. Ask for help in listening deeply to these emotions and meanings.
4. **Contemplatio:** Enter a time of receptive prayer. Let go of the images of the scripture passage and all other thoughts, interpretations, and worries. Breathe deeply and calmly, entering a profound, silent state of listening. Wait for whatever God may bring to you in the quietness. If any insights or impressions come, note them with gratitude and then return to the scripture passage. When you feel your prayer or meditation has ended, offer a word of thanks to God, open your eyes, and return to the room around you.

Matthew 14:22–33

²²Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. ²⁵And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. ²⁶But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. ²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

²⁸Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." ²⁹He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. ³⁰But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³²When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

After the final reflection, invite youth to share insights or "aha" moments from this practice. What new understanding do they have of this passage? What is God's invitation to them?

3 RESPOND

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

Today's story is not about a miracle of walking on water. We don't need to worry about whether or not that is scientifically possible or not. In the midst of our fear and doubt, Christ is our peace. We also are called to share the peace of Christ with others.

Read Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a–b and discuss the following questions.

- a. Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's shalom, invites all people to come and receive divine peace in the midst of the difficult questions and struggles of life. Follow Christ in the way that leads to God's peace and discover the blessings of all of the dimensions of salvation.
- b. Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community. The restoring of persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth is at the heart of the purpose of your journey as a people of faith.

Questions for discussion:

- What images or phrases from Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a–b connect with your understanding of the passage from Matthew?
- What does this passage reveal to you about faith?
- What does the passage reveal about receiving and sharing Christ's peace?

4 SEND

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

Provide for each youth a half sheet of paper, trimmed to dimensions of a square, and a pen or pencil. Have them make a T-chart on the paper. On the left side, list the things

in your life that cause you fear or doubt. On the right side, list possible ways your faith in God, or the peace of Jesus Christ, can help you. Does that involve friends or family? Does that mean making a change in your life or lifestyle? How can the church community help you in this process?

Optional activity: Have youth fold their papers into origami boats as a reminder of today's story. Easy instructions are available by searching "origami boat" on the internet. You may choose to have youth place their boats on the water as a symbol of Christ's peace in the midst of our fear and doubt. When placing their boat on the water, invite them

to state, "Christ is my peace," or, "I will share Christ's peace with others."

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of total lesson time)

Read or sing stanza four of "The Summons" CCS 586 as a closing blessing.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 15)

LESSON 39
20 August 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 15:21–28

Lesson Focus: Disciples of Jesus must confront injustice by sharing the peace of Christ.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share definitions and examples of prejudice.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and Enduring Principles.
- explore ways to confront prejudice and injustice in their school and community.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Chart paper or large writing surface and markers or chalk
- (Optional) *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 15:21–28 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 97, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Greet youth by name and welcome them into the space. Ask about their week and how they experienced the peace of Christ.

On a large writing surface, write the word “prejudice.” Invite youth to write a description or draw a symbol of what represents their understanding of the word. If possible, provide a dictionary to look up the word or search for a definition online. Ask the youth which definition best fits their understanding. Where do they see examples of prejudice in their community? Have they ever been hurt by someone’s prejudice toward them?

The setting for today’s scripture passage has Jesus retreating to the non-Jewish land of Canaan. He likely was looking for a place to rest and spend time with God where no one would recognize him or bother him. As the passage is read, ask the youth to identify examples of prejudice in the story.

2 ENGAGE

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

Have youth take turns reading Matthew 15:21–28.

²¹Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.” ²³But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, “Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.” ²⁴He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” ²⁶He answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁷She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

Ask:

- What examples of prejudice did you identify in this passage? (*prejudice between Canaanites and Jews; prejudice against women*)
- How did Jesus respond to the woman's request? Why is his response surprising?
- How does the woman convince Jesus to heal her daughter?
- What Enduring Principles are represented in this passage? (See *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, pp. 12–14 for full descriptions.)

Scholars differ in their interpretation of Jesus' response to the Canaanite woman. Perhaps he was tired and caught off guard, or perhaps he made a surprising, ironic statement to make point with the disciples. Regardless of the reason, this passage causes us to ask who the Canaanite woman represents in our community.

Ask:

- Who in your community is overlooked, denied human rights, or treated unfairly because of religious, racial, or cultural prejudice?
- What can youth do to change these circumstances?

3 RESPOND

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

Form groups of two or three and assign each group a stanza of "Friend of the Streetwalker" CCS 289. Have them discuss the following questions; then share insights with the larger group.

- How does the stanza connect with today's passage?
- What does the stanza express about Jesus?
- How does the stanza challenge disciples?

Have each group rewrite the stanza in their own words and share with the group.

4 SEND

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

Read Doctrine and Covenants 165:3e.

Oneness and equality in Christ do not mean uniformity. They mean Unity in Diversity and relating in Christ-like love to the circumstances of others as if they were one's own.

Have each youth consider one example of prejudice they see in their school or community. Invite them to complete the following action challenge:

I will confront _____ (prejudice) by...

Form groups of two or three and have the youth share their action challenge statements with each other. Challenge the groups to serve as prayer partners throughout the coming week by committing to offering a prayer for themselves and the other member(s) of the group to have courage to confront prejudice. Encourage them to check in with each other at some point during the week.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of total lesson time)

Offer a closing prayer for courage to confront prejudice and injustice.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 16)

LESSON 40
27 August 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 16:13–20

Lesson Focus: How we live like Jesus is more important than what we say about Jesus.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share descriptions of who Jesus is to them.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and Community of Christ statement about Jesus Christ.
- explore how their relationship with Christ has shaped them.

Supplies

- Large sheet of paper
- Paper and pens or pencils
- Rocks—one for each student
- Permanent markers

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 16:13–20 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 98–99, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Ask the students to shout out different titles they have (such as student, brother, sister, neighbor, friend). Ask each student to pick one and explain to the group why that title is important to them.

Ask the students to shout out names for Jesus (Messiah, Son of God, Lamb of God, Emmanuel, Savior, Lord). List them on a large paper or writing surface. Ask the students to explain what each name says about Jesus.

In today’s scripture passage, Jesus asks the disciples similar questions.

2 ENGAGE

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

Have the students take turns reading Matthew 16:13–20.

¹³Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in

heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Messiah means “anointed one.” Peter recognizes Jesus as the Messiah, the one sent to restore the kingdom of Israel; but Jesus is not the Messiah that Peter, the disciples, and others expected. Jesus gives Peter a new name and tells Peter he is the rock on which the church will be built. Jesus is challenging Peter, the disciples, and the church to live the concerns and passions of Christ.

Ask:

- How would you feel if you were Peter and Jesus laid this heavy responsibility on you?
- How would you respond?

Read the following statement from “We Proclaim Jesus Christ” (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 23).

As disciples of Christ, we are all called to conform our lives to his by living in loving community with others, seeing Jesus in the faces of the least of God’s children, and serving those whom the world has forgotten.

Ask:

- Where do you see examples of disciples living in loving community, seeing Jesus in the faces of the least of God’s children, and serving those whom the world has forgotten?
- When have you experienced these examples?

Explain that in our focus scripture Jesus asked the disciples a question, “Who do you say I am?” Jesus wanted the disciples to think about what it meant to follow him. The importance is not what we say about Jesus, but how we live in relationship with him, and how we pattern our lives after him.

Have the students make a timeline of significant events in their lives, starting from birth and ending today. Ideas may include a family celebration, starting a new school, the loss of a loved one, or meeting their best friend. Once everyone has completed their timeline, engage the students in a discussion about what Jesus means to them using the following questions.

- At what times in your life have you felt particularly close to Christ?

- When have you lived examples of Christ’s love and mission?
- How has your relationship with Jesus shaped who you are today?

Have the students add a future event to their timeline representing a specific example of how they will live Christ’s love and mission.

3 RESPOND

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

Have each student select a rock from the rocks you brought to class. In our focus scripture today, Jesus compares Peter to a rock and says that he is the foundation of the church. Engage in a brief discussion about rocks.

- What are some characteristics of rocks?
- How can rocks be used?
- Why are rocks used for the foundation of buildings?
- Why are people sometimes referred to as rocks? What characteristics of Peter were similar to a rock?

Invite the students to spend a few minutes in thought. You may want to go outside and encourage the students to spread out and find a peaceful place to sit in nature. If you are inside, encourage the students to separate and sit (or lie) in a comfortable position and look at their rocks. Notice the size, the color, the shape—any characteristics that make them unique. Ask the youth to silently consider how the rock is like Jesus. After a few moments, ask the youth to consider how they can be a rock to others, how they can live Christ’s love and mission.

Close the focus time with a prayer, or invite the students to silently pray for people who are rocks in the lives, for the recognition of Christ in their lives, and the ability to be a rock to someone else this week.

4 SEND

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

Distribute permanent markers to the students. Invite them to write on their rocks a quality of Jesus that they would like to live out in their daily lives. Have them share this quality with the group along with an example of how they can live out that quality in their discipleship this week.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope

(5% of total lesson time)

Close with the following prayer, or invite youth to offer a closing prayer.

Eternal God, when people are searching for the answer to the question, "Who is Jesus?" help us be ready with the answer. Give us the courage to live your love and mission. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 17)

LESSON 41
4 September 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 16:21–28

Lesson Focus: Disciples are called to follow Christ by living Christ's mission.

Objectives

The learners will...

- experience following each other.
- discuss Matthew 16:21–28.
- explore how they can live Christ's mission through the Mission Initiatives.

Supplies

- Multiple items small enough to carry
- A coin
- Images of Mission Initiatives
- Paper and markers or crayons

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 16:21–28 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 100–101, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Greet youth by name and welcome them into the space. Ask if any would like to share experiences of sharing with a prayer partner and carrying out their action challenge from the previous lesson.

Invite youth to play follow the leader. Have youth take turns being the leader while the rest of the group follows their movements. This can be done by moving around the room, making gestures, or clapping various rhythms for the group to imitate.

2 ENGAGE

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

Have youth take turns reading Matthew 16:21–28.

²¹From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders

and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." ²³But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

²⁴Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?"

²⁷"For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. ²⁸Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Discuss the following questions:

- What did Jesus tell his disciples that upset them?
- What did Peter say to Jesus?

- How did Jesus respond to Peter? What did he say Peter was to him?
- How was Peter a stumbling block to Jesus?
- What stumbling blocks prevent you from living as a disciple?
- What do you think it means when Jesus says, "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it"?

3 RESPOND

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

Explore the statement "Take up your cross and follow me." What does Jesus mean by this statement?

Ask for a volunteer to stand in the middle of the room. Instruct the other students to fill the volunteer's arms with items found in the room. Place a coin on the floor and ask the volunteer to pick up the coin without dropping any items. Several attempts may be made. Allow the students to brainstorm ideas how to pick up the coin with arms full.

After several attempts, ask the volunteer how it felt to be overloaded with various items. Did the class learn anything watching the volunteer try to pick up the coin? Tell the class that we often are too overloaded with "stuff" to pick up our cross and follow Jesus.

Jesus was preparing his disciples for the difficult work of carrying out his mission. In Community of Christ, we proclaim Christ's mission as our mission. We understand Christ's mission through five life-changing, world-changing Mission Initiatives.

Display the Mission Initiative images and descriptions. Use the following questions to guide discussion about each Mission Initiative. You may also choose to have youth write or draw examples of each one.

- How would you describe this Mission Initiative to a friend?
- In what ways is this Mission Initiative difficult to live out? In what ways is it easy?
- What could you give or give up that would help you live this Mission Initiative?

Examples:

Invite People to Christ: Give (*love, kindness, smile*), give up (*fear, playing a game by yourself instead of inviting someone to play with you*)

Abolish Poverty, End Suffering: Give (*time, talent, treasure, and testimony to help others*), give up (*purchasing something you don't need in order to donate the money to others in need*)

Pursue Peace: Give (*encouragement to others, smile, time to peacemaking activities*), give up (*choices that do not help me care for myself, others, or the environment*)

Develop Disciples to Serve: Give (*time to learn about Jesus*), give up (*anything that keeps me from being a follower of Jesus*)

Experience Congregations in Mission: Give (*time, talent, treasure, and testimony*), give up (*playing a video game so I can spend time helping others*)

4 SEND

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

Give each youth a half sheet of paper and markers or crayons. Have them draw one of the Mission Initiative symbols and describe how they will live that Mission Initiative in the coming week. Invite them to share with the larger group.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of total lesson time)

Read the Mission Prayer together.

God, where will your Spirit lead today?
Help me be fully awake and ready to respond.
Give me the courage to risk something new and become a blessing of your love and peace.
Amen.

MISSION INITIATIVES



Invite People to Christ
Christ's mission of evangelism



Abolish Poverty, End Suffering
Christ's mission of compassion



Pursue Peace on Earth
Christ's mission of justice and peace



Develop Disciples to Serve
Equip individuals for Christ's mission



Experience Congregations in Mission
Equip congregations for Christ's mission