

# A MOVEMENT FOR WHOLENESS IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD



## **ABOUT THIS COURSE**

This study guide and its accompanying videos were developed to help members of our faith communities have a common language to describe our movement. The Council on Christian Unity used the Disciples' identity statement, and its central concepts - movement, wholeness, table and welcome - as a way of focusing the discussion for these studies.

This guide can be used in part or in whole for individual study or as "homework" for a self-styled group study. If you are planning a group study, you may want to look for the group study guide under the teaching tab on the "Our Identity" page on http://www.disciples.org.

Our hope is that you will obtain a better understanding of how the resulting actions and behaviors strengthen your relationship with Christ.

## **LEGEND**

The icons below indicate an opportunity for you to interact and will help guide you through this course.



**Scripture** 





**Personal Discovery Exercise** 



Video

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## **MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION**

## HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

This guide is intended to be used along with the accompanying videos as a self-guided study. It can be used as an online editable document by following the instructions below;

- 1. Click the document to download it from the website
- 2. Click File, then Save as
- 3. **Rename** the document, then save it to your desktop
- 4. **Reopen** the document and click in the highlighted field to type your response.

Once you have completed the lesson, save the document to your personal computer. You can print all or part of this document on your local printer if you prefer.

Before you start. Make sure you can access the online "identity videos" at <a href="http://www.disciples.org">http://www.disciples.org</a> on the "Our Identity" page.

Here are some suggestions to keep in mind that will help you get the most benefit from these study sessions.

- Be open-minded be ready to take an honest view of your belief systems and how
  they affect who you are today. But keep in mind that even if views appear to conflict,
  God loves and cherishes each person as God's beloved child, even when we express our
  ideas about God in diverse terms and language.
- **Study** Set aside a specific time each day/week for study. You should complete one module per session. This study is meant to be contemplative and reflective, so thoughtfully read each lesson, underline, make notations in the margins, and use any other means that will help you to absorb the underlying principle thoughts.
- Journal We've included pages for journaling and expressing your thoughts and feelings
  as you reflect on these concepts. Use these pages and an accompanying notebook to
  keep a record of your thoughts and feelings for discussion during group meetings.
- **Practice** Without a whole-hearted willingness to engage the Word of God, there can be no change in our spiritual life. At the end of each lesson we outline practical ways to incorporate what you've learned into your everyday life.

## INTRODUCTION

Often we Disciples tend to describe ourselves in the negative, by what we are not: we're not hierarchical, like the Catholics; we don't baptize infants, like the Methodists; we don't require acceptance of any formal creed for membership in the church, like the Presbyterians. The following material is an effort, in positive statements, to focus on who we are and on ways to convey that to those inside and outside our church.

A church's identity must be firmly rooted in scripture and yet flexible enough to adapt to changes in culture and the shifting demands of mission. Early Christians in Jerusalem had to learn what it meant to be faithful in Antioch and Rome. The forebears of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), as they moved from the frontier to the city, had to rethink such matters as congregational autonomy and the goal of "restoring" the New Testament church. Today, we wrestle with what it means to be disciples of our Lord in a world that is increasingly pluralistic, globally connected, and yet so often violently divided.

And so, we offer a succinct statement of identity:

We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.



## MODULE 2: WHO WE ARE AS DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

## **VISION**

To be a faithful and growing church that demonstrates

- True Community
- Deep Christian Spirituality



A Passion for Justice (Micah 6:8)



- Reflection	1
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In what ways are you practicing justice, loving mercy and	d walking in humility?
To do all these well and live God's plan for my life, I	

## **MISSION**



To be and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ, witnessing, loving and serving from our doorsteps "to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth.

**Acts 1:8** 

<b>-0</b> -	Reflecti	10

What things keep us from being connected to one another?
What areas of your life are you needing power?
How has disunity been a barrier for receiving power?

## Module 2

## **OUR IDENTITY STATEMENT**

We are Disciples of Christ, a **movement** for **wholeness** in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ we **welcome** all to the Lord's **table** as God has welcomed us.

## Personal Discovery Exercise

The above is the Identity Statement of the Church. There are four prevailing concept within this statement. If you had to create four identifying words that describe who you are what would they be? As you read the church's identity statement what images and/or thoughts come to mind around the key concepts?			

## WHAT ARE SOME CORE DISCIPLE VALUES?

- **celebrating communion** every Sunday as a congregation. We practice unity and inclusion at the Lord's Table for the sake of mission and for the sake of the world as the one family of God.
- **believer's baptism by immersion** that is, a person makes the choice to follow God's call rather than the choice being made for them as an infant. Baptism is understood to be the basis of membership in the one universal Church and also a mark that every person is called to serve God the idea of the "priesthood of all believers." (I Peter 2:5)
- partnering with other faith communities to work for bringing about wholeness healing and justice – in the world. One example is our cooperative work with the United Church of Christ in Global Ministries.
- **studying and reading scripture** for ourselves. We critically and thoughtfully study scripture, taking into account the history and background the context in which it was written.
- **staying unified in covenant** as a witness to the world so even when we disagree we can still make room, welcoming all to the table as Christ has welcomed us. Our spiritual ancestors in the Stone-Campbell movement were fond of saying, "unity, not uniformity."
- answering God's call for justice particularly in the areas of care for the earth, the challenges for women and children, poverty and hunger and immigration. We seek to do this work in cooperation with other people of faith. Some say we "get dirty for Jesus" as a way of conveying the hands-on mission orientation of many of our faith communities.

These traits were summed up by former General Minister and President Dick Hamm when he identified the marks of a faithful church as true community, deep Christian spirituality and a passion for justice.

We're a movement whose time has come!

## **INTERSECTIONS**

Now that you know who we are as Disciples, let's explore the relationship between individual members, the Church and the union of the two. Understanding our own beliefs and those of fellow members may be helpful as we become actively engaged in the life of our Church as it serves the world.

The next few modules will cover the components and phases of integrating individuals into the body of Christ as depicted in the charts below.

## **Components:**

- Me = Member
- Others = The congregation/Church
- Us = Members that join the Church Body



## **Phases:**

- Understanding the beliefs, convictions and conflicts that I bring with me
- Understanding the beliefs, practices and value of the Church
- Understanding how to connect my understanding with that of the Church.



## **MODULE 3: WHAT DO I BELIEVE?**

Beliefs play an important role in our lives. A belief system is a set of strongly held opinions which shape how you perceive life, how you filter what you hear, how you act, and what you feel.

Think of your belief systems as a filter. While you do not see them consciously, everything you encounter in life is filtered through your beliefs, the same way we might not see the windshield because we have trained ourselves to look through it.

Discovering your beliefs is essentially discovering who you are at your core.

Reference- "As he thinks, so he is; as he continues to think, so he remains." - James Allen, As a Man Thinketh



## Personal Discovery Exercise

are just beginning practices that start the process of building self awareness and uncovering you belief system. Write a brief personal statement of faith.					•	

Journaling, reviewing what you've written (several days later), and observing the words you speak

## **REPLACING NEGATIVE BELIEFS**

Sometimes we have belief systems that are not allowing us to grow. We see this especially when a belief is born out of a negative and or traumatic experience such as being neglected or abused. We can form a belief such as "I have no value." In order to grow in Christ we must let go of any belief that separates us from Him.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!			
Personal Discovery Exercise			
c about the last time you had an emotional reaction to something. What was the underlying f that fueled that reaction?			

Is this belief guiding you to wholeness or is it a false truth? Challenge any belief that you have that is not life-giving.

## **CHALLENGING YOUR BELIEFS AND CONVICTIONS**

A conviction is an unmovable belief. It has been said that "a belief is something **you hold**, a conviction is something that **holds you**." Faith is the factor that turns a belief into a conviction.

Hebrews 11:1 - Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

	or things not seen.
	Personal Discovery Exercise
How	does faith play a role in solidifying your convictions?
Wha	t is holding you?

Conflicts are everywhere, including disharmony within our own beliefs, convictions and actions Depending on your personality, you may run to or away from conflicts. Regardless of your feelings about conflicts, they can help us grow in our understanding, particularly when we are open to God's leading as we examine our own beliefs and convictions.

Stress, disharmony and disease can be the result of unresolved internal conflicts. Avoiding conflicts may be impossible but depending on how you handle the conflict, growth and peace are possible.

Romans 7:15 - I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

Personal Discovery Exercise

What is your most pressing internal conflict?
How does it show up in your life?
How does it effect your ability to be whole?
Is this belief guiding you to wholeness or is it a false truth?
Challenge any belief that you have that is not helping you serve God and God's children.

ADDITIONAL NOTES		



## **MODULE 4: OUR IDENTITY**

Now that you are aware of your personal beliefs, convictions and conflicts you are prepared to think about the four concepts of the identity statement:

- Movement
- Welcome
- Wholeness
- Table

After you have examined your ideas you will watch videos that will present several Disciples' perspectives about the concepts. You will be asked to dig a little deeper to discover your role as a follower of Christ.



## **EXPLORATION: MOVEMENT**



## Personal Discovery Exercise

**Directions:** Answer these questions to the best of your ability without self editing or pausing. The more candid you are the more valuable your answers will be in helping you discover your own faith perspective.

## Your thoughts on **Movement**:

When I think of movement what comes to mind?	
In what areas of life do I feel stuck?	
In order to be a part of a movement I	
In what areas of life do I feel stuck?  In order to be a part of a movement I	

	<b>D</b> (1)
7,95	Reflection

After you view the video on Movement, take a moment to reflect on these questions. Click here to watch video.
When you hear the words below, which of them resonate with you regarding movement? Why? Water, Change, Creative, Bold, Connectedness, In Synch
Do you feel that Jesus and his Disciples were a movement? Why or why not?
If yes, if you were alive during that time would it have been a movement that you would have joined? Why or why not?
If no, do you think Jesus intended to start a church or did he want to reform humankind? Why?
Which disciple do you most identify with? Why?
What social justice issue "gets your blood pumping?" Are you working in this area? Where?

## **EXPLORATION: WHOLENESS**



## Personal Discovery Exercise

**Directions**: Answer these questions to the best of your ability without self editing or pausing. The more candid you are the more valuable your answers will be in helping you discover your own faith perspective.

Your thoughts on Wholeness:
In what areas of my life am I broken?
To move toward healing I can
When I am whole my life will look like
After you view the video on Wholeness, take a moment to reflect on these questions. Click here to watch video.
When you hear the words below, which of them resonate with you regarding wholeness? Why? Diversity, Process, Surrender, Hopeful, Complete, Unity

What would your life look like if you were living God's Ideal for you? Is that wholeness?
"movement for wholeness" – Why do we need to move toward wholeness?
In what ways are we fragmented?
Is it possible to see people that are different from us as equal in God's eyes?
Why do you think we as humans focus on differences rather than similarities?
How did Jesus focus on what we have in common?
What pieces are missing from your "puzzle" that are needed to make you whole?

## **EXPLORATION: WELCOME**



## Personal Discovery Exercise

**Directions:** Answer these questions to the best of your ability without self editing or pausing. The more candid you are the more valuable your answers will be in helping you discover your own faith perspective.

Your thoughts on Welcome:
I feel welcome because
A time that I did not feel welcome was
A time that I did not leef welcome was
I feel most "at home" around people who are
After you view the video on Welcome, take a moment to reflect on these questions. Click here to watch video.
When you hear the words below, which of them resonate with you regarding Welcome? Why? Acceptance, Unconditional, Fellowship, Belonging, Mutuality

Has being welcomed into the body of Christ been a transforming experience for you?
What were you before?
What are you becoming?
As you are welcomed, do you feel compelled to welcome others?
How have you reached out to welcome someone else to the body of Christ?
How did reaching out impact you?
What was their response?
Have you felt that the door is open for you to bring your gifts & talents to your congregation or faith community?

## **EXPLORATION: TABLE**



## Personal Discovery Exercise

**Directions**: Answer these questions to the best of your ability without self editing or pausing. The more candid you are the more valuable your answers will be in helping you discover your own faith perspe ctive.

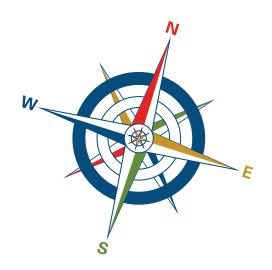
Your thoughts on lable:
I believe that to be at the Table I should
What is at the Table for me?
God invites me to the Table. How does that feel?
After you view the video on Table, take a moment to reflect on these questions. Click here to watch video.
Is the Table a place you visit or something you do? Is it an internal practice or a way of building community? Or all of the above?

When you hear the words below, which of them resonate with you regarding Table? Why? Justice, Open, Hope, Unity, Equality, Healing
"The Table is a place where we find wholeness in the midst of a broken body." How have you found wholeness at the Table?
How do you keep the experience of coming to the Table from becoming stale and routine, especially if it is a part of weekly worship?

## **ALIGNING OUR BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS**

Behind every action is a thought. Our thoughts are rooted in our beliefs. Now that we have examined what our beliefs and thoughts are the next step is determining what we will do. Before we move into our action plan we need to set our course.

**Intentions** are who you want to be. **Goals** are what we want to do.





Think about the 12 disciples of Christ. Each one brought a very unique perspective and set of skills to the group.

Who do you want to be in the body of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_\_ Who do you believe that God has called you to be?



- Water
- Change
- Bold
- Connectedness
- Diversity
- Process
- Surrender
- Hopeful
- Total Accesptance
- Unconditional
- Belonging
- Mutuality
- Justice
- Hope
- Openess
- Unity

ADDITIONAL NOTES		



## **MODULE 5: WHERE DO I FIT INTO THE CHURCH?**

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Now that you have more insight into your beliefs and the identity statement of the church, the next question is what are your next steps. How do you become an effective follower in your church body?

In order to know where you are most suited to serve it is very helpful to know what your spiritual gifts are.

Spiritual gifts are God's way of enabling believers to do their part in the Church. They equip us to glorify God through our service, and affirm the uniqueness of our calling. Knowing where we are spiritually gifted helps us know where to put our focus, energy, and time in ministry.



(See Romans 12:6-8, and 1 Corinthians 12:8-12).

There are many online resources available to you where you can take a spiritual gifts inventory. One suggested site is: http://www.spiritualgiftstest.com.



## Personal Discovery Exercise

God gave us different gifts so that we would have to rely on each other. Not only does this create unity in the body of Christ but it also fosters spiritual humility (I Corinthians 12:12-26). Knowing your most prominent spiritual gifts will give you direction in the areas that you are best suited to serve.

## My Top 3 Spiritual Gifts Are:

1.		
2.		
2		

## **CREATING A PERSONAL GROWTH PLAN**

Eighty-one percent of all Christians have no real plan for spiritual growth. - George Barna Poll

The cornerstone for our discipleship action plan is rooted in our beliefs and our intention – who we want to be.

**Intention** – In Module 4 (pg. 21) of our study we discussed the difference between intentions and goals. Now that you are clear on your spiritual intentions, you are ready to set your goals.

My Intention (How I want to show up in the world) is:		
<b>Goals</b> – It is important to set realistic, measurable goals. Those in the business world sometimes use the acronym S.M.A.R.T when goal setting. Strive to make your goals - Specific, Measurable Achievable, Realistic and Time-Bound.		
My Goals Are:		
1		
2		

Your goals could be anything from creating a consistent spiritual morning practice, getting involved with a new ministry or taking a mission trip. The most important thing is that you have goals that are written down!

Accountability Partner – Find someone in the church that will be willing to serve as your accountability partner. This will increase your chances of accomplishing your goals tremendously.

Accountability partnerships work best when you meet regularly to report your successes or failures around your specific goals. Sometimes, this is all the motivation you need to finally get things moving.

## **MY GROWTH PLAN**

Statement of Faith:
Spiritual Gifts:
1
2
3
Intention:
Goals: (S.M.A.R.T)
1
2
3
Accountability Partner:

Ministry Opportunities: (Consult with your Pastor or spiritual leaders for counsel on appropriate ministries for you)	
Commitment Statement: I am a disciple of Christ that serve in the body of Christ. I hereby commit today to a my above stated goals, maintaining contact with my a guidance for my life.	ctive spiritual growth by working toward
Signature	Date



## **MODULE 6: SUMMARY**

## **WRAP UP**

Thank you for taking this journey. This is only the beginning of what God has in store for you. We encourage you to continue to develop your relationship with Christ through study and prayer.

We hope you have gained a better understanding of

- the beliefs, convictions and conflicts that we all bring with us
- the beliefs and values of the Church, and how we embody the concepts of movement, wholeness, welcome and table outlined in the Identity Statement, and
- how to connect your actions with that of the Church.

Because together we create a living body that exists to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

## APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

To get the most out of this course you should:

- Take some time to review each lesson carefully, assess your answers and responses and update or add to them as necessary.
- Keep a separate journal on areas you want to explore further. This will become a record of your spiritual development during your journey.
- Remember that an action plan is always a work in progress. It is not something you can
  write, put in a drawer, and forget about. Keep it visible. Display it prominently. You will want to
  continually (usually monthly) revise your action plan during your growth and development.
- Think about ways you can apply what you've learned in this course, and add them to your action plan.
- Continue to ask questions and seek advice from your community of believers.
- Explore the suggested readings outlined in the resource section.

## **RESOURCES**

Below are some sources you may find helpful for materials to help you develop a consistent study routine.

## http://www.wellfedspirit.org/main\_site/Welcome.html

The Office of Christian Vocations offers many resources on prayer, practice and more.

## http://www.chalicepress.com/

Chalice Press offers Disciples Thumbnail Sketches, history books, bible studies and more.

## http://www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/

This publisher has downloadable curriculum and studies as well as paper versions that can be ordered online.

## **Ideas for Service**

- Check with your church leaders for volunteer opportunities in your community.
- See what your regional church does by checking the website or talking to the staff.
- Investigate more ideas by reading the Disciples News Service (a weekly e-letter) and/or checking the websites of Disciples Home Missions (http://www.discipleshomemissions.org) and Global Ministries (http://www.globalministries.org).

# **ADDITIONAL NOTES**

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This study guide was provided to you by the Communication Ministries and the Council on Christian Unity



