

Welcome to Exploring Discipleship

Why has this booklet been written?

The Church of Scotland is committed to creating and deepening cultures of discipleship across the Kirk but for us to have a Kirk-wide conversation on discipleship we need to find some common ground in our vocabulary – what does the word discipleship mean?

One of the great strengths of the Church of Scotland is its ability to be a ‘broad church’, listening to and learning from a wide arc of theology and practice. It is the intention, in the following short chapters, to provide a beginning for this broad church to continue its conversation on discipleship.

The aim is to help develop or create cultures of discipleship across the Kirk and help people take the next steps on their journey. No-one can tell you exactly what your local culture will look like because culture is built by and for your community – formed by all the ingredients of your context, and so a culture of discipleship will look different from place to place, it will flex with the people and personalities as they change over time.

What is discipleship?

Discipleship is a God-ward transformation which takes place when individuals and communities intentionally, sacrificially and consistently live every aspect of their daily life in commitment to following Jesus Christ. It is a lifelong, whole-life reorientation which will have challenging implications for our self-identity, our belonging within community, our belief systems and our daily behaviour.¹

A shorter pithier expression, from Micah 6:8 (NRSV) would be:

What the Lord requires of us is to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God.

Who is this booklet for?

It is for everyone engaged in the life of our church. It hopes to define our terms but not in a limiting way; that’s why the text has a lot of questions through it – to help you think through your own context.

Is it for individual study or group discussion?

It is not written as a group study guide but we hope it might spark some inquiries – so feel free to use it any way you like. Every section is followed by a set of questions to help you think about the themes and issues raised. The questions could be used individually or in groups.

What comes next?

This booklet is part of a stream of new resources that we are creating to help build discipleship. To raise awareness of the term and to start people talking we created ‘Conversations in Discipleship’. ‘Exploring Discipleship’ continues the conversation by providing a starting point and perhaps by helping you define your own terms and start thinking about your own culture. Next, we hope to produce a suite of learning materials for use in intergenerational groups and, finally, we hope to equip and inspire individuals to become more involved in discipling others in their own contexts.

Come follow me

“Come follow me.”² Jesus called out to his first disciples.

Do you see yourself as a disciple of Jesus?

The word disciple comes from the Greek word for pupil but the meaning has evolved from ‘learning’ to ‘learning by following’. Jesus lived with his disciples; they journeyed together through the mundane and the marvellous and you often get a sense that Jesus addressed things as they came up, perhaps as they witnessed together the rights and wrongs around them.

Jesus taught his closest disciples intentionally yet conversationally, spontaneously perhaps. Together in the context of relationship they lived a life of learning.

Being and making disciples has been called the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:18-20 ‘Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Culture of discipleship

So, if church is a gathering of disciples, then church culture is a culture of discipleship.

Does that ring true for you? Does that describe your experience of being in a faith community? Is the culture that you are building and the culture that builds you one of discipleship - walking together, with Christ, in Christ and to Christ?³

Defining terms

The word discipleship can be a huge umbrella term encompassing, for some, all that is Christianity. Language is socially constructed, meanings made and shared together. For example, when you think about discipleship are you thinking about something you are or something you do? Is the context your personal faith or evangelism? Is the time frame a momentary decision or a lifelong journey?

As a starting point for building culture the following pages set out six characteristics of discipleship, not in any particular order of priority. The world is full of writings in great length and depth on every aspect of discipleship. This booklet is not trying to distil all that shared knowledge, rather this is some of what is meant when these terms are used. In turn, it’s helpful if you, the reader, also reflect on what you mean when you use these terms.

Characteristics of discipleship

Faith as a journey of discovery

How we listen to and learn from God as we seek to grow closer to God

Understanding who we are

Living life in all its fullness through understanding how God sees us and how God wants to use us

Whole life worship

How we worship God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind, both in times of worship and beyond

Prayer

How our journey of faith is shaped by listening to and conversing with God

Being a servant

How we go about loving our neighbour, inside and outside our Church community

Discipling one another

How we shape others', and our own, faith journey through, for example:

- Being intentional about discipleship
- Sharing our faith
- Evangelising
- Connecting with those in our community
- Journeying with others

Faith as a journey of discovery

How we listen to and learn from God as we seek to grow closer to God

Little by little, one travels far

JRR Tolkien

When does a journey of faith start? Some say it starts when you begin to know the presence of God, in your mind or your heart or your Spirit. That first step will be different for all of us; learning at the knee of a parent like Timothy⁴; or as an adult in a blazing encounter like Paul⁵; through study and questioning like Nicodemus⁶; or by the healing of your heart like Mary⁷.

Our journeys of faith can be meandering- with ups and downs, twists and turns we weren't expecting. Sometimes we may even feel that we are going backwards, however, discipleship sets the course, it fixes the direction of travel, and that direction is towards God. We choose to deepen our relationship so we decide to do something about it; we are intentional about our engagement with that journey.

Seek me

Jeremiah 29:13 'You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.'

To seek is a verb, it is a doing word.

Jesus says that if you seek you will find⁸ – it's a foregone conclusion because God journeys with you. On the road to Emmaus⁹ some disciples were discussing, trying to understand what had happened. Even in that searching and wrestling, Jesus travelled with them. The answer walked with them. They listened to Jesus as they trekked and eventually they learned as they listened.

Not all who wander are lost

JRR Tolkien

God is a personal God who speaks to you¹⁰, who knows you¹¹ and cares about the situations you find yourself in¹². God is with you throughout the journey not just at the high times, the mountain tops of faith where you feel so connected and contented in your Christianity, but in the low valleys too, the wildernesses¹³, the dark nights. You don't have to pass tests or endure a certain level of hardship to be with God. God is with us¹⁴.

I am here next to you, always. You do not have to behave a certain way, be in a special place or work hard to be in my presence, you have but to turn your face towards me, as a lover turns their head on the pillow. See I am here.¹⁵

Hearing God

How do you listen to God on this journey? Some hear God's voice through the Bible; perhaps a well-known verse speaks to you in a completely new way¹⁶ – a way relevant to your times and trials right now. Or perhaps you can identify with the characters whose lives unfold before us: the enthusiasms and errors of Peter, the steadfastness and the sorrow of Mary, the questions and qualms of Thomas.

Perhaps God speaks to you through the glory of creation. You feel God's presence in the sweeping grandeur of the hillside; you see God's purpose and planning in the veins of a leaf; you experience God's hope in the unfolding of spring; you are touched by God's tender care watching the wildlife.

Romans 1:20 'For his (God's) invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made...'

God can speak through the words of others, teachings from the holy and humble alike - your neighbour, a child, Sunday worship, your friend.

Romans 1:11-12 ESV 'For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.'

God can use anything to reach you, words on page, a song on the airwaves or perhaps the still small voice heard in your own mind: a thought, a knowing – strong and sure, insisting, encouraging.

God speaks in stories, in poems, in metaphors and pictures. Perhaps you see the things of God in your mind's eye.

Acts 2:17-18 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.'

God can speak through actions: The love you show to others comes from the source of all that is good, it comes from God¹⁷ and the moment you accept loving care yourself you are receiving the very expression of God.

God can speak into silence. Do you find it is easier to listen when you become quiet?

Psalms 46:10 'Be still, and know that I am God'

[Walking with God](#)

However you hear, however you learn, however fast or slow your pace - a journey is being made, a path is being followed¹⁸, a path lit for you¹⁹, a safe path²⁰.

It is a journey you do not make alone.

It may not be a comfortable walk. Along with times of joy and peace it may be difficult or disappointing but God encourages saying:

'Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.' Joshua 1:9

End of section questions

Faith as a journey of discovery

- A. When have you been aware of God's presence? How did it make you feel?
- B. When do you think your journey of faith started?
- C. Think about some times you have felt far from God. Did you learn anything in these times?
- D. How do you hear God?
- E. Are you still learning about God/ From God?
- F. How do you evaluate if you're growing closer to God?

Notes...

Understanding who we are

Living life in all its fullness through understanding how God sees us and how God wants to use us

God's desire for your life is that it is full and vibrant and good²¹. A life made for you²², to fit the true you, although sometimes we cannot see the true us.

John 10:10-11 'I have come that they may have life, and have it in all its fullness. I am the good shepherd'

God says you are made in my image²³, that in God you live and move and have your being²⁴. In fact the scriptures are full of declarations of identity:

- you are God's child²⁵
- you are Christ's friend²⁶
- you are united with the Lord and one spirit²⁷
- you are redeemed and forgiven of all your sins²⁸
- you are a saint, a holy one²⁹
- you are a co-heir with Christ³⁰
- you have authority over all the power of the enemy³¹

Do you accept these biblical promises? Have you believed them and has that understanding dropped down into your heart?

Understanding identity

Understanding how God sees you will affect the way you think and the way you feel. It will be born out in your choices, your speech and your behaviour - it shapes character, and ultimately identity.

Does your life reflect your true identity in Christ?

The world may tell you that the Christian life is a meagre one but the Psalms tell you that if you delight in God, God will give you the desires of your heart³². Importantly, there is also a reassurance that God is already at work in you shaping your wants and will³³.

It is easier to see yourself through your own eyes, from an earthly perspective, than it is to look at yourself with God's eyes, but you are seated in heavenly places, in Christ³⁴. Christ sees you entirely - all you have been, all you are and all the potential of tomorrow³⁵.

God's gifts

God gives everyone abilities, skills and passions. God sewed them into your DNA³⁶, placed you in situations where they would arise, moulds you as a potter does clay. Those talents and characteristics are already in you. Perhaps you don't think of them as gifts from God because you don't remember a time without them; you don't remember the instant you received them but despite that you were given them – they are gifts.

And God is a good parent who continues to miraculously give gifts³⁷ throughout your life.

At the intersection of your abilities and the God given desires of your heart lies your destiny, your purpose in God's plans.

Ephesians 2:10 'For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.'

A context of relationship

This is not to say that the life of a disciple becomes a life consumed by works. The life of a disciple is characterised by relationships, and even that relationship is a gift³⁸, but there are things that God wants you to do with Him and so has equipped you accordingly.

Isn't that amazing, that Almighty God wants to use you? These are not things you have to do but things you get to do - you are invited to be part of the plan. You are the only plan. You are the way God has chosen to make disciples, through relationships: in relationship with God and relationship with others.

We are all different parts of the body of Christ³⁹, each of us fulfilling our purpose by being who God made us to be.

Image of God

What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

Genesis 1:26-27 "Then God said, "Let **us** make mankind in **our** image, in **our** likeness, ... So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created **them**..."

Whilst some have taken this literally; that humans look like God in physical form, what if the way we resemble God is that we were created to dwell in community, to give and receive love like the Trinity? All people no matter how able or unable they are, no matter what they do, have done, will do or can't do – all people can give and receive love and flourish in community.

Ultimately, who we are is in fact whose we are.

Galatians 3: 26-29 'So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'

End of section questions

Understanding who we are

- A. What does 'Being made in God's image' mean to you?
- B. What would 'life in all its fullness' be for you?
- C. Looking at this list, which of these ideas do you feel most and least comfortable with and what does this reveal?
 - you are God's child⁴⁰
 - you are Christ's friend⁴¹
 - you are united with the Lord and one spirit⁴²
 - you are redeemed and forgiven of all your sins⁴³
 - you are a saint, a holy one⁴⁴
 - you are a co-heir with Christ⁴⁵
 - you have authority over all the power of the enemy⁴⁶
- D. What do you think are the differences between how you see yourself and how God sees you?
- E. What gifts has God given you (abilities, skills, passions)?
- F. How has God worked through you in the past; how is God currently working through you and how would you like God to work through you in the future?

Notes...

Whole life worship

How we worship God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind, both in times of worship and beyond

If you had to describe what made up a human being what would be on your list? How would you break it down?

Of course, this very question has been pondered for thousands of years, from early philosophical debates through novels about artificial intelligence to films about planets filled with apes.

Luke 10:27 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength⁴⁷ and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'⁴⁸

This is such a comprehensive statement; simply put – love God with all of you.

All of me

With 21st century eyes it could be seen like this:

- Your heart is all you feel - all your emotions, and passions
- Your soul is your personality - what makes you unique in this sea of people
- Your strength is your physicality - all you can do with your body
- Your mind is your beliefs - your understanding, intellect and will

Interestingly in Hebrew there is no such deconstruction. The word heart encompasses all that a person is – the inner being.

To worship God your whole life means not just on Sunday mornings and mid-week prayer meetings, not just inside a church building but at home, in the community, playground, office and down the pub.

Do you worship God with your words, thoughts, choices, actions, belongings and finances?

Have you put God first, before your reputation, your possessions, even food and drink?

Do you involve God in your friendships, your job, your ambitions?

Does relationship with God get the first and the greatest slice of your energy?

Are you trying to live a holy life, to repent and to endeavour not to sin?

Do you listen to God and obey God?

And here, if you are not careful, you can find yourself weary. Here, sometimes, it can feel like a burdensome⁴⁹ list of things to do – of works to strive for. If it feels like that then discipleship has been taken out of its true context – love.

“The more we know Him, the more we will desire to know Him. As love increases with knowledge, the more we know God, the more we will truly love Him. “ Brother Lawrence

All about love

Being a disciple starts with loving God. In fact it actually starts with God loving human kind – for God loved us first⁵⁰. There is no divine punishment for missing some imaginary discipleship standard. There is only

love. God knows where you are on the path towards greater intimacy because God is there on that path with you.

The more time you spend in the presence of God the freer you become. Disciplines stop being duties and start being joys as you are transformed into his likeness.⁵¹

God wants to be with you in the minutiae of your daily life. God does not want to be your best clothes, only used twice and both times in church - once at a wedding and once at a funeral! God wants to be woven into all you are and all you do because God delights in you, God sings songs of joy over you.⁵²

In every aspect of your life

‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.’ Deuteronomy 6:4-9

God asks that these commandments enter into every aspect of your life. On your heart, which is the foundational stone of your inner being, and also in every conversation: with family and friends, at home and in the street. They fill your day from the moment you rise, right through to when you sleep again.

This love of God, this worship, would be through everything you do with your hands and everything you think in your head. But you don’t have to do this alone- Jesus promises to be with you, in you - as one spirit⁵³.

John 14:23 ‘Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”

End of section questions

Whole Life Worship

- A. Take some time to think about loving God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind. Perhaps ...
- Heart – what is love, who/what do you love, showing compassion, self-care, loving creation
 - Soul – personality, feelings, choices, will, behaviours, your identity, your desires
 - Strength – physical acts of worship, living out your worship, walking, talking, fitness, health
 - Mind – politics, economics, consumer choices, education, advocacy, influencing culture, the arts
- B. There are six challenging questions in this chapter. Take time to reflect on each of these questions remembering to be honest with yourself and kind to yourself. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind the right things and ask that the Spirit would guide you to make helpful changes.
1. Do you worship God with your words, thoughts, choices, actions, belongings and finances?
 2. Have you put God first, before your reputation, your possessions, even food and drink?
 3. Do you involve God in your friendships, your job, your ambitions?
 4. Does relationship with God get the first and the greatest slice of your energy?
 5. Are you trying to live a holy life, to repent and to endeavour not to sin?
 6. Do you listen to God and obey God?

Notes...

Prayer

How our journey of faith is shaped by listening to and conversing with God

How many ways of communicating can you think of?

- Speech
- Writing
- Pictures
- Morse code
- Body language
- Semaphore
- Smoke signals
- Touch
- Breadcrumbs
- Drum beats

God's creation communicates in so many ways; bees communicate in dance; dogs by smell; spiders by vibration; birds through song; flowers use ultra-violet light, unseen by human eye; perhaps even the rocks are crying out.⁵⁴

Prayer is communicating with God, however you chose to do it: if your intention is to convey something to God or hear from God - then that's prayer.

A whole life prayer life

David is credited with writing over half of the Psalms. When you read the Psalms you are reading David's prayer life. David's prayers express disappointment, adoration, delight, fear, jealousy, despair, joy... they all flow out of him to God. He understands that God sees all and knows all⁵⁵, so why keep any thoughts or feelings back - pour them all out to God.

Like Job's friend Elihu says in Job 32: 18,19 'For I am full of words, and the spirit within me compels me; inside I am like bottled-up wine, like new wineskins ready to burst.'

Jonah says his prayers rose to God in the holy temple⁵⁶ David asks that they be set before God like incense⁵⁷.

First Thessalonians 5:17 says 'Pray continually' which at first glance seems impossible, but if you are always aware of God's presence, if every thought is heavenward⁵⁸, then perhaps it is possible. It is not that God wants to hear continuous speech rather God wants to be with you, in communion, to have your very being in God⁵⁹ and equally God resides in you – your body is a temple⁶⁰ and that temple a house of prayer⁶¹.

"Prayer is a new, gracious, lasting will of the soul united and fast-bound to the will of God by the precious and mysterious working of the Holy Ghost." Julian of Norwich

Jesus prayed

Jesus prayed. Jesus took time to pray both in solitude⁶² and with others⁶³. Jesus prayed before performing miracles⁶⁴ and after⁶⁵, at the crucifixion⁶⁶ and the transfiguration⁶⁷. Jesus prayed before teaching⁶⁸ and before eating⁶⁹, at baptism⁷⁰ and death⁷¹.

Matthew 6:5-8 'And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.'

We are God's children⁷². A child shares everything: the joy of a flower; the sorry of a broken cup; the wonder of a ladybird; the sadness of a sudden fall. They reach their arms out and up in the universal language that says 'lift me up, I want to be in your arms'. A child communicates from first breath of the day to last gasp of the evening⁷³.

Ways of Praying

As you continue on your journey of faith the way you pray can change. Sometimes that change comes from you, as you grow or your circumstances shift and at other times your prayer life will mould you.

Prayer is a two way communication; God speaks too and you can be transformed by the interaction, renewed by the active process of conversing with a living God who draws near to you.⁷⁴ Taking time to listen expectantly to God is an important aspect of prayer. Indeed, sometimes you may think, 'but I don't have the words to say', but Romans 8:26 says that the Spirit helps - the Spirit intercedes through wordless groans.

There are all kinds of prayer⁷⁵. Miriam worshipped God in dance⁷⁶, Bezalel with the work of his hands⁷⁷, Abraham with his obedience⁷⁸, Ezekiel with his body⁷⁹, Mary with a song⁸⁰ and the poor widow with her offering⁸¹.

Prayer can be private or shared and prayer can be powerful and effective⁸².

1 John 5:14-15 'This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.'

Prayer can sound like a very simple idea – communicate with God in every situation⁸³ - when you are in trouble, and when you are happy⁸⁴, give your worries over to God because God cares for you.⁸⁵⁷⁸

And yet, also, prayer is a mystery because sometimes it seems that prayers are not answered; perhaps it is a matter of timeframes:

'But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.' 2 Peter 3:8-9

End of section questions

Prayer

- A. What does it mean to you to be in the presence of God during prayer?
- B. What is the role of silence in your prayer life? How does silence make you feel?
- C. Can you think of a time you communicated with God without words?
- D. Can you remember a particular time you felt God answered prayer?
- E. What are the benefits of praying with others?
- F. How have your times of prayer changed you?

Notes...

Being a servant

How we go about loving our neighbour, inside and outside our Church community

Do you see yourself as a servant?

We all have been in situations where we have served others but to take part in the action of serving does not mean that servanthood becomes a major component of personal identity.

Jesus described himself as a servant.

Mark 10:45 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

Jesus served the disciples at the dinner table⁸⁶ even as they squabbled amongst themselves about which of them was the greatest.

Before that last supper Jesus took off his outer garments, wrapped a towel round his waist and with his own hands washed the disciples feet, drying them on the towel he wore⁸⁷.

Imagine the room just moments before filled with the vibrant voices of at least a dozen people fresh from the road, now a shocked and uneasy silence as the Rabbi they followed knelt on the floor and scrubbed the dust and dung from their feet, wiping them clean on Himself.

When Jesus came to Peter, Peter could not keep silent any longer. He tried to refuse Jesus. Perhaps this act of lowly servitude confused Peter– 'if this is the Christ, the son of the living God⁸⁸, then why...how... could the Messiah be serving me?'

Serving as leading

In that era where greed and power were typified by slavery and manual labour Jesus was portraying a radical new way of leading, a new way of being.

'When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." John 13:12-15

True disciples of Christ follow Christ in word and deed - faith is often seen through choices and actions⁸⁹, in the outworking of love for one another⁹⁰.

"Love cannot remain by itself – it has no meaning. Love has to be put into action, and that action is service." Mother Teresa

Many bible verses plait together servanthood, obedience, love and belonging. Jesus obeyed the will of the father⁹¹ and asks you to do the same.

'If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.' John 15:10.

Serving in community

Did Jesus show love only to those he found in the synagogue? No, he was equally the Messiah of the marketplace: telling the religious leaders of the time that He was sent to those outside their circles⁹².

How do you love and serve those in your communities? All your communities: church; family; everyday friends; far flung friends; workplace; the village; the nation. Can you serve all your neighbours? Can you love all of them, all the time?

If this makes you feel a little overwhelmed you might find it helpful to pray this prayer:

Holy Spirit, whisper in my ear and move my heart, show me who I am to serve today, how I am to love, what to give, what to say. Let me see people with your eyes, as an ever forgiving father, pierced by the pain of others. Give your wisdom to discern when and where and your peace that I might share it with others⁹³

God has already equipped you with all you need to do God's good will⁹⁴. It could be as easy as a smile. Ask yourself, 'what has God already put in my hand? What can I give, what can I do?' For example, never underestimate the good gift of food to share love with one another - baking down barriers.

"If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one."

Mother Teresa

Do we serve differently inside the kirk? Sometimes church is a place to be refilled so that you can go back into the world refreshed. Church is also a place of humble serving, exemplified by a can-do attitude that is quick to help in any capacity, not just in ways that fit your gifts or calling.

everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another John 13:35

This characteristic of discipleship uses the word 'loving'. Loving is an ongoing term, ongoing perhaps in the face of rejection or ingratitude, perhaps unrecognised, at least here on earth. Loving is an action. Loving is long-term as you journey together in God-given, God-giving friendships.

End of section questions

Being a servant

- A. Of all the Mother Teresa quotes on page 31 which ones move you the most and why?
- B. Where do greed and misuse of power show themselves in your communities? How can you stand against them with love?
- C. Of all your neighbours who is God prompting you to love and serve and how?
- D. Is your church community a place of loving and serving for everyone?
- E. Can you think of a time someone loved and served you? What impact did that have on you?
- F. In your faith journey what are the connections between servanthood, obedience, love and belonging?

Notes...

Discipling one another

How we shape others', and our own, faith journey through, for example:

Being intentional about discipleship;

Sharing our faith;

Evangelising;

Connecting with those in our community;

Journeying with others

First, Jesus called the 12 to be disciples. Then they spent considerable time under his discipleship and then he commanded them to go make disciples⁹⁵.

Does faith's journey naturally move you from being a disciple, through discipleship to a place where you're discipling others? Is it sequential?

Is a disciple about being, discipleship about doing and discipling about sharing?

Is it, however, defined by the environment – like three states of H₂O: ice, water and steam? In different situations we are a disciple of Jesus, undergoing discipleship and discipling others.

We are disciples of Jesus and that is one way: He teaches, we learn but when we become disciplers of others, human to human, it becomes a two way street: you are challenged, encouraged, moved and shaped by the relationship just as much as the other person.

Discipling others – being a discipler

Sometimes the idea of discipling others - being a discipler - is uncomfortable because you don't want to presume that you know more or know better, so you may shy away from the role of guide. But at times in your Christian walk you will be the receiver and at other times the giver, as situations and gifts flex - like the evolving relationship of Barnabas and Saul, Paul and Barnabas. If you feel uncomfortable with the term 'guide' could you see yourself as an encourager?

"Act as if everything depended on you; trust as if everything depended on God" St Ignatius of Loyola

Disciples aim to draw closer to God, to go deeper in relationship and to become more like Christ as a consequence⁹⁶. A discipler wants to help others on that journey. Guided by the Holy Spirit a discipler hopes that their suggestions and corrections enable that progression. The relationship is one of mutual accountability and vulnerability. Disciples open themselves, giving permission for others to speak into their lives to encourage but also to criticise -not in a harsh or destructive way but born of love and respect.

Disciples have a shared direction and an agreement - to be answerable to each other for joint positive development, journeying together into a deeper relationship with God.

You might say – 'it is just a conversation, it is just friendship', but what is the goal? God sees the heart and the intentions⁹⁷. Friendship becomes discipleship when you ask God to be involved; then it becomes a three stranded cord⁹⁸.

Sharing faith

Involving someone else in your walk with God can be a frightening thing to do. You have to take down the boundaries around your faith, which is often lived as though it is a private thing, and you invite someone into that personal place. But sharing faith is a foundational aspect of Christianity. Just as the Godhead dwells in eternal community, so too Jesus travelled with a community, sent them out in pairs, and asks us to meet together in fellowship⁹⁹.

As Jesus is with you always¹⁰⁰, as the Father dwells in you¹⁰¹, as the Spirit guides¹⁰² you in all things, then surely sharing faith is actually just talking about your reality. Not talking about God in everyday conversations is an act of deliberate censorship.

If you speak your truth as a child of God and you are your true transparent self then you become a natural evangelist for God. A witness in your failings and stumblings that God's mercy and love be revealed; in your blessings and triumphs that God's faithfulness and provision can be seen. You are a testimony to God's steadfastness when you feel far from God and to God's joy when you feel connected.

You are made to reflect God's glory¹⁰³, to be an ambassador¹⁰⁴ for God in the world. The journey of discipleship is not private. It winds through all areas of life - a public pilgrimage. You connect with those around you in so many ways. Jesus sends us out to the world¹⁰⁵ to radically influence culture. God calls us to be a strong voice in business, to shape the media, to influence the arts, to bring wisdom to government, to be educators not consumers.

End of section questions

Discipling one another

- A. Are you more comfortable with:
 - the idea of being a disciple
 - the disciplines of discipleship
 - the role of discipling others (a discipler)?
- B. Do you have a Godly accountable relationship with someone who can correct and guide you?
- C. Is God calling you to draw alongside somebody?
- D. Can you think of a time you shared your faith with someone? Did that help you grow?
- E. Are you being intentional about discipleship? How are you trying to deepen relationships with God?
- F. How does your discipleship interact with society either nationally or globally?

Notes...

End notes

All bible quotes are from the NIV unless otherwise stated though more expansive language translations are available.

¹ Report of the Mission & Discipleship Council (section 29), Peace be with you: General Assembly 2018, (Edinburgh: The Church of Scotland Assembly Arrangements Committee)

² Matthew 4:18-20

³ Taken from Church of Scotland booklet: Aspirations for Ministry – with Children and Young People in the Church of Scotland. Page – Faith Formation. 3rd paragraph

FAITH AS A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

⁴ 2Timothy 1:5

⁵ Acts 9:3-6

⁶ John 3

⁷ Luke 8:2

⁸ Matthew 7:7-8

⁹ Luke 24:13-35

¹⁰ Acts 10:13-15

¹¹ Psalm 139:2

¹² John 10:27-28 King James Version

¹³ Hosea 2:14

¹⁴ Joshua 1:19

¹⁵ Prayer written by Hannah Sanderson, Church of Scotland.

¹⁶ Hebrews 4:12

¹⁷ James 1:17

¹⁸ Psalm 16:11

¹⁹ Psalm 119:105

²⁰ Isaiah 26:7

UNDERSTANDING WHO WE ARE

²¹ Jeremiah 29:11

²² Acts 17:26

²³ Genesis 1:27

²⁴ Acts 17:28

²⁵ John 1:12

²⁶ John 15:15

²⁷ I Corinthians 6:17

²⁸ Colossians 1:14

²⁹ Ephesians 1:1

³⁰ Romans 8:17

³¹ Luke 10:19

³² Psalm 37:4

³³ Philippians 2:13

³⁴ Ephesians 2:6

³⁵ Psalm 139:16

³⁶ Psalm 139:13

³⁷ Luke 11:13

³⁸ 2 Timothy 1:9

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- ³⁹ 1 Corinthians 12
 - ⁴⁰ John 1:12
 - ⁴¹ John 15:15
 - ⁴² I Corinthians 6:17
 - ⁴³ Colossians 1:14
 - ⁴⁴ Ephesians 1:1
 - ⁴⁵ Romans 8:17
 - ⁴⁶ Luke 10:19

WHOLE LIFE WORSHIP

- ⁴⁷ Deuteronomy 6:5
- ⁴⁸ Leviticus 19:18
- ⁴⁹ 1 John 5:3-4
- ⁵⁰ 1 John 4:19
- ⁵¹ 2 Corinthians 3: 16-18
- ⁵² Zephaniah 3:17
- ⁵³ 1 Corinthians 6:17

PRAYER

- ⁵⁴ Luke 19:40
- ⁵⁵ Psalm 139:1-4
- ⁵⁶ Jonah 2:7
- ⁵⁷ Psalm 141:2
- ⁵⁸ Colossians 3:2
- ⁵⁹ John 14:20
- ⁶⁰ 1 Corinthians 3:16
- ⁶¹ Isaiah 56:7
- ⁶² Luke 6:12
- ⁶³ Matthew 26:37
- ⁶⁴ John 11:41-42
- ⁶⁵ Mark 1:35
- ⁶⁶ Luke 23:34
- ⁶⁷ Luke 9:29
- ⁶⁸ Luke 11:1
- ⁶⁹ Matthew 26:26
- ⁷⁰ Luke 3:21
- ⁷¹ Luke 23:46
- ⁷² Matthew 18:4
- ⁷³ Psalm 92:2
- ⁷⁴ Psalm 145:18
- ⁷⁵ Ephesians 6:18
- ⁷⁶ Exodus 15:20
- ⁷⁷ Exodus 31:2-4
- ⁷⁸ Genesis 22
- ⁷⁹ Ezekiel 4:4
- ⁸⁰ Luke 1:46-55
- ⁸¹ Mark 12:41-44
- ⁸² James 5:16
- ⁸³ Philippians 4:6-7
- ⁸⁴ James 5:13

⁸⁵ 1 Peter 5:7

BEING A SERVANT

⁸⁶ Luke 22:27

⁸⁷ John 13

⁸⁸ Matthew 16:15-16

⁸⁹ James 2:14-17

⁹⁰ John 13:35

⁹¹ John 4:34. 6:38. 9:4

⁹² Mark 2:17

⁹³ Prayer written by Hannah Sanderson, Church of Scotland

⁹⁴ Hebrews 13:21

DISCIPLING ONE ANOTHER

⁹⁵ Matthew 28:19

⁹⁶ Romans 8:29

⁹⁷ 1 Chronicles 28:9

⁹⁸ Ecclesiastes 4:12

⁹⁹ Hebrews 10:25

¹⁰⁰ Matthew 28:20

¹⁰¹ John 14:23

¹⁰² John 16:13

¹⁰³ 2 Corinthians 3:18

¹⁰⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:20

¹⁰⁵ John 17:18