

GOSPEL BASED DISCIPLESHIP

Some Suggestions for Presenting

Background

- ***Gospel Based Discipleship*** is not a program. It is not Bible Study. It is an encounter with the Gospel, designed to engage people with the Gospel appointed for the day, or the Sunday proper. It depends on participants being willing to share responses to the three questions: *What words or ideas did you hear? What is Jesus (the Gospel) saying to you? What is Jesus (the Gospel) calling you to do?*

Format

- **Gospel Based Discipleship** may be used by any group. An experienced leader is not required.
Normally the group gathers by using the gathering prayer at the top of the card or the beginning of one of the selections from *A Disciple's Prayer Book*. Someone volunteers to lead the group. It's good to rotate the leadership.
GBD may be used by a regular study group, to begin a meeting of a vestry or other group, as a form for worship, or as a personal devotion. Normally the appointed Gospel for the day is used.

Method

- The questions: *What words or phrases did you hear? What is Jesus (the Gospel) saying to you? What is Jesus (the Gospel) calling you to do?* are designed to elicit personal reflection, sharing and discussion. It is important for people to know there are no right or wrong answers. The group is seeking the truth by hearing what the Gospel says to them individually and corporately. Statements like: *That's not what we believe;* or *You're wrong about that* are not helpful. Statements that elicit response such as *Could you say more about that?* or *I've never thought of that before* keep the discussion going. Persons who do GBD regularly find new insight and revelation are the rewards.
- At least two or three translations of the Gospel should be available. Many groups have had a positive experience using *The Message* (NAV Press), a contemporary translation by Eugene Petersen, for one of the readings. Normally the passage is read three times, each time from a different translation. People may choose not to have a printed version unless they are reading aloud. This encourages "listening".

GBD in a Meeting

- Starting a meeting with GBD grounds participants in the Scripture and focuses the energy of the group. It is a good way to get people sharing with one another at a spiritual level. Normally a copy of the Scriptures remains on the table, or in the room, with the understanding that at any time during the meeting anyone may call for the reading of the Gospel again. This often helps refocus the group when it's been distracted or conflicted.

Expectations and Outcomes from GBD

- Groups that use GBD regularly should expect to begin to see their call to mission differently. Some congregations use GBD as a way to focus on what God is calling them to do in their community.
- Spiritual friendship is another outcome of GBD. As people become familiar with the process and each other, spiritual journeys are shared and people know one another in a new way, not based merely on similar likes or dislikes, but as disciples on a journey together.
- The entire faith community encounters the Gospel as peers, whether ordained or non-ordained. This leads to a vision of the community gathered around the Scripture. The Sunday sermon is the place where critical commentary and teaching can be applied to the Gospel.

Materials

- The "*card*" or *bookmark* is designed for easy use for small groups and individuals. It contains a statement of Guiding Principles that may be read in unison or individually in turn. It also contains the Apostle's Creed, a provision for prayers, and a Rule of Life statement to be read by all.
- *A Disciple's Prayer Book* is designed for liturgical use, patterned after the Daily Office. It contains formats for various times of day, and psalms appropriate for the liturgical season. Colored tabs also indicate the seasons. The booklet contains a blessing service, one for a vigil at time of death and one for a gathering.
- Copies of these materials can be obtained for a nominal charge from *Episcopal Parish Services* at 1-800-903-5544 or episcopalparishservices.org