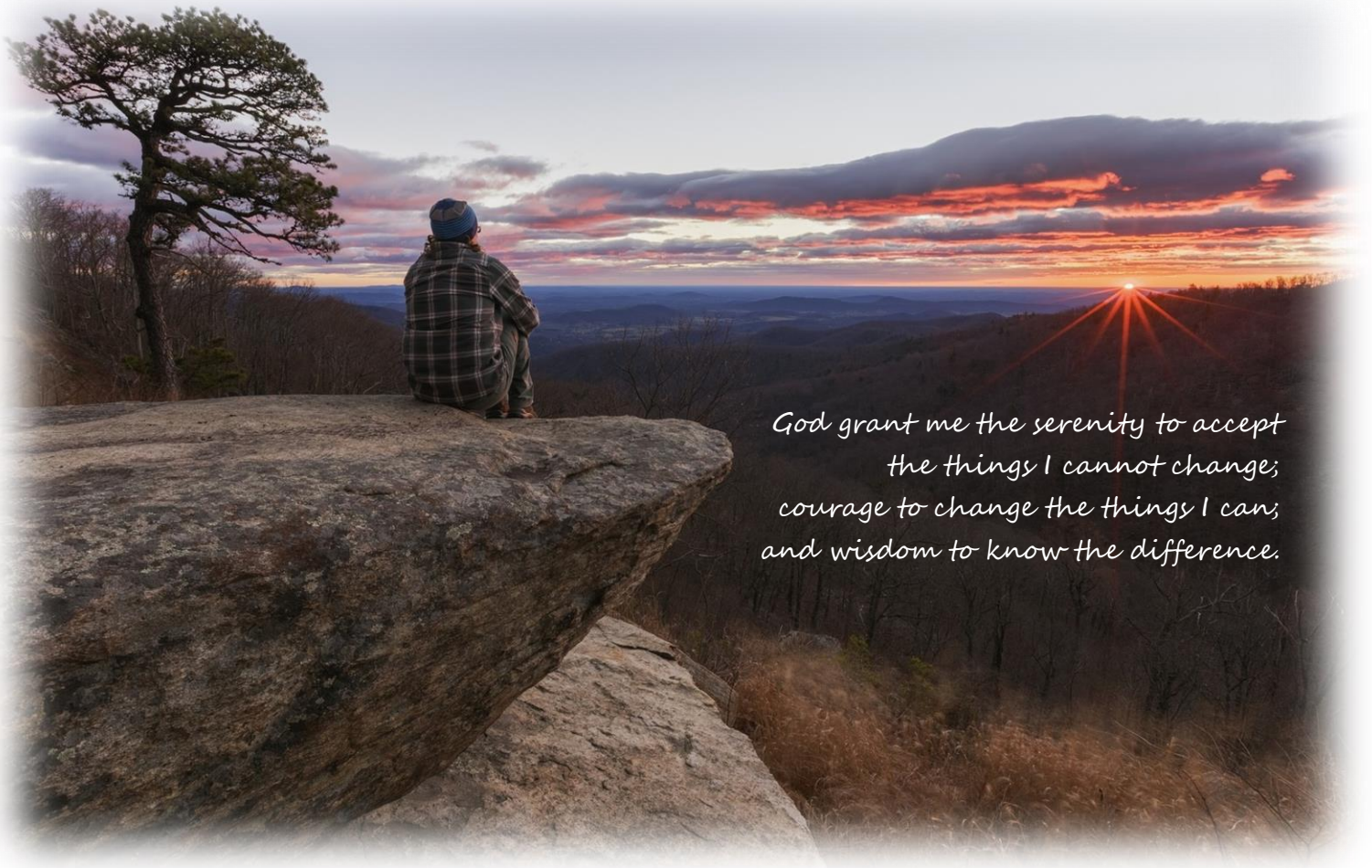


Living Discipleship

Local Lay Ministry



*God grant me the serenity to accept
the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.*

Investing in your journey of discipleship



DIOCESE OF
LICHFIELD



The Church of England around Staffordshire, northern Shropshire and the Black Country

SAMPLE

Living Discipleship (2019) was prepared by Lindsey Hall.

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Living Discipleship: Module 1

Introduction to Living Discipleship

Module 1:

1. Week 1: Living the Christian Life Now
2. Week 2: The Challenge of Change
3. Week 3: Forming Vision
4. Week 4: Living the Christian Life in the Future

Introduction

Introduction

Living Discipleship is a programme of formation; it is about exploring who you are, and who God is calling you to be more than it is about learning information. The focus of the programme is prayer, Bible reading and reflecting on God, the world and your own life. *Living Discipleship* encourages you to take stock of your life, think about your gifts and opportunities for ministry and to offer your reflections to God, asking God to shape you as you learn more about what it means to follow Jesus.

Each module is designed to be done over the space of about a month. This is to give you chance to reflect on and embed some of the material and ideas you are engaging with. You can of course take longer if that's *helpful* or more realistic for you. You may look at the content and think it won't take you anywhere near a month. Try not to rush the exercises or the reading; the aim isn't to get it done quickly, but to think about it, take your time and give God lots of space to speak to you through it. The modules are split into four weeks; each week will include reflection on the set Bible passage and the module prayer as well as some other activities.

Bible Reading: Dwelling in the Word

Dwelling in the Word is a method of Bible engagement where you stay with one passage of Scripture for a prolonged period of time. The idea is that you don't just read it, but absorb it, hear it, be shaped by it, hear it *again*, and hear new things in it. Each module has a set Bible passage with some questions about the verses each week. To really engage with the passage you might choose to read it every day during the module. Don't try too hard to explain the passage; listen to it and let the God speak to you through it. You may want to read it aloud to yourself, this can be a good way of hearing differently!

Module Prayer

Each module focuses on a particular prayer. Using prayers that Christians have prayed for centuries connects us to those who have gone before us in the faith and to praying in the Christian tradition. In each module you will explore four different types of prayer: praise and thanksgiving, confession, *intercession* and blessing and sending out. These four ways of praying are part of the shape of most services of worship, and invite us to engage with God in different ways. The module prayer, as well as being a prayer in itself, invites us into a range of ways of praying, and of offering to God all that we are and all that we hope to be. You are encouraged to pray the module prayer every day during the module.

Reflections and Activities

Each module will include a further range of reflective exercises and activities which you will be invited to complete, as well as some guidance for meetings with mentors.

Module 1

Prayer:

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

Key Question:

Do you want to be changed?

Bible Passage:

Matthew 5:1-16

Week One

Living the Christian Life Now

Week Outline

- ❖ Introduction
- ❖ Bible Passage: Matthew 5:1-16
- ❖ Making Connections
- ❖ Module Prayer (Praise and Thanksgiving)
- ❖ Reflective Exercise

Introduction

Something has prompted you to embark on the *Living Discipleship* programme; it may be that you want to develop your ministry in a particular way, that you want to deepen your understanding of discipleship, that you have a sense you are being called to something more, or there may be any number of other reasons. You may consider yourself a life-long disciple, you may have a very clear idea what it means to be a disciple, or you may feel a bit vague about what it entails.

Discipleship

- ➔ Which of these definitions most closely match your understanding of the word 'disciple'?
- A follower of Jesus who tries to live by Jesus' teaching
 - Someone whose life is guided by the Holy Spirit
 - A person who prays and reads their Bible regularly
 - Someone who tries to be a good person
 - A person who feels that they have experienced grace and forgiveness and try to live out of that

Would you prefer another definition? Or a combination of more than one of the definitions above? Make a note of it here:

Living as disciples of Jesus looks different for everyone, but there are certain things that we might recognise about it.

➤ What would you expect to see in every disciple?

➤ What do you think discipleship looks like 'in you'? This is a big question and it might help you to start by thinking of yourself as a disciple in a particular context: at home, work, to your neighbours etc.

Christian Life

The start of this programme is an opportunity to take stock, to notice what it means to you to be a Christian and what the character of your Christian life is like.

➤ How would you explain, in your own words, what it means to be a Christian?

➤ Looking at what you have written, how is that evident in your life?

- Being a Christian isn't always easy. It can be difficult to know what God requires of us. What is your most pressing question or challenge about Christian life? (It might be something head-based that you are trying to understand or something heart-based that you are trying to live out.)

- Do you want to be changed? If so, in what ways and if not, what makes you resistant to change?

Read through your answers to the whole of this section and offer them to God. Thank God for the ways in which you are able to live as a follower of Jesus and pray for God to lead you in the next phase of your journey.

SAMPLE

Bible Passage: Matthew 5:1-16

Read slowly through the passage from the beginning of Matthew 5. Try and notice what words or phrases jump out at you, perhaps as powerful, inspiring, strange or uncomfortable. Make a note of them:

Jesus tries to help the disciples to understand what it means to live as his followers, he teaches and instructs them, shows them signs and miracles, models relationships and engages with them in all sorts of ways. Despite all of that, the disciples find it pretty tricky! They don't always understand what Jesus is saying. At the beginning of Matthew 5 Jesus describes some of the qualities of Christian life, and it is pretty unlikely that it was what the crowds or the disciples expected to hear.

Read the passage again.

- ➡ How would you summarise the teaching in this passage, in your own words?

- ➡ What do you want to thank God for in this teaching or in the vision it describes?

- ➡ Do you think this passage has anything to say directly to your own life?

- There has probably never been a Christian who has lived according to this teaching for their whole life! However we might hope that through every Christian, people get a glimpse of Jesus' vision. What does / would it look like to live according to this vision? This might be small glimpses!

- Is there anything you would like to know or understand better in order to live according to this vision? How might you gain this understanding?

- In light of this passage, and the things you have noted down, what changes might you be called to make in your own life? Changes often happen gradually over a period of time, rather than all at once, and they most often happen because of the intention to change.

- How do you see the teaching about the beatitudes reflected in your church or Christian community? (This could be for example in preaching, teaching, policies, organised activities, or the life of individual church members)

- Do you think there are any ways in which you could change, which would end up changing your church as well?

Read through what you have written about your church or Christian community. Offer it to God in prayer, giving thanks for all that is good, and all the ways in which your church is shaped by the teaching of Jesus.

Module Prayer: (Praise & Thanksgiving)

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

There is a lot going on in this prayer! As you pray it each day during this module, you will probably notice different things about it. For this week, we are offering it as part of our praise and thanksgiving.

- ➔ Thank God who gives us: serenity, courage and wisdom
- ➔ Praise God for the times in which serenity, courage and wisdom have been evident in your life
- ➔ Pick one of those (serenity, courage or wisdom) and make notes on:
 - What do you think it means?
 - In what way do you have this serenity/ courage/ wisdom?
 - How does it show up in your discipleship / ministry?
 - To what extent are you aware of feeling that this particular virtue is a gift from God, or that you depend on God for it?

Pray the Module Prayer and make a note of what comes to mind as you focus on it.

SAMPLE

Once you have drawn your life map, or put some points down on paper, or on your computer, have a look at the picture of your life.

➤ What do you notice about how you have lived as a Christian?

➤ What would you most like to change about your map?

Offer that reflection to God.

Give thanks to God for all the blessings that are obvious to you as you look at your life map.

Thank God for all the gifts you haven't really noticed and ask God to help you to be attentive to all you receive from God.

This is the end of Week One! Congratulations on completing the first section of the module. You may want to do one or more of the following to mark this point:

- Light a candle and spend a few minutes in quiet prayer
- Tell somebody about the work you have done so far and how you feel about it
- Make a note of the key things that have struck you in the process of completing Week 1, or put a * next to the most significant section.