

## MISSIONAL CHURCH: Treasure in Clay Jars

### *Lesson Four: Biblical Formation and Discipleship*

#### **Outcome Objectives:**

1. Learners will understand that the Bible has a formative role in the church's life and that all church members must learn what it means to be a disciple.
2. Learners will understand what it means for Scripture to be normative for Christian community.
3. Learners will explore the role of Scripture in missional formation and discipleship.
4. Learners will develop opportunities to practice the pattern of biblical formation and discipleship.

#### **Introduction:**

1. Teacher may open with a conversation starter. Ask the class to share with one another what they think of the old line: "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me." Is this true or false? If it is false and words do hurt, what does this say about the power of words and the enduring nature of this old proverb?
2. Read Genesis 1 (read verses 1-5 if time is critical). Teacher will indicate that God uses words to bring creation into existence. Invite the class to respond to what this means about the power of words. Do our words have the power to shape reality? How much more then does God's word have the power to shape our reality and identity?
  - a. Give the definition of the following terms:
    - i. Normative
    - ii. Disciple
  - b. Discuss the following verse from the "treasure in clay jars" text in 2 Cor. 4:6 – "For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."
    - i. Compare this to the translation from Peterson's The Message: *"It started when God said, "Light up the darkness!" and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful."*
3. Read Hebrews 4:6-13. Teacher may acknowledge that verses 12-13 are more familiar than the context starting in verse 6. Teacher will indicate that the context involves disobedience. Have the class indicate the adjectives, verbs, and images used to describe the word of God. Write these on a board.

#### **Exploration**

1. Teacher will explore the context of Hebrews 4:6-13 and the images used to describe the word of God.

- a. What does the description of God's word as sharp, penetrating, dividing, living, and active tell us about the function of the word as it relates to obedience?
  - b. How are obedience and discipleship related?
  
2. Teacher Exploration Strategy: Teacher will adopt the role of a spiritual seeker or skeptic. Teacher will ask the learners: "Why should I study the Bible?" Have someone write down the answers that the class gives. In the role of the seeker (or skeptic) ask the class: "Why do you read the Bible for yourself?" Have someone write down the answers to these questions.
  - a. Compare the two lists. Do we read the Bible for the same reasons we tell seekers or non-Christians to read the Bible? Why or why not?
  - b. The purpose of this exploration strategy is to make the learners aware of assumptions that we have about the role of the Bible is evangelism and discipleship. Do we regard the Bible as containing information that converts must accept, or do we view the Bible as the living word of God which shapes all of us (converts and Christians) into disciples.
  - c. Some may indicate that they read the Bible to discover interesting facts or to stay in a routine. Compare that with reasons given for a seeker to read (i.e. to learn what God wants you to do/be).
  
3. Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Why does Paul take Timothy back to what he has learned "from infancy?" How does the study Timothy learned as a child now contribute to wisdom? How often do we hear teachers say "Forget what you learned in Sunday School!" What is meant by this?
  - a. What is the use for Scripture? How does verse 17 summarize the connection between Scripture and discipleship?
  
4. Read Matt. 28:18-20. What is involved in the process of making disciples? (Note: baptizing and teaching). How long does this teaching last? What are the essential elements of this teaching?
  - a. Exploration Strategy for Teachers: Distribute cards and have the learners write on the card what they consider to be the "essential elements" of the teaching commissioned in Matt. 28. Encourage them to write down as many elements as they can. Invite discussion from the class: "Have we included everything? How long will it take us to educate on all of these?"
  - b. The purpose of this strategy is to demonstrate that training in discipleship is not simply a matter of knowledge but a discipline for one's life.

## Response

1. In this closing section, it is important to emphasize that the role of the Bible in our life together is to shape us into the kind of people God wants us to be. *The goal of biblical teaching is obedience and discipleship and not just knowledge.*

2. Encourage the learners to go on “field trip” around the congregation’s facilities. Sometime (class time if practical) walk around your congregation’s facilities. Notice what Scriptures are on display. Gather samples of congregational literature. Notice what Scriptures are on display.
  - a. Why are these Scriptures on display? What do they say about our “vocation” (Recall Pattern 1)
  - b. How do they shape and form our life together? How should they shape and form us?
  - c. Are these scriptures “equipping us for righteousness?” Are they forming us into a called and sent people? Why or why not?
  - d. If not, what should we do to allow the word of God to judge our thoughts and attitudes?
3. Read Matthew 6:31-34. What would it look like for this word from Jesus to be lived out among our congregation?
4. How does being a disciple enter into these everyday situations: 1) buying a house, 2) purchasing a car; 3) choosing a career; 4) dining together as a family; 5) choosing what books to read, movies to watch; 6) the way you treat those who serve you; 7) the way you treat those you serve. (Please add your own everyday situations.
5. Consider the reasons you study the Bible. Is it for your own “benefit;” to gain guidance for a difficult decision; to build an argument? Is it part of a routine discipline? How might we go beyond these and dwell in God’s word so that it transforms and disciplines us?
  - a. Alternatively, imagine ways we might read the Scriptures together as a called and sent community. Teacher should invite the class to suggest ways we could collectively discern God’s word for us in our current context (recall pattern 1 – missional vocation).