



FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Find time to explore these questions as a family after each session.

Session 1

- Why do you think there are four books about Jesus in the Bible?
- Do you think it's OK that there are differences in the four books? Why or why not?
- If you were to share the story of Jesus' resurrection, what do you think would be the key points to share?

Session 2

- Do we have to make sacrifices to follow Jesus? Why or why not?
- As a way to put your faith into action, what is one thing that you'd be willing to give up for the week? What wouldn't you be able to give up, even as an act of faith?
- How would you respond to someone who asked you, "Does Jesus really want me to give up my cell phone?"

Session 3

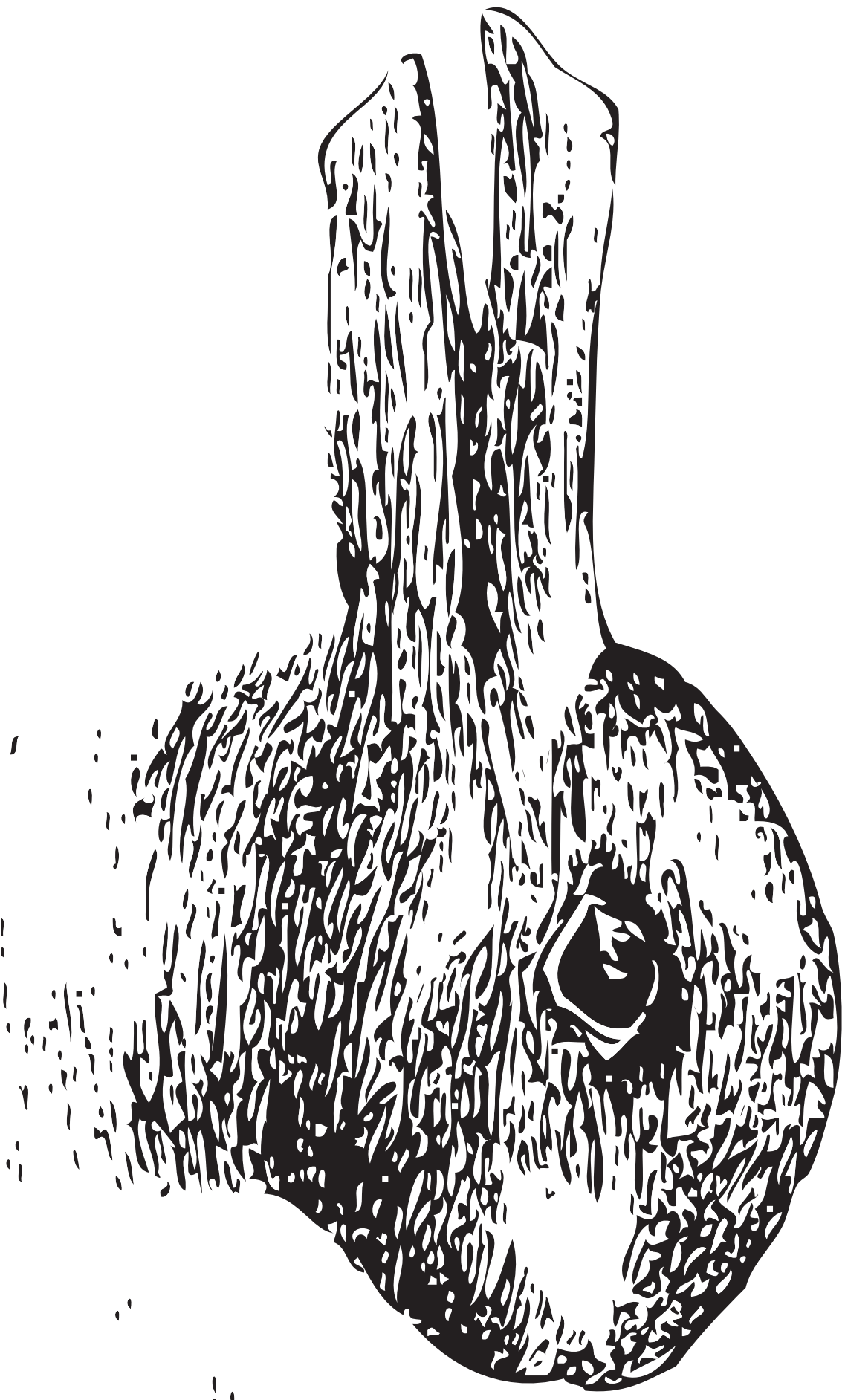
- In what ways are you doing a good job of living as a disciple of Jesus Christ? How might you do a better job?
- How would you respond if someone asked you, "How do I need to lead my life if I want to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ?"
- How can you support other followers of Jesus Christ as they strive to live as Christ's disciples?

Session 4

- In your life, who best exemplifies living his or her life as a follower of Jesus Christ? What about this person exemplifies the Christian life?
- How easy or challenging is it to live your life as a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- What is one thing you can do this week to put your faith into action and do something for someone who is in need of God's love?



IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER





WHICH GOSPEL ARE YOU?

Circle the answer that is the most likely response for you.

1. Which truth about Jesus do you think is most important?

- A. He died on the cross.
- B. He came to heal the sick and save the lost.
- C. He performed miracles.
- D. He was God "in the flesh."

2. When you tell a story you:

- A. Stick to just the pertinent facts.
- B. Like to share all the details.
- C. Explain why you are telling the story.
- D. Use subtexts and jargon known only to a select few.

3. When you hear a story you:

- A. Like to have a definite beginning.
- B. Like to have a definite ending.
- C. Care more about what it means than how it's told.
- D. Like stories that have no ending, leaving you to make up your own ending.

4. You prefer to:

- A. Live in a large city with different types of neighborhoods.
- B. Live in a very small town where previous generations also lived.
- C. Live in a hidden place where only a select few know how to find you.
- D. Live in a suburb where everything looks the same.

5. Which type of stories about Jesus do you prefer?

- A. The parables
- B. The healing stories
- C. The stories about Jesus' passion (his suffering, trial, death, and resurrection)
- D. The stories of Jesus' speeches (the "I am" statements)



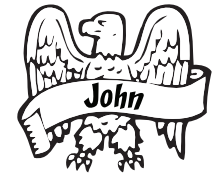
The winged man represents how Matthew begins his Gospel with Jesus' human genealogy.



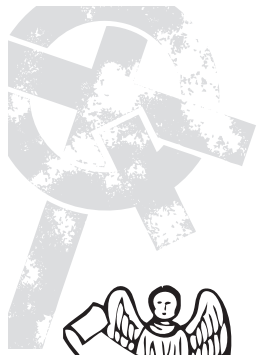
The lion is used because Mark starts his Gospel with "the voice of one crying out in the wilderness" like the roar of a lion.



The winged ox is a symbol of sacrifice. Luke's Gospel stresses the saving sacrifice of Jesus.



The eagle is used because John soars to lofty heights to focus on the mind of Christ.

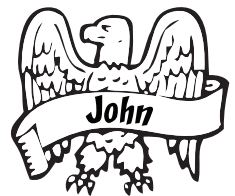


CUT AND PASTE



After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. When [the women] looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him."

While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. So [Mary] ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb; stooping and looking in, [Peter] saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.





FAITH STATEMENT

We trust in Jesus Christ,
fully human, fully God.
Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
preaching good news to the poor
and release to the captives,
teaching by word and deed
and blessing the children,
healing the sick
and binding up the brokenhearted,
eating with outcasts,
forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.
Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,
Jesus was crucified,
suffering the depths of human pain
and giving his life for the sins of the world.
God raised this Jesus from the dead,
vindicating his sinless life,
breaking the power of sin and evil,
delivering us from death to life eternal.
— *A Brief Statement of Faith* (lines 7–26)

FAiTh





REWRITE

Audience Types

Mark

- Small, close-knit community (everyone knows everyone else)
- Made up of second-generation believers who grew up hearing the stories from eyewitnesses
- Has recently suffered a significant loss or tragedy (such as a massive fire)

Matthew

- Large, urban community
- Made up of people well versed in Scripture and those who are unfamiliar with Scripture
- Tries to reach out to new people while remaining true to its roots

Luke

- Made up of third-generation believers who have heard the stories secondhand
- Does not know all the traditions behind the stories
- Struggling to find ways to live as believers in a contrary culture and to represent beliefs in a positive way

John

- Diverse community made up of people from different traditions
- Tries to incorporate those different traditions into itself
- Holds a mystery religion worldview in which the physical world is viewed as flawed and redemption is found in "secret" knowledge

Read about the audience for your assigned Gospel. Looking at the excerpt from *A Brief Statement of Faith*, reflect on the following questions:

What information in the excerpt from *A Brief Statement of Faith* is important to share with your audience?

What about Jesus would you add to the statement?

Would you remove from the statement? If so, what?

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the excerpt from *A Brief Statement of Faith* as if you were sharing it with your assigned audience.



IGNATIAN READING

Step 1

Become aware of God's presence. Think back on the events of your day in the company of the Holy Spirit. Some things may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

Step 2

Read Matthew 19:16–26 slowly together. Review the story with gratitude. Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through the story and focus on the story's gifts.

- Where is blessing found in the story?
- What did the people hearing the conversation between Jesus and the young man receive?
- What did you receive from this story?

Pay attention to small things—God is in the details.

Step 3

Pay attention to your emotions. One of St. Ignatius's great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in our emotions.

- Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the reading. Boredom? Confusion? Understanding? Compassion?
- What is God saying through these feelings?

Step 4

Choose one feature of the story and pray from it. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something that God thinks is particularly important for you to hear. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart.

Step 5

Look toward tomorrow. Ask God how this story pertains to you today and tomorrow. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up.

- Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive?
- Ask God for help and understanding.



REST OF THE STORY

Scenario 1

The young man walks away and decides that what Jesus was sharing wasn't important after all. What do you think he goes on to do with his life?

After reading Matthew 19:16–26, decide what you think happens next to the young man.

Scenario 2

The young man goes home and, after a night in prayer, he decides he can do what Jesus suggested. What do you think he does next and what happens to him?

Scenario 3

The young man turns around and comes back to Jesus, leaving his old life behind. What do you think happens to him next?



LABYRINTH

Step 1 The question or issue I want to focus on is:

Step 2 Trace the labyrinth path slowly with a finger.

Step 3 Reflect on the following questions:

- What did you “hear” as you traced the labyrinth?
- What did you feel?
- Did you discover an answer or something you had never thought of before? If yes, what?





LECTIO DIVINA GUIDELINES

Lectio divina ("divine reading") is an intentional, contemplative way to connect with God's Word. This ancient spiritual practice involves listening to multiple readings of the same Scripture passage interspersed with short periods of silence.

Relax in God's Presence

Dim the lights. Light a candle or an oil lamp. Sing a song or play contemplative music. Take a few minutes to relax in God's presence and to open the group members' hearts and minds.

Listen for God's Word

First Reading

Have a group member slowly read the Scripture passage out loud while the rest of the group members listen for a word that "jumps out" at each of them. Give each person an opportunity to share his or her word (without comment or explanation) with the rest of the group. Allow a time of silence before the next reading.

Second Reading

Invite each group member to think about his or her word during the next reading, exploring the question "How does this word and this Scripture passage connect with my life?" Have a second reader slowly read the Scripture passage out loud to the group and allow for a time of silence after the reading. Give each person an opportunity to share his or her response to the question.

Third Reading

Invite each group member to think about the question "What is this passage calling me to do?" or "Who is this passage calling me to be?" during the next reading. Have a third reader slowly read the Scripture passage out loud to the group and end with a time of silence. Give each person an opportunity to respond to the question "What have you heard from God in this Scripture passage?"



CINQUAIN

Guidelines for a Cinquain:

- Line 1: Title (a noun; one word)
- Line 2: Describes the title (two words)
- Line 3: Action words or phrases about the title (three words)
- Line 4: Describes a feeling or a complete sentence about the title (four words)
- Line 5: Refers to the title (one word)

Example:

God
Great Creator
Acting for humankind
You are my rock
Love

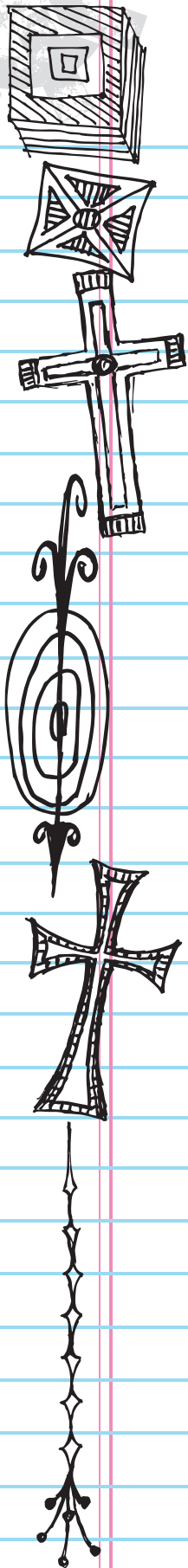
Write a cinquain that does one of the following:

- Reflects how you respond to Christ's call
- Is a prayer for help in making choices
- Expresses the meaning of today's Scripture passage

_____	_____		
_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	_____

FIRST THOUGHTS

*Knowing what Jesus desires from me,
what am I supposed to do?*





INTENTIONAL ACTS OF KINDNESS

In the ancient Near East, hospitality was offered to all people, even complete strangers or enemies. If someone in need appeared at your door, you were obligated to offer shelter, food, protection, or whatever the person needed. This was a matter of survival for people and, more importantly, it was a spiritual matter. In that time, people believed that strangers could be gods or angels in disguise. Hospitality was a way to meet and receive the holy presence. After all, that straggly stranger could be a messenger of God!

Today's Question:
What am I supposed to do now?

What do you think are the essential ingredients for hospitality? (*Hint: You'll find the answers in the Scripture passage.*)

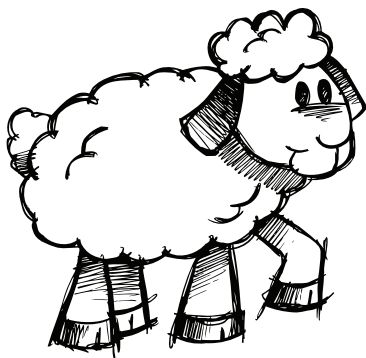
Who are the enemies and strangers in our lives?
What would offering them hospitality look like?

Have you ever felt that you met Christ in a stranger? What was that like?

What are some practical ways to offer hospitality at home? In church?
At school? In public places?

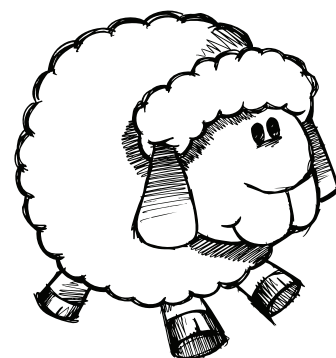


BE LIKE SHEEP



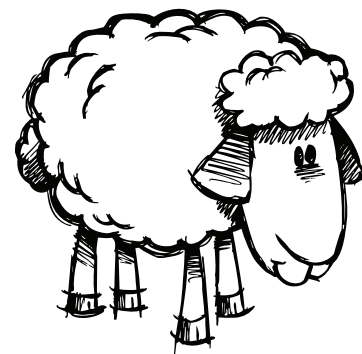
Feeding the hungry:

Sheltering the homeless:



Clothing the naked:

Visiting the sick or imprisoned:





PLEDGE TO CARE

(Pour the water into the bowl.)

One: Come, you who are blessed by God, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.

All: For when we care for the least of God's children, we show our love and commitment to Christ.

One: For I am hungry;

All: We can give you something to eat.

(If you feel called to show you care by feeding the hungry, drop a stone in the water.)

One: For I am thirsty;

All: We can give you something to drink.

(If you feel called to help provide clean water, drop a stone in the water.)

One: For I am a stranger;

All: We can welcome you as one of our own.

(If you feel called to make people feel welcome, drop a stone in the water.)

One: For I am naked;

All: We can give you clothing.

(If you feel called to help provide clothing to those in need, drop a stone in the water.)

One: For I am sick and in prison;

All: We can visit you.

(If you feel called to help those who are sick, homebound, or imprisoned feel remembered, drop a stone in the water.)

One: When, O Christ, did we care for you?

All: When we care for one another, we care for Christ. We promise to follow Christ by modeling his self-giving love for all and we pledge to care for the least among us as if they were the greatest of all, Christ our Lord.



FAITH STATEMENT

Biblical visions and images of the rule of Christ, such as a heavenly city, the household of God, a new heaven and earth, a marriage feast, and an unending day culminate in the image of the kingdom. The kingdom represents God's triumph over all that resists the divine will and disrupts God's creation. Already God's reign is present as a ferment in the world, stirring hope in all people and preparing the world to receive its ultimate judgment and redemption.

With an urgency born of this hope, the church applies itself to present tasks and strives for a better world. It does not identify limited progress with the kingdom of God on earth, nor does it despair in the face of disappointment and defeat. In steadfast hope, the church looks beyond all partial achievement to the final triumph of God.

— *Confession of 1967* (9.54–9.55),
Inclusive Language Text

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