



small groups

Discussion Guide



Your M.D. Degree

Ephesians 4:11-13

Ice Breaker

(5 minutes)

Happy New Year! You were going to talk about it anyway so go ahead: Did you make any new year's resolutions? What are they?

Lesson Review

(45 minutes)

This year's emphasis at IBC is on discipleship, and this week's lesson was on the goal of discipleship. A fully-formed disciple is someone who lives, loves and serves like Jesus. Andy issued a challenge to all IBCers to pursue an MD (Master of Discipleship) degree this year by growing in three areas. He presented them as courses in IBC's College of Discipleship.

DISC 101 — GROW — Living Like Jesus Lived

1. Jesus was regularly engaged in time with the Father.

This primarily means two activities: praying and reflecting on scripture. Of course there are lots of other activities that can help us grow in our relationship with God — worship, journaling, fasting, Sabbath-keeping, and a lot more — but prayer and scripture are essential. And they were modeled by Jesus. Jesus often quoted the Hebrew scriptures. He had studied and memorized much. And he often retreated to quiet places to pray.

Read Mark 1:35

Discuss

- Mark tells us that Jesus prayed “very early in the morning” in a “solitary place”. The “when” and “where” of your prayer life matters. When and where do you engage with the Father?

2. Jesus was wholly devoted to God’s perfect will.

Read John 4:34 and James 1:22-25

Discuss

- What do these verses say about DISC 101?

DISC 102 — CONNECT — Love Like Jesus Loved

1. Jesus was graciously disposed toward all.

The word used most by the gospel writers to describe Jesus’ emotional state is “compassionate.” Jesus cared about everyone he encountered — those who followed him, those who opposed him, and those who misunderstood him. He extended love and grace to his friends and his enemies.

Scan the Gospel of Mark. Find examples of three categories of people to whom Jesus showed grace.

Discuss

- What categories of people do you find it hardest to love? (Hint: they will likely be people who aren’t like you.)

2. Jesus was intimately connected to a few.

Jesus had a small group: 12 disciples who were his closest allies. (And even within that group, Peter, James and John seemed to be especially important to him.) Andy pointed out that Jesus' small group wasn't perfect: it included Judas. Then Andy described the community he son Jeff has. Jeff shares his time, his heart and his possessions (including food and clothing!) with his friends.

DISC 103 — ENGAGE — Serve Like Jesus Served

1. Jesus was passionately responsive to the needs of others.

Jesus wasn't too busy for people, especially people who were hurting. He responded to interruptions and irritations with grace and patience. Andy used the real-life example of Kent Brantly, a doctor who voluntarily went to West Africa to treat ebola patients.

Discuss

- You may not know any ebola patients, but you certainly know someone who is hurting. How can you respond to their needs this week? Name one thing you could do to bless someone in their area of need.

2. Jesus lovingly pursued people far from God.

Andy used the example of Zacchaeus, a tax collector and swindler. This would have been someone that the righteous and religious looked down on in his day. But Jesus reached out to him and had dinner with him.

Discuss

- Who do you know who is far from God? There is no commitment here to "win them" or persuade them. Just share their name with your group.
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Application

(10 minutes)

Andy's three-course degree plan is connected with IBC's three-part strategy for making disciples: growing in Christ (live), connecting in community (love), and engaging in God's mission (serve). It also parallels the Small Groups values of interdependence, authenticity, and mission.

Discuss

- Which of these three areas appeals most to you? Which course are you most eager to take?
- As homework for next week, commit to practicing the very first life mark on the "syllabus" — regularly engaging time with the Father.
- Before your next meeting, read the description of IBC's Mission and Vision on the web page Andy referenced: <http://www.irvingbible.org/about/mission-and-vision/vision-compass/>