



Blind Spots: The Disciples' Response **OPENING PRAYER**

Dear God, open our hearts, minds, and souls to receive your word and share our experience of your work in our lives. Give us the strength to live for you through our words and actions. Bless our time together.
In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Read Mark 10:46-50.

“They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Jesus stood still and said, ‘Call him here.’ And they called the blind man, saying to him, ‘Take heart; get up, he is calling you.’ So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.”

WC ENCOUNTER GROUPS CURRICULUM

WEEK THREE: THE DISCIPLES' RESPONSE

The mission of the United Methodist Church is “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” I cannot tell you how many times I have heard this mission statement recited over and over again at General and Annual United Methodist gatherings. But what does it mean to be a disciple? Jesus’ disciples were people from all walks of life- who left behind their livelihoods and loved ones to follow Jesus (I am not suggesting that we leave our families and employment). They learned from Jesus, through his teachings and actions. Jesus gave them specific tasks to carry out during his earthly ministry and gave them the Great Commission before his ascension into heaven. The context for learning was within a small group of 13 people, including Jesus, who was active in the local community. So, disciples are faithful followers of Jesus, lifelong learners, doers of the Word of God, and channels of the grace of God by loving people the way that Jesus did. All these actions demonstrate our love and obedience to God.

So, how did the disciples respond when Bartimaeus cried out, asking Jesus for mercy? Mark does not make a distinction between the actions of the crowd and the actions of the disciples. Although it is not implicitly stated, one could surmise it is the disciples that Jesus commands to “call him here” that the “they,” referred to in the text, that called the blind man to Jesus was the disciples. As we are marching onward to Zion, as followers of Jesus complete with our “I love Jesus” bumper stickers, clothed in our religious attire (mission T-Shirts, etc.), and our God is Big Enough Bracelets, how many desperate people are crying out from the crowd, yet we don’t see them or don’t hear them. If Jesus told us to call that person here, would we have the courage to do it? Would we even recognize the voice of the one whom we follow?

GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Where have you seen God at work in your life this week?

.....
.....

In the midst of our multitasking world, how do we overcome the temptation to fail to give others the time/attention they need/deserve?

.....
.....

Share a time when you stopped to help someone because you felt God was directing you to help them. What did you learn about God? Yourself? Others?

.....
.....
.....

How often do we miss our opportunities to be a part of the miracles God wants to work on earth? What do we do about it?

.....
.....
.....

How can we participate in God's miracles? Do they still exist? Why so much rarer than in Jesus' day?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/concern.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

.....

.....

WC ENCOUNTER GROUPS CURRICULUM

WEEK THREE: THE DISCIPLES' RESPONSE

FAMILY ENCOUNTER

WEEK THREE

Supplies:

- Bible
- Paper or Stationery
- Sacred Candle & Matches/Lighter
- Pens, Pencils, Markers, Crayons

WELCOMING GOD:

Gather together, and welcome God into this time and space through the lighting of a candle. Take this moment to pause briefly and sit quietly in this light for a few moments allowing time for everyone to relax their body, mind, and spirit for this time. In these moments, the invitation is to become aware of God's presence with and amongst you as a family.

SHARING WITH GOD AND ONE ANOTHER:

Say: "If anything is on our minds that makes it difficult for us to focus, let's share it now and then let it go."

- Whoever leads this portion might share what is on his or her mind to model this. Give time for each person to respond. When everyone has responded that would like to, invite everyone to place their hands out and lift them up as we give these distractions to God.

OR you can invite the family to pray together as one person leads, saying the following:

"Dear Loving God, The One who knows our hearts, celebrates our victories, grieves with us during our losses, and gives us the strength to overcome our challenges. Please help us to let go of the distractions we name now, so that we can openly share with our family and may encounter you in a special way today. Our distractions are... (let there be silence here, so everyone has an opportunity to name aloud what is distracting them). In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen."

ENCOUNTERING GOD:

Read aloud: Mark 10:46-50.

- Take turns reading the Scripture or have a different family member read the Scripture each week.

"They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' Jesus stood still and said, 'Call him here.' And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart; get up, he is calling you.' So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus."

ENCOUNTERING EACH OTHER:

Say: “Jesus stopped. Did you notice that? When Bartimaeus continued to call him, Jesus froze. Then, he told the disciples to call Bartimaeus to him. But, wait! It gets better! Not only did Jesus stop so he could meet Bartimaeus, he invited the disciples to be the ones to call him forward. Then, they not only called Bartimaeus to Jesus—they encouraged him! ‘Take heart!’ they said!”

Activity: Think of someone you know who might need some encouragement right now (someone who sits alone at school, someone experiencing sickness, someone experiencing sadness or lack of confidence, etc.). Write that person a letter or make them a card to encourage them and let them know that you care—and so does Jesus!

Say: “When Jesus invites the disciples to bring Bartimaeus to him, he invites them to be part of the miracle that is about to happen! Every single day, we receive the same invitation to bring others to Jesus and participate in miracles because every single day, God invites us to be encouraging and kind to those around us. ”

Discussion Questions

- Imagine being Bartimaeus. How does it feel that Jesus stopped to pay attention to you? How does it feel when the disciples say to “take heart” instead of joining the crowds in telling you to be quiet?
- Can you share a time you’ve been encouraged by others and what that meant to you?
- Is there a place in your life that you could use some encouragement now?

ENCOUNTERING GOD TOGETHER:

Say: “May we pray together as a family...

Let us share our prayers for the world: for our country and leaders, for other countries and their leaders...

Let us share our prayers for the church, ministers, and spiritual leaders...

Let us share our prayers for our teachers, first responders, friends, and others in the community...

Let us share our prayers for our family and our own specific needs...”

If you would like to record the people for whom you pray, use the next few lines to do so:

*You can also record these requests in a family prayer journal if you are using one.

ENCOUNTERING TRANSFORMATION TOGETHER:

Pray aloud together:

God, we welcomed you here and read Your Word,
we prayed and we spent time with you,
we rested in your love for us,
and we did this all together.

Now, we promise to love one another and others as you love us.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

BLESSING ONE ANOTHER FOR OUR ENCOUNTERS WITH THE WORLD:

Invite family members to bless one another using any of the examples below or their own blessings.

Examples:

- "I love you. God loves you. I pray God blesses you."
- "God loves you exactly like you are—and so do I."
- "I love the gifts God has given you and how you bless the world with them."

DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Please answer these during your personal devotional time at the end of the day or do it as a couple or family.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, "what made you happy today?"

.....

What broke your heart or made you sad today?

.....

What good thing did you do for someone else today?

.....

What are you thankful for today?

.....

