

Short-Term Disciple Course Descriptions

These eight to eleven week in-depth, high commitment Bible studies are modeled after the basic design of DISCIPLE Bible Study, which has enriched more than 1 million lives. Short-Term DISCIPLE Bible Studies make these life-changing courses easier to be a part of for those busy people who are unable to commit to longer studies. Weekly group meetings are designed to last 1 ½ to 2 hours with a two-part video segment to guide each session with interpretive presentations from biblical scholars; contextual presentations and roundtable discussions; and opportunities for reflection, contemplation, or inspiration on some aspect of the Scripture studied.

INVITATION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

This eight week study approaches the study of Hebrew Scriptures by inviting participants to hear the story of God and God's calling of the people of Israel through the many "voices" of the biblical text. Narrative, poem, history, and prophetic utterance all have their own distinctive characteristics and purpose, arising out of a particular historical, social, and cultural setting. To understand fully the story of God's covenantal relationship with Israel calls for listening to these various ways the story is told throughout the Old Testament. What does it mean to be God's chosen people? And how does the story of Israel's covenant with God inform our own identity as heirs of that covenant? Through this study, participants will be invited to listen afresh to the witness of the Old Testament to hear God's call and purpose for their own lives and respond to that call.

INVITATION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

Using Matthew's Gospel as a starting point, this eight week study explores how the new Testament writers and the early Christian community wrestled with the coming of Jesus--his life, actions, mission, death, and resurrection--and the implications of his arrival for their lives and their communities of faith. Moving through the Gospel of Matthew sequentially, the overarching themes from this story of Jesus provide the conversation topics for each of the eight sessions. Each theme is then traced through other related passages in the New Testament. Who is Jesus and what is his significance for our lives? Participants are invited to join this conversation, to study afresh this story of Jesus, and to learn more about their calling to discipleship and to community.

INVITATION TO JOHN

In its wisdom, the early church chose to keep four Gospel accounts of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Three of these Gospels are very similar to each other in both what they tell about the story of Jesus and how they tell it. However, the Gospel of John stands apart. In it, we find Jesus speaking not in parables but in lengthy discourses. We overhear Jesus talking with Nicodemus, a Samaritan woman, and Mary Magdalene. We marvel at Jesus turning water into wine, calling Lazarus from the tomb, and washing his disciples' feet. We linger over Jesus' great promises: "For God so loved the world..." "I am the bread of life..." "I am the resurrection..." "Peace I leave with you..." In the very first chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus issues two invitations: "Come and see," and "Follow me." They echo the invitations of this eleven week study: to come and see this Jesus—to hear him speak, to see his signs—and to consider anew what it means to be his followers.

INVITATION TO PSALMS

The human emotions expressed in the Book of Psalms rise to peaks of joy and descend into valleys of despair. In the Psalms, the promise of the reign of God meets the historical experience of God's people. Faith in God's faithfulness collides with human experiences of pain and suffering, enslavement, oppression, and exile. God's people--given voice in the Psalms--struggle to make sense of who God is and who they are, and in so doing they have composed a collection of moving testimonies of grace, glory, sorrow, and beauty unmatched in sacred literature. For students of the Psalms today, this ten week study offers greater understanding of how these ancient texts of praise, lament, worship, and prayer can still speak to us and for us.

INVITATION TO GENESIS

"In the beginning . . ." These first words in Genesis may be among the most familiar words in all the Bible. Many readers of the Bible recognize Genesis as a book that describes the beginning of all things: the Creation. This is certainly true but is only part of the story—the creation of the world only takes up the first two chapters of a fifty-chapter book. What are the other chapters about? This 10 week study approaches the Book of Genesis not simply as a story of the beginning but as a story of beginnings from start to finish. Through the study, participants will be invited to listen afresh to the witness of this opening book of the Hebrew Bible and to understand more clearly God's purpose in beginning to form a people with the likes of Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, and Jacob and Esau.

INVITATION TO ROMANS

It is difficult to overstate the importance of Romans in Christian tradition. Some of the great formers and re-formers of church teaching were themselves formed by their reading of Romans. Paul's teachings in Romans come to us mediated through the history of the church's interpretations of his letter. The challenge of reading Romans, then, is to learn to have our own interpretive conversation with the text itself, in spite of centuries of commentary on the text. One of the aims of this eight week study is to invite us into conversation around several key themes: (1) Paul's emphasis on communal salvation; (2) the centrality of God's righteousness; and (3) the relationship between Jews and Gentiles and the relationship of both to God.