

Purpose

- To learn about forgiveness
- To learn about baptism, what it means and why
- To learn about communion and what it means to us as Disciples

Materials

- Bibles
- Handouts

Background Information**FORGIVENESS**

During this week we will be focusing on forgiveness. If you look up forgiveness in the dictionary what do you think you would find? What do you think forgive means? (Allow them time to answer) Forgiveness is the process of giving up resentment or desire to punish someone. To forgive is to stop being angry with someone. Forgiveness means canceling what ever is wrong or offends. The ultimate forgiver is God. He forgave whatever we did without any questions, as long as we believe that he is our Savior and say that we will live for Him. One of God's gifts to us is forgiveness. Two practices of the church, communion and baptism, help us understand God's forgiveness and blessing.

Many times people in the Bible "messed up". But God never gave up on them and he always responded lovingly. God still used these same people to live and work with him and to carry on when he was gone. Some examples are: In Genesis 12:10-20 Abraham deceived the Pharaoh of Egypt by telling him that Sarah was his sister and not his wife. Also Peter denied Jesus three times after Jesus was arrested. Again in Acts 9:1-2 Paul persecuted the followers of Jesus before he was converted. Look at what God did with these three men later in their life. Even these men were forgiven and God did not seek revenge for what they had done.

In Matthew 18:21-35 Jesus told Peter to forgive seventy times seven. WOW! That's 490 times. Do you think God really meant that number or are we to always forgive and not judge? God did not judge us by our sins so why would we have the right to judge someone else.

Also consider did God show partiality toward some people over others? In Acts 10:34-43 Peter reminds us that God forgives everyone no matter what sin, race, amount of wealth, clothes, sex or whatever. God wants all of us, not just the ones we feel are elite or special. If God didn't show partiality we dare NOT!!!

BAPTISM

The experience of Christian baptism is an experience. When we hear and believe the gospel message, and decide to repent and turn away from our sins, we decide

to enter the water of Christian baptism. It is “an outward and physical sign” of what we have experienced very personally – our desire to get rid of the old, muddy life. We want to “wash away” the dirt of the way we used to live, and we do so by being baptized. When we are baptized, we identify with the death and burial of Jesus Christ. We also want to put on “clean clothes” or a new life, and we do so by coming up from the baptismal waters and “putting on Christ.” We decide to follow Jesus Christ and live, as he would have us live and love, as he would have us love. Are you ready to get rid of that old, muddy life? Are you ready to “put on Christ”?

Jesus himself was baptized by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:13-17) even though he had lived a sinful life he asked John the Baptist to baptize him as an example for us. He wanted to live as a human and show us how we should live.

One of the handouts points out the story of Margaret and Alexander Campbell and how they struggled with their decision to not baptize babies, but let them make their own decision about being baptized. Alexander and his father, you remember, differed from the Presbyterian on the question of infant baptism. Our denomination (Disciples) believe as the Campbells did that we each need to make our own decision about how we will live our life and who we will follow. This is a decision you have been thinking about and on Pam Sunday will be given the opportunity to state your answer. Do you want to follow God? Do you want to serve Him? Then on Easter Sunday you will have the opportunity to show your love in front of family and friends here at South Side by being baptized in our Sunday church service. Remember we love you and are always behind you.

COMMUNION

There is a very important piece of furniture in our worship place. Do you know what it is? It is a table—The Lord’s table. This is another name we give the Communion table. Why do we call it the Lord’s table? At the Lord’s table or communion table during worship you can find bread and a cup that are special symbols for Christians. The bread reminds us of Jesus’ body, and the cup reminds us of his blood. He gave his body and blood for us when he died on the cross.

Jesus invites us to come to this table and remember what he has done to show us God’s love and offer of forgiveness. When Christians come to this table they give thanks to God for the gift of Jesus. We are also reminded of the special way God wants us to live as we follow Jesus.

This has not always been true that all were welcome to come to the table. What would it be like if you were not allowed to take communion if you couldn’t pass a test given by the elders? It wouldn’t feel good to be excluded from Jesus’ table! In our church the communion table is open to all who believe that Jesus is the Christ and have accepted Christ as their Savior.

When people take communion they give thanks for God’s love and forgiveness that Jesus showed us in a special way. They give thanks that Jesus loved us enough to give his life for us. A new movie just came out “The Passion.” This movie shows what Jesus endured during the last hours of his life. As I understand this is a very graphic depiction of the time that Jesus shed his body and blood so that we might be saved.

We as Disciples take communion every Sunday so that we can always remember what God sacrificed and what Jesus did for us. We observe Communion in a very special way so that it always fills us with God’s love and the Holy Spirit.

The first communion was done by Jesus and his 12 disciples in the upper room. Here Jesus tried to prepare the disciples for what was ahead of them and what he wanted them remember when he was gone. This is the first time that the words of Institution were used in the Bible. We use these words today. Each and every Sunday our pastor uses these words so that we never forget what was done for us. This story can be found in Matthew 26:20-30, Mark 14:17-26, Luke 22:14-30 or John 13:21-30.

As disciples we believe that once we have publicly confessed our sins and asked God to come into our lives we are then to take communion as a constant reminder of what Jesus gave up for us. This act of communion and well as daily communication with God helps us keep our lives in line with what God wants us to do.

Procedure

- Read background information on Forgiveness.
- Do handout Lesson 69-1. Bring this to class.
- Read background information on Baptism.
- Do Lesson 69-2 and 69-3 for them to just read. Do Lesson 69-4 and bring it with you to class.
- Read background information on Communion.
- Do handouts 69-5, 69-6, 69-7, 69-8, and 69-9. Let them look these over. They have good questions and ideas but use them as you have time. The five-finger exercise for communion is great.

Lesson 64-1

How does forgiveness work in your life?

- ❑ How does it feel when someone forgives you for something you have done wrong?
- ❑ How easy is it for you to forgive someone?
- ❑ What things do you do to show forgiveness:
- ❑ What do you do to ask for forgiveness?
- ❑ Think of three occasions when you may need forgiveness.
- ❑ Think of three occasions when you may need to forgive someone.
- ❑ What does it mean to forgive?

FORGIVENESS: WHAT DO YOU THINK IT MEANS?

Forgiveness is:

- ❑ Restoring a good relationship with someone, even if you're still hurting.
- ❑ Saying "I'm sorry," whether you are or not.
- ❑ Being willing to start over again.
- ❑ Examining the situation to see where fault lies and talking it out.
- ❑ Not feeling guilty anymore
- ❑ Pretending everything is okay.
- ❑ Feeling accepted by God and by the other person.
- ❑ Saying "I love you" and meaning it.

