

Full Circle Discipleship

Developed by Growing Spiritual Leaders Team – Susquehanna Conference

Definitions:

Faith - Heb 11:1 – “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” (NIV) A recent author talked about ‘confidence in what we hope for’ as actual desire for more of God in our lives. Faith is much more than simple belief or assent – it is desire for more and active trust in the love of God for self and others.

Three forms of Grace – Eph 2:8-9 - *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.* Grace is a gift from God humanity, God’s loving act for everyone. John Wesley defined God’s grace in our lives in three movements:

Preceding – This first movement of God’s grace is a constant flow of love to all of us, even when we are not fully aware that the source is God. Romans 8:38-39 - *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Preceding grace is characterized by growing awareness of God’s activity in one’s life, the discovering of gifts and relationships, and an overall thankful attitude. Our historical language for this is Prevenient Grace.

Embracing – This second movement of God’s grace is the widening and deepening of a relationship of love with God. It emerges as our recognition and awareness expands. We choose to love God in return. God’s work comes first (reconciliation, pardon, restoration). We commit to building a right relationship with God and others. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 - *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.* Embracing grace is characterized by growing a healthy relationship with God, oneself, and others. Our historical language for this is Justifying Grace.

Transforming – This third movement of God’s grace is an ongoing experience of being transformed by God’s love. Staying deeply connected with the Spirit helps us become all we are intended to be. Wesley often referred to this as ‘holiness’ or becoming a loving presence wherever you go. Evidence of sanctification becomes obvious as our words and actions lead us to bear the fruit of the Spirit and do the work of justice. As Cornell West describes, “Justice is what love looks like in public.” 2 Corinthians 5:17 - *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!* Transforming grace is characterized by accepting risk and reaching out to the unknown as we are used by God to change ourselves and the world around us. Our historical language for this is Sanctifying Grace.

Another thought about God’s grace – how do we model grace toward other people so that they might have the chance to recognize God’s grace in their own lives? Preceding Grace – help people awaken to the blessings and gifts given in life? Embracing Grace – help people embrace the love of God and develop a deeper relationship? Transforming Grace – live a journey with other people toward Christlikeness?

From Membership Vows to Discipleship Pathways

Jesus said, “Come, follow me”. This is an invitation into a way of life – engaging others in abundant Christian love that transforms lives everywhere we go. See the kaleidoscope of color that helps us to be the light of the world!



Prayerful Practices – These are both individual and corporate. When we develop these ways as communication with God, then our relationship with God grows and deepens over time. Personal forms of prayer, fasting, healthy living, and individual study are ways in which we experience God’s love for oneself. Christian Conferencing, Study of Scripture, Holy Communion, Corporate Worship help us to recognizing God’s love for us as a people together, called for a purpose and usefulness to our community.



Presence – Sensing God in daily life moves us from attendance to attentiveness, recognizing and embodying God’s love in the world. As we develop in God’s love, we become “present” with the world and a “present” to the world. This lifestyle is who we are in the world. **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Gal 5:22-23)**



Gifts – We are stewards of so much more than money! Spiritual gifts are unique attributes given by God that build up Christ’s body and bring love to the world. Also, using your natural talents is a powerful way to be a gift of God’s love to the world. **So, Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.** (Ephesians 4:11-12)



Service – We become Servant Leaders in the world through acts of mercy and justice, which are outward-focused actions. Mercy gives us the opportunity to meet immediate needs in our communities – food, clothing, visitation, school supplies, and many others. Justice, as one author defines it, is what love looks like in public. What needs to be fixed in our community systems that are the causes of suffering? **He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**

Micah 6:8



Witness – Recognizing your God story that shapes you can be used to invite others to experience God’s activity. We must articulate the Love we trust in for people so that they clearly understand the motivation for our Christian lifestyle. This also means pointing to the Love of God wherever we see it. We listen to the stories of others and they listen to ours which is the way relationships form. **But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)**

Full Circle Discipleship	Preceding Grace	Embracing Grace	Transforming Grace
Prayerful Practices	I am exploring and experimenting with different kinds of spiritual practices. I'm noticing the unique blessing of each one - Bible study, prayer, healthy living, solitude, sacred art, the means of grace.	I choose several spiritual practices that most deepen my relationship with God, others, and myself right now. I use them regularly to stay centered in love and stay open to new spiritual practices.	I open myself to be changed by God and by the love of Christ through these spiritual practices.
Presence	I'm growing in the ability to be present in the moment, in the places, and with the relationships that I encounter each day, being attentive to sacredness.	Being present with my faith community and the wider world is becoming more and more an avenue to love and be loved.	I take the role of a learner and a disciple by being present to life, listening and discerning God's movement and direction.
Gifts	I'm discovering my Spiritual Gifts, abilities, and resources as a child of God.	Out of love for God, I dedicate these gifts to be a blessing – we are blessed to be a blessing.	God is stretching me, sometimes in uncomfortable ways, to make a difference where there is need through my spiritual gifts, abilities, and resources.
Service	I'm noticing in a deeper way the many contributions to my well-being given by Christ, others, and the natural world.	I embrace more and more the servant heart of Jesus as an expression of love for me and the whole world.	I extend myself in widening relationships and collaborations with others to do good and relieve suffering in the church and the community.
Witness	I see and recognize the damage and hurt that happens in the absence of love.	I have an increasing trust in God's forgiveness and constant life-giving presence, when I and others have failed to love.	With God's help, I dedicate myself to be a lifelong witness to and an avenue for the redeeming power of love.
Outcomes	Growing awareness – discovery – thanksgiving	Growing in relationship with God and others	Courage to be changed and to change the world.