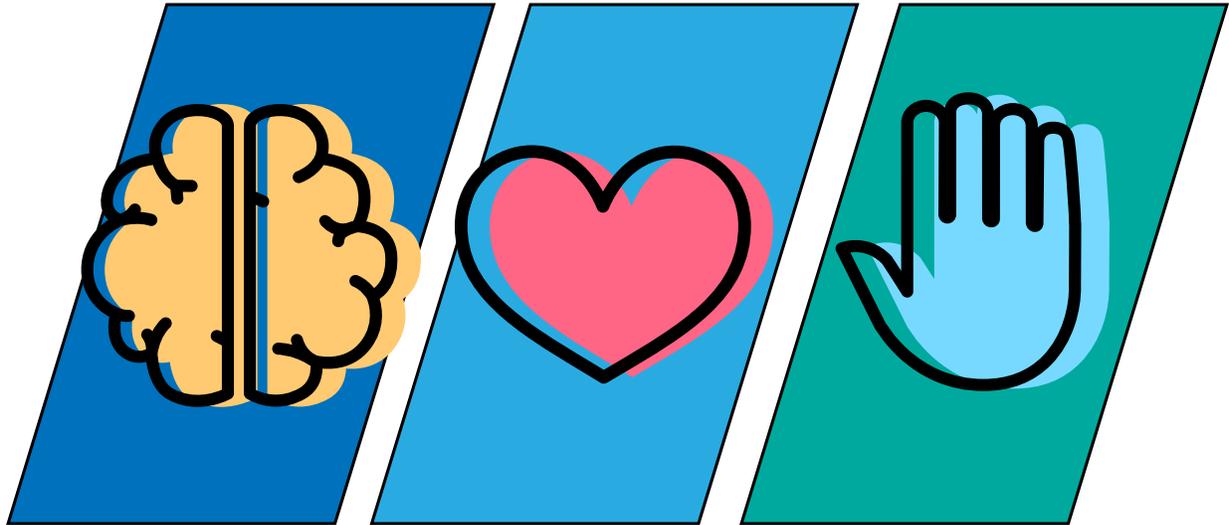


With Head, Heart, and Hands: The call to follow Jesus



Lent 2023

**Preaching Series
Prayer Guide**



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN EVANSTON

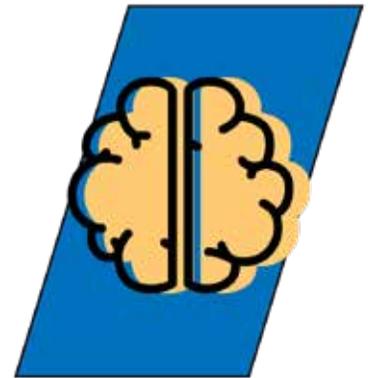
*“WITH HEAD, HEART, AND HANDS:
THE CALL TO FOLLOW JESUS”*
THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart
and with all your soul and with all your might.”*

- Deuteronomy 6:5

Since the beginning of 2023, we have been looking at what it means to be a Disciple of Jesus Christ. We began by looking at how we turn our **heads** - our minds - toward living as a follower of Jesus. We considered the following concepts:

- Jesus chose to become like us in order to save us.
- Through his own baptism, Jesus was sent in the power of the Holy Spirit to pursue his ministry.
- For us to follow Jesus, we must be inspired by a clear sense of God’s calling to live as disciple.
- Faithful disciples commit their heads, hearts, and hands to follow Jesus.
- In living as disciples, we choose a life which is distinctly different than the ways of the world.



In February, our focus shifted to what it means to align our **hearts** to living as disciples. We looked at these ideas:

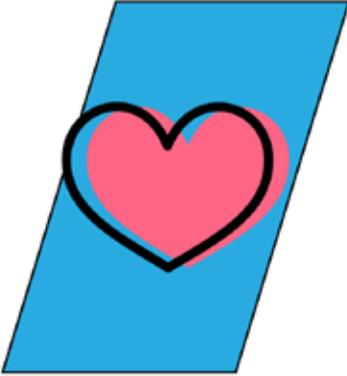
- At its core, the life of a disciple of Jesus is more about form than function.
- Right thinking and right action are aligned in the process of following Jesus.
- As Jesus is, so we will be.
- Practicing the way of Jesus calls for obedience of the heart.
- Jesus succeeds where Adam and Israel failed in defeating the power of sin.

In March, we will move into what might be considered a more practical approach to discipleship. We put our **hands** to work serving Christ. This service is really just an extension of where our mind and heart have taken us.

- As Jesus traveled, he healed indiscriminantly, for both Jew and Gentile; bringing the power of the Holy Spirit to bear upon the persecuted and the persecutors.
- Followers of Jesus share the water of life with all who are thirsty, not just those whom they love or admire.
- In the same way, Jesus saw the darkness of sin and sorrow at work in both those inside and outside religious society.

- Jesus must be at the center of the life of a disciple. Disciples follow Jesus, are changed by Jesus, and serve on mission with Jesus.

This guide is meant to serve as a starting point for weekly group gatherings and discussions about the sermons being preached during the season of Lent, and setting us on a course to turn what we have learned in our heads and felt in our hearts into the activity and actions of our hands in serving others as Christ has called us to.



If you would like to revisit any of the sermons preached so far in this series, or look at what is coming up in the future, visit <https://firstpresevanston.org/head-heart-and-hands-2023/>.

Please know that our lay leaders and staff are praying for you and asking God to move in all our hearts and make us more and more like Jesus.

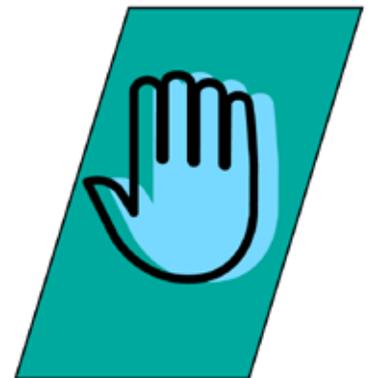
HELPFUL TIPS FOR SMALL GROUP LEADERS

Before you meet:

1. Pray feach week, asking God to give you his heart for the attendees.
2. Read the weekly study scripture, notes, and questions ahead of time.
3. Give God permission to set his agenda for the meeting and invite the Holy Spirit to be present. Be flexible.

During the meetings:

1. If only one or two people show up, do the study anyway.
2. Defend each participant's chance to speak without requiring everyone to do so.
3. Let the group know ahead of time that they don't need to worry about getting to every question. If the discussion is going well, keep it going. If one question fizzles, move on.
4. Look for others who might be good leaders. Give them a chance to lead discussions in subsequent weeks.



After the meetings:

1. Make notes on what was said and who said it. Work on learning people's names.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to solidify what was taught in the hearts of those who were there.
3. Follow up with those who were absent without criticizing them for not being there.

Text: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Theme: Inhabiting the practices of faith

Big Idea: Practicing the way of Jesus calls for obedience from the heart.

Notes: Jesus takes the three main areas of traditional religious devotion - prayer, fasting, and almsgiving - and warns his hearers against ostentatious or superficial devotion.

We have all seen it. Someone who makes a big show out of an act of kindness or generosity, or who lets it be known every time they are fasting and makes sure to remind others what a hardship it is for them. While there may have been a genuine motive to help or bless someone at the beginning or grow in relationship with God by fasting, by the time the tip is left or the donation has gone into the Salvation Army bucket or the offering plate, everyone within earshot is aware that their gifts are insignificant by comparison. Or someone who is fasting from something like food or social media and mentions it without being asked (sometimes multiple times).

But in the economy of discipleship, these gifts and actions are measured by the desire of the heart much more than by the quantity or personal cost of the gifts themselves.

As we learn to inhabit the practices of faith as followers of Jesus, we seek to have our hearts changed as well as our pocketbooks.

Discussion/Questions:

- Can you remember a time when you sought to be seen while doing good? What was at the heart of your desire to have others know you were being kind or generous?
- Discuss what it looks like to “not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.”
- Why does Jesus suggest such modesty and hiddenness when fasting?

Prayer: Lord, give us the strength to resist the temptation to do our good works before men. Set our hearts firmly on a path that emphasizes our relationship with you above all others, and leaves behind the worldly desire to be considered highly by others rather than walking humbly in friendship with you.

Text: Matthew 4:1-11**Theme:** The Battle**Big Idea:** Jesus succeeds where Adam and Israel failed**Notes:** What did the temptation mean to Jesus? The story of the temptations is not included in the Gospel primarily to provide an example to Christian disciples, (though it does provide that example). These temptations are best understood as messianic. They were uniquely appropriate to God's Son, who had just received a clear vision of his mission during his baptism. Now the question was no longer what his mission was, but how to accomplish it. How was he to carry it out? How was he to lead people back to God? Was he to adopt the path of the conquering king OR of the suffering Servant? Satan tempted Jesus to fulfill popular messianic expectations. Jesus found his strength to resist in Scripture.

Our modern society scoffs at the thought of Satan as being anything more than a general concept of evil, or a anthropomorphic expression of the temptations of our own flesh. But three of the four Gospels mention it, each reporting it was Satan who did the tempting. In Matthew and Luke, Jesus responds to each temptation by quoting scripture back to Satan and rejecting a twisted version of the truth which might have made him rich, powerful, and famous - the very things many people of his time expected would characterize the coming Messiah.

Discussion/Questions:

- Do you find the temptations of Jesus relevant to what you face today? Why or why not?
- Hebrews 2:18 says the temptation of Jesus equipped him to help us in our temptation and suffering. Discuss and describe how this could be.
- What are some of the scriptures you turn to when facing temptation?
- When thinking of Satan as an individual, does that help you resist temptation or not. Why or why not?

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for being willing to face temptation and emerge victorious over them. Help us to follow your example of responding to temptation with scripture, proclaiming it as our primary source of truth.

March 5

Week 2 - 2nd Sunday of Lent

Text: Matthew 4:23-25

Theme: The Healing Ministry of Jesus

Big Idea: Jesus went about doing good indiscriminately to Jews and Gentiles.

Notes: In what way are disciples called to exercise the healing ministry today? See: Matthew 9:35-38; Matthew 10:1-15;

Each of us has had a need for healing at some point in our lives. Whether it is a personal physical or emotional challenge, or our desperate desire that a loved one or close friend be restored to health, the emotions of such situations are deep and powerful. In Matthew 4:24, Jesus is said to have become so famous due to his healing ministry that his fame spread far and wide. Later in the Gospels, Jesus gives the same healing authority to the Apostles AND other disciples. He sends them out and they experience the same “power encounters” that he had done.

Today, we often isolate healing in the hands of medical professionals, exclusively trusting their medications, advanced technologies and skills (which are also gifts from God). But just as with other characteristics of discipleship, we are also called to minister healing. Just as in the time of Jesus and the Apostles, it can be an effective way to break down barriers to the Gospel in peoples’ hearts.

Discussion/Questions:

- Does the thought of praying for someone and seeing them healed excite you or frighten you?
- Have you ever experienced that kind of Holy Spirit power encounter? If so, describe it in detail to the group.
- In the book of Acts (Chapter 14:8-18), Paul and Barnabas were mortified when the people exalted them as gods after they healed a lame man in Lystra. Discuss their response and why it was so important to them that they not receive the credit for the miracles they accomplished.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, we invite you to move among us in your healing power. Give us wisdom and discernment as we seek to minister like Jesus in this way. As disciples of Jesus, allow him always be the one who receives the glory!

Text: John 4:5-42**Theme:** Giving Water to the Thirsty**Big Idea:** Followers of Jesus share the water of life with all who are thirsty.**Notes:** Jesus, as living water, hydrates from the inside out. He said, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” (John 4:13–14).

The term “living water” can seem so innocuous and vague to us, especially if we are currently experiencing that dryness and thirst in our hearts, minds, and spirits. When Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman and spoke with her, he did more than just break a societal taboo. He listened to God, shared what he heard, and created a connection point which then allowed him to go deeper in relationship immediately. Her life experiences had left her with far more than a physical thirst. Jesus pierced the division between them and offered her more than just kind words. As his disciples, we can do that same with those we encounter throughout our lives.

Discussion/Questions:

- What are some examples of spiritual thirst?
- Do we know of people who are thirsty? Without betraying confidential information, share what some of those “thirsts” might be.
- What does it look like to share living water with thirsty people today?
- How can we be ready and able to distribute “living water” to others?
- Are there people we might hesitate to engage with if given the opportunity? How can our hearts be changed towards them?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we live in a time of spiritual and emotional drought. We experience it in our own lives and in the lives of those around us. Fill us, right now, with your living water so we might then be sent out to give it away to all who thirst. Give us eyes to see these opportunities and obedient hearts to follow your leading.

Text: John 9:1-41

Theme: From Sight to Insight

The darkness of the man born blind, and the ignorance of the religious leaders are potent images of the condition of people inside and outside the church.

Notes: The once-blind man now “sees,” whereas some with physical sight are spiritually blind. (John 9:41. See also John 8:24.) As the man gains his sight, he also gains insight into Jesus’ identity: sight becomes metaphor for perceiving the significance of what Jesus has done and who he is.

The event of Jesus healing the blind man told in John 9 illustrates more than just a physical healing. Jesus is asked whose sin resulted in the man having been blind from birth. He uses the opportunity to heal others of their spiritual blindness (or ignorance), and also reveal the heart of God, whose purposes are greater than we often perceive.

John 9:13-41 illustrates how those who we might reasonably expect to have the closest relationships with God can sometimes suffer from their own forms of spiritual blindness. Jesus (who is often far more harsh in his criticisms of the “religious elite” than with others) pulls no punches as he speaks of their blindness within their hearing and offers no great hope for their redemption.

Discussion/Questions:

- Why might people assume it was someone’s sin that caused the man to be blind from birth? Why might they have concluded Jesus was a sinner?
- The man who was healed, when asked his thoughts about Jesus, called him a prophet. How do you think he reached that conclusion?
- Jesus says he “came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind.” What do you think is meant by that statement?
- As his disciples, how does this story impact how we should live?

Prayer: Dear God, heal our many kinds of blindness and guide us as we walk with you. Do not allow us or our leaders to fall into the trap of pride or envy.

March 26

Week 5 - 5th Sunday of Lent

Text: John 6:1-15

Theme: On Mission with Jesus

Big Idea: A Disciple is someone following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and on mission with Jesus.

Notes: Being on mission and sharing God's love as an individual is expected of those who follow Jesus. However, more dynamic, formative, and impactful experiences occur when they happen in groups.

We live in an age when we are often directed to stay on target, on task, or on point. Most often, we are charged with completing something, sent off to do it, and not expected to come back until it is finished, at least in first draft form.

Imagine how Phillip must have felt when Jesus asked him where to buy bread for the large crowd headed their way. But Jesus doesn't send us out alone or ask us to solve the big problems on our own any more than he did his disciples. And the lesson he seemed most eager to teach them this time was to have their eyes, ears, and hearts open to the miraculous taking place at any time in any situation.

It can be easy to think this is not a lesson we need to apply to our own lives. But in promising before his ascension that he would always be with us, it seems likely he meant he would be with us in power and still expecting us to seek those encounters with him yesterday, today, and forever.

Discussion/Questions:

- Have you ever been in a position as a volunteer or as an employee where you felt you were being hung out to dry in a no-win situation? How about at church? Did Jesus feel nearby then?
- How might this example of Jesus having his disciples "on mission" be applicable to our own experiences and expectations as members of a congregation?
- Do you come to church expecting to see God at work? Why or why not?

Prayer: Holy Spirit, we ask you to stir our hearts so they are ready when you are about to move in powerful ways. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear!

Conclusion

It is no mistake that the words disciple and discipline share the same root. To be a disciple of Jesus is to commit ourselves to undergo changes which can only happen through discipline (training oneself to do something in a controlled and habitual way).

We might be tempted to respond to such a claim in one of two opposing extremes.

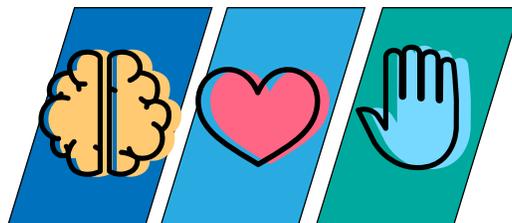
- To either equate such efforts as being antithetical to the freedom we have in Christ and to the grace we have received, and therefore call them legalism;
- Or to see this call to disciplined training as a law unto itself and be consistently disappointed in ourselves as we never reach the perfected imitation of Jesus we seek to display in our lives.

Instead, however, we can live in the balance where our freely-given and freely-received call to follow Jesus allow our discipline to be sweetened with joy rather than soured with drudgery. Because our debt to the law has already been paid, we can try, fail, and try again without needing to carry any burden of shame or embarrassment.

Each day we awaken to the clean slate and fresh perspective which allows us to align our head, heart and hands to God's purposes, all the while celebrating his great goodness. As we walk through this season of Lent together in 2023, we can be encouraged that we are never alone and that our creator has illustrated time and again a commitment to purposes which promise to result in our offering eternal praise when the completion of those purposes is finally revealed.

On the following page, you will find a list of opportunities where you might choose to serve others as a revelation of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in your life. These are not "must-dos" or "really-shoulds" but rather invitations to come alongside others in loving brothers and sisters nearby and far away.

Our prayer is God would be known more fully through all we have experienced by the time we reach Resurrection Sunday.



Head, Hands, and Heart Service Opportunities

(Managed by the FirstPres Missions Council & Deacons)

February -May 2023

- **February:**
 - Wednesday 15, 10 a.m. Hybrid: Mission Prayer
 - Sunday 26-March 19 Overnight Shelter at First Pres
(Set up and/or clean up) Opportunities will be each night and each morning during the three weeks FPCE is hosting the shelter.
 - Sunday 26: Help with and/or attend luncheon for Frontier Fellowship
 - Specific Saturdays: New Life Shelter Kids outing or time together in gym
- **March:**
 - Blood drive for the month via Vitalant on Main Street in Evanston.
 - Wednesday 15, 10 a.m. Mission Prayer in Room 213 and on Zoom.
 - Friday 17: Syrian Mother's Day Event: planning and/or set up/cleanup/participate.
 - Saturday 18- April 17: 30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World (during Ramadan)
- **April**
 - Collecting items for Snap Gap with possible collection drive(s).
Donate and/or collect items. More details to come.
 - Wednesday 19, 10 a.m. Mission Prayer in Room 213 and on Zoom.
 - Saturday 22 (Rebuilding Together)
Serve during the day or help organize ahead of time.
- **May**
 - Tuesday 9, early morning. Distribute items for Snap Gap at Farmers Market/Robert Crown center
 - Wednesday 17, 10 a.m. Hybrid: Mission Prayer
 - Thursday 18 - Sunday 21 Ethiopia Network Meeting.
Volunteers needed for set up/cleanup/serving meals & snacks;
Airport Rides to and from; Participate in the sessions (free to FPCE members); host missionaries or participants in your home.

Opportunities without dates yet (TBD):

- Training for First Friends volunteers
- One-on-one visits with Syrian families for coffee (with Caryl, Younan or Bridgette). These can be arranged to fit volunteer's schedule.
- Peace Feast: Training and participation with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship students and Muslim college students.
- New Life outings on one Saturday every month.

An updated version of this list will be available after February 22 online at:

<https://firstpresevanston.org/lent-2023/>

Holy Week at First Pres 2023

Palm Sunday - April 2
9:30 a.m. Worship Service*

Maundy Thursday - April 6
7 p.m. Worship Service[§]

Good Friday- April 7
7 p.m. Worship Service*

Resurrection Sunday - April 9
9:30 a.m. Worship Service*

*(Locations: *Sanctuary; [§]Walker Chapel.)*



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN EVANSTON

First Presbyterian Church of Evanston
1427 Chicago Avenue, Evanston, Illinois 60201
847-864-1472
www.firstpresevanston.org