

Follow the Light

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

WEEK 1: EPIPHANY

1. What stood out to you from the message this past Sunday? Was there anything that seemed timely or relevant to you? Was there anything which made you uncomfortable, or with which you disagreed?
2. This week we are celebrating Epiphany. Share about a time when you had an epiphany, an eye-opening moment, or an awakening of some kind. What provoked it? How did it change you?
3. Read Mark 1:1-15. In what ways does this passage describe an epiphany? Who is having the epiphany and what does it mean? As you look ahead to this new year, what are some ways you could nurture a deeper experience of God's love for you?
4. Read Mark 15:25-39. How does the experience of Jesus in the first passage compare to his experience in this one? Who is having the epiphany in this passage? What pain are you experiencing in your own life at the moment? How are you handling that pain?
5. Now read Acts 9:1-9. Who is having any epiphany here? In what ways is it similar to and different from the epiphany in Mark 1? Have there been or are there any current circumstances that metaphorically keep knocking you to the ground? How might this story change the way you view and respond to these circumstances?
6. How do you relate to Peter in the story in John 21:1-19? What is his epiphany? Are there any ways in which a sense of failure or self-doubt has been holding you back? How might this story be an epiphany to you?
7. Break into smaller groups of 2 or 3 (or stay together as a larger group if that feels appropriate) and each share about a way you feel challenged to grow spiritually this year. Then spend some time praying for one another.

Prayer practice for this week: The Examen

Sometimes we seem to notice God's presence and sometimes we do not. Even in our noticing it can be fleeting and we quickly move on without really becoming more aware. This simple Ignatian prayer practice can help us take more notice and begin to grow in awareness. It's a way of practicing epiphany.

Sit comfortably in silence with your back straight, feet planted on the floor, arms relaxed and hands supported in your lap. Close your eyes and relax your shoulders. To begin, listen to your breath as you breathe. Feel your breath in your nostrils, chest and abdomen, inhaling and then exhaling fully and deeply—hold your exhale a bit longer than usual to completely expel air and release any tension you feel. Continue with normal rhythmic breathing, allowing tension to flow away from your body, and your spirit to be at peace.

Consciously think back over the previous day. Trace the story of your life during this period of time and observe what happened. As you do this lovingly ask yourself the following 2 questions. Don't judge yourself; just be honest:

At what times did you experience God's presence?

- What happened?
- How was God present?
- Were you aware of God being present at the time or is it only now as you look back that you realize it?
- How did you respond?
- What was the outcome?

At what times during your story were you resistant to God's presence?

- What happened?
- How did you resist?
- Were you aware of resisting is it only now as you look back that you realize it?
- What were your feelings or beliefs about the situation and any person(s) involved, including yourself and God?
- What was the outcome?
- How could you have thought, acted or believed in a way that would have embraced the reality of God's presence, and channeled more love into the situation?

When you have finished reflecting on your day, continue to focus on your breathing for a few moments and invite God into the story that lies ahead of you. Ask God to help you be more embracing of God's presence tomorrow.