



Discussion Guide

Date: 5/10/2026

Sermon Title: What makes a disciple?

Scripture: Luke 1:46-55

This discussion guide is a layout to be used with a group or class. We have included opening and closing prayers to start and end your group. The guide may be used for personal or family reflection as well.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious and loving God, we come before you as we are; bringing our stories, our questions, our doubts, and our hopes. Thank you for the witness of Mary, whose faith reminds us that you call ordinary people for extraordinary purposes. Open our hearts and minds to your Word today. Help us to hear your voice, to trust your grace, and to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. Shape us not toward perfection, but toward faithful progress, guided by your love. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

OPENING QUESTIONS: (Choose one to start with)

1. When you hear the word disciple, what comes to mind?
2. Do you tend to think of discipleship as something you are or something you are becoming? Why?

DIGGING INTO THE SCRIPTURE:

Read Luke 1:46-55 (NRSV). Additional translations may be helpful for you and your group.

Observation Questions (Digging into the Text):

1. What words or phrases stand out to you in Mary's song? Why?
2. How does Mary describe God's character in this passage?
3. What does this text reveal about what God values (e.g., humility, justice, mercy)?
4. Where do you see evidence of Mary's faith and trust in God?
5. Mary speaks as if God's promises are already fulfilled. What does that tell us about her faith?

Interpretation Questions (Understanding the Meaning):

6. Mary was young, likely afraid, and living in uncertainty. What makes her response one of deep discipleship?
7. In what ways does Mary model what it means to follow God before fully understanding the outcome?
8. How does this passage challenge common assumptions about who is "qualified" to be a disciple?
9. What does Mary's song reveal about God's concern for the lowly, the hungry, and the overlooked?
10. How does this connect with Jesus' later teachings (e.g., Luke 6:20-23, the Beatitudes)?

Application Questions (Living It Out):

11. If nothing disqualifies us from being a disciple, what sometimes feels like it disqualifies you?
12. Where in your life is God inviting you to say “yes” like Mary?
13. What would it look like for you to embrace progress, not perfection in your faith journey this week?
14. How can we grow in trusting God’s promises even when we don’t see the full picture?
15. In what ways can our group or church embody the kind of upside-down kingdom Mary describes?

Supporting Scripture Discussion:

- John 2:1-12; John 19:26-27; Acts 1:14 - Scriptures that show Mary’s progress of faith
- Ephesians 2:8–10 – Saved by grace, created for good works
- Philippians 1:6 – God continues the work in us
- 1 Timothy 1:15–16 – Paul as an example that no one is beyond grace
- Luke 8:21 – “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”

Methodist Theology Perspective:

Grace is for all: John Wesley emphasized prevenient grace. Which is God’s grace already at work in every person before we respond. Mary’s story reminds us that God calls and equips ordinary people. Discipleship is a journey: Wesley taught that faith is a process of sanctification. Growing in love of God and neighbor over time, not achieving instant perfection. At times you may hear “Go on to perfection” (Wesley). This does not mean flawlessness but rather being perfected in love. Mary’s song reflects a heart aligned with God’s love and justice.

SERMON QUESTIONS:

1. How does the phrase 'pregnant with possibilities' in uncertain situations challenge you to reframe how you view difficult circumstances in your own life?
2. What does it mean to make yourself available to God when you cannot see the outcome, and what might be holding you back from that kind of availability?
3. How can we cultivate the kind of faithfulness that Mary demonstrated, maintaining trust in God even when promises seem delayed or unclear?

REFLECTION:

1. What holds us back from being available to God? What fears or uncertainties get in the way?
2. Eugene Peterson describes faithfulness as "a long obedience in the same direction." What does this phrase mean to you? Where in your life are you practicing this kind of faithfulness right now?
3. Who in your life models this kind of long-term faithfulness? What can you learn from them?
4. Dr. Oliphint ends with the idea that disciples help the world see it is "pregnant with possibilities." How does Christ help us see possibilities where others see only problems?
5. What would it look like for you to abide more fully in God's love? Christian community? Trust, even in uncertainty?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Faithful God, thank you for the witness of Mary, who trusted you with her whole life. Remind us that we are not called to be perfect, but to be faithful. When we feel unworthy or unqualified, speak your grace over us again. Help us take the next step in our journey as disciples; to trust you more deeply, love more fully, and



serve more courageously. By your Spirit, continue shaping us into the people you have called us to be. We offer ourselves to you, just as Mary did, saying: "Let it be with me according to your word." In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

WAYS TO RESPOND:

Choose ONE of the following practices to focus on this week:

Reflect on this week and take one step as a disciple I will...

Practice Availability

- Spend 15 minutes each day this week in prayer asking God, "How can I be available to you today?"
- Journal about what God brings to mind.
- Take one concrete step to make yourself available.

Practice Faithful Pondering

- Choose one question or struggle you're wrestling with in your faith.
- Spend time each day "pondering" it through prayer, scripture reading, or journaling.
- Share your reflections with a trusted friend or mentor.

Practice Abiding in Community

- Reach out to someone in your church community who might be struggling.
- Commit to "abiding" with them—checking in regularly, praying for them, being present.
- Or identify where you need community support and reach out to ask for it.