

Leader's Guide for Session Three:

[Understanding My Faith Journey with Christ](#)

Main Theme: God's Love

Ask participants to read the pamphlet before meeting for study.

Materials Needed:

Pamphlet: [Understanding My Faith Journey with Christ](#) by Wesley S. K. Daniel
Bible
Newsprint or white board and markers
Photocopy the *Small Group Activity Handout: The Great Commandment* for the group.

Key Terms & Concepts

From Understanding My Faith Journey with Christ:

Reconciliation – the common meaning associated with this term is *change* or *exchange*. Salvation brings about a change in the relationship between God and a follower of Christ. Prior to reconciliation with God we are powerless and are at odds with God.

Forgiveness – in divine forgiveness, God restores the broken relationship that exists between God and humanity. God restores this relationship through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

New Creation/New Life – refers to the new nature that God places within believers when they receive Christ into their hearts. The term new, in relation to salvation, means different from usual, better than the old and superior in significance. Despite this new nature, followers of Christ do continue to wrestle with the old human nature with its ingrained habits, beliefs and attitudes.

Bible Readings:

The leader should prepare for the lesson by reading and reflecting on the following passages under each term.

Sacrificial Love

John 3:16–17

Romans 5:7–8

Forgiveness

Luke 23:26–43

Luke 17:4

New Life

2 Corinthians 5:17–18

John 1:12

Summary of Content:

The main theme of the pamphlet is God’s Love. Author Wesley S. K. Daniel explains that through our relationship with Jesus Christ we can grow as children of God.

Jesus demonstrated God’s great love for us by dying a sacrificial death on the cross.

God’s love is eternal and is extended to everyone. John 3:16–17 is the passage of scripture most often cited to describe God’s great love for the world.

We do not earn God’s love. It is God’s free gift to us. Ephesians 2:8–9 teaches that salvation comes through faith in God, not through good works.

When we accept God’s love and grow in relationship with God. We experience spiritual transformation, i.e. we become more merciful, kind, patient, etc. The author speaks of this transformation as God performing “heart surgery” on us.

Small Group Activities:**Spiritual Check-in**

Invite the group to discuss the results of trying any of the suggestions from last week’s *Session Two Small Group Activity Handout* on the Means of Grace.

Icebreaker

Invite participants to discuss one of the following conversation prompts with a partner:

1. Describe a *person* who loved you “no matter what.”
2. Recall a *time* when you forgave someone who hurt you deeply.
3. Talk about a *place* where you truly felt God’s love.

Discussion Starters

1. Read the Great Commandment aloud (Matthew 22:34–40). Discuss what it actually means to love God with all of your heart, soul and mind. Ask participants for concrete examples of loving God.
2. Ask the group who they think of when they hear the word *neighbor*. In a culture of houses with no front porches, how well are we able to get to know our neighbors?
3. What barriers stand between us and our neighbors? How can we overcome these barriers in order to love our neighbors as God commands?
4. Read the Ten Commandments aloud (Exodus 20:1–17). Are there any similarities between the Ten Commandments and the Great Commandment?
5. Discuss practical ways to show God’s love this week. List practical ways to reach out to neighbors with God’s love this week. Write responses on newsprint or on a white board. Invite participants to write down one or two of the responses that they will put into practice this week.

Closing Prayer (Read Together)

Dear Lord, your love for us is too great to imagine. We are in awe of the depth of your forgiveness and your strong desire to reconcile your relationship with us and with everyone in the world. We pause to praise you for caring for us so deeply. We pause to proclaim that your grace and mercy endure forever. Draw us now into this legacy of love. Teach us how to love ourselves. Teach us how to love our neighbors. Teach us how to introduce others to this love of God that transforms us into the image of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Next Steps

Throughout each day this week pray a *breath prayer* based on the Great Commandment. A breath prayer is a short prayer repeated frequently, such as, “Give us peace” or “Lord, have mercy.” Early Christians repeated breath prayers endlessly to develop the habit of praying without distraction.

Sample breath prayers could be, “Love God; love neighbor.” “Show me my neighbor.” “Help me love my neighbor.”

Practice one or two of the suggestions for loving God and loving neighbor that you wrote on your handout.

Suggested Resources

[Room for Repentance](#) by Marjory Zoet Bankson

[Book reviews](#): *Forgiveness, the Passionate Journey: Nine Steps of Forgiving through Jesus' Beatitudes* by Flora Slosson Wuellner and *Companions in Christ: The Way of Forgiveness* by Marjorie J. Thompson.

[Niceness or Genuine Forgiveness?](#) By Sarah Arthur

Ask Julian Question: [Can God forgive every sin no matter how bad...?](#)

[Justice in Forgiveness](#) by Myron S. Augsburger

["By Grace through Faith" in *United Methodist Member's Handbook*](#) revised by George Koehler (Discipleship Resources, 2006), pp. 78–79.

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Session Three Small Group Activity Handout

The Great Commandment

Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest? He said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.
Matthew 22:36–40 NRSV

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