



## Love Boldly, Serve Joyfully, Lead Courageously – Miracle Sunday Worship and Small Group Series

### Resources and Scriptures for the Six-Week

This six-week worship and small-group series invites congregations around the world to journey together through the heart of Christian discipleship. At its center is a simple but transformative truth: disciples of Jesus Christ are shaped, empowered, and sent by God to bless the world. Each week explores a core dimension of discipleship—being formed by Christ, empowered by the Spirit, loving boldly, serving joyfully, leading courageously, and ultimately joining God in transforming the world.

This series supports the **Miracle Sunday Campaign**, a global effort to strengthen theological education in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines. By equipping pastors, teachers, and lay leaders, the Church invests in leaders who will guide communities with wisdom, compassion, and courage.

To support this journey, we have provided a set of rich resources for each week:

- A thematic introduction for worship
- Scripture summaries for preaching and teaching
- Meditations and prayers from Global Leaders
- Sermon preparation points
- A small-group leader's guide with discussion questions
- A video testimony of a graduate from a theological school

Together, these resources help churches of every size and culture grow spiritually, deepen their witness, and join in God's mission with bold love, joyful service, and courageous leadership.

# **WEEK 1 Disciples Formed by Jesus Christ**

## **Introduction**

Following Jesus begins with formation. Christ does not simply call people to believe; he shapes their entire way of life. In every culture and community, disciples are formed through Scripture, worship, fellowship, prayer, and the daily practice of following God's ways. In United Methodism we call this the "Means of Grace," or spiritual disciplines. Our understanding is that as we regularly practice these, we experience God's grace.

This first week invites us to reflect on what it means to be shaped by Christ in mind, heart, and action. Becoming a disciple is not instant; it is a lifelong journey of learning to walk in God's path, to grow in spiritual maturity, and to join Jesus in his mission. As the Miracle Sunday Campaign strengthens theological education across Africa, Europe, and the Philippines, we remember that Christ continues forming leaders everywhere for the sake of the Church and the world.

## **Scripture Passages**

### **Psalm 119:1–8**

Psalm 119 opens with a blessing: flourishing belongs to those who walk in God's ways. In many communities, "walking" suggests steady movement in a chosen direction. The psalmist describes discipleship as aligning one's steps with God's commandments, not as a burden, but as a source of joy and integrity. These verses emphasize wholeheartedness: a life not divided between God and competing loyalties. The psalmist desires to "keep your statutes," yet also confesses the need for God's help, revealing that discipleship depends on grace. The prayer "do not forsake me" expresses trust that God accompanies those who seek to live faithfully. For congregations in every cultural context, this passage reminds us that formation begins with hunger for God's teaching and humility before God's guidance. Theological education helps deepen this walk, enabling new leaders to interpret Scripture faithfully and serve their communities with wisdom.

### **Ephesians 4:11–16**

Paul portrays the Church as a living body, with Christ as the head who shapes the whole. The diverse gifts, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, are given so the Church may grow into maturity. Maturity here means stability, unity, and the ability to discern truth amid many competing voices. Formation is not an individual project; it is a shared calling. The body builds itself up in love when every member participates. For global congregations, this passage affirms that discipleship strengthens the entire community: pastors are formed to teach faithfully, laypeople are equipped to serve, and new leaders rise to guide ministries in local contexts. The Miracle Sunday Campaign supports this growth by ensuring communities have the trained leaders needed to foster unity, wisdom, and maturity. Christ forms us so that we, in turn, may form one another.

### **Luke 5:1–11**

Jesus' call of the first disciples shows formation beginning in ordinary life. Peter, James, and John encounter Jesus while working—tired, uncertain, and not expecting transformation. Jesus steps into their boat, teaches, and then invites them into deeper water. The miraculous catch reveals Jesus' authority and awakens Peter's humility: "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." Yet Jesus responds not with judgment but with a calling: "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." Formation begins with grace and leads to mission. The disciples leave everything familiar to follow Jesus. For congregations across continents, this story reassures us that Jesus meets people in their daily lives and shapes them for God's purposes. The formation of new leaders—pastors, evangelists, teachers—continues this same pattern. Christ calls, equips, and sends disciples into the world.

## **Meditation and Prayer by Global Leaders**

### **Ephesians 4:11–16**

**Bible Text:** Ephesians 4:11–16

#### **Meditation / Scripture Reflection:**

I grew up in Switzerland, where friends and I debated self-determination versus external control. Some assumed that a practicing Christian lives under external control. That tension did not ring true. I met Christian leaders whose joyful and liberating faith reflected the essence of Christ. I chose to follow Christ, not because of pressure, but because of the power of the love of God in Christ. I chose to profess membership in a small United Methodist community because that community helped me discover Christ. Others helped me recognize gifts from God, and I sensed a quiet call to ministry. “As each part works properly, the body grows, building itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:16). This remains my prayer for the Church.

#### **Prayer:**

Lord Jesus Christ, you love us and call us to be members of your body on earth. Through the Holy Spirit, transform our lives from the inside out so that we may build community and help transform society. Strengthen each of us to share boldly the gifts you give for the joy and courage of ministry in this world. Amen.

**Contributor:** Bishop Patrick Streiff    **Location:** Switzerland

### **Bible Text: Psalm 119:1–8 — A prayer of blessing for those who walk in the ways of God**

#### **Meditation / Scripture Reflection:**

On a recent train trip to Copenhagen, I almost set off in the wrong direction from the station. A friend corrected my course and saved a long walk with a heavy suitcase. I desire to walk in the ways of God for the sake of people and the earth, yet I often need help to discern the way. Praying Psalm 119, I choose to use ears, eyes, and mind to study the statutes of God, and I ask for guidance to use mouth, feet, and hands to practice what I learn. Formation improves spiritual direction. It works best in community, where siblings offer insight, inspiration, and correction. I give thanks for theological schools and seminaries that form Christ-centered disciples for mission wherever United Methodists serve.

### **Ephesians 4:11–16 — The body of Christ growing into maturity, shaped by Christ the head**

My doctor tells me that the physical body shrinks with age. Scripture tells me I am not too old to help the body of Christ grow. We build up the Church together. Some share the gospel in familiar and new places. Some speak prophetically for compassion and justice. Some comfort those who mourn, others teach what discipleship means, and many serve through prayer. None can do all that is needed. Everyone can do a part. Equipped with different gifts, we learn with and from one another in homes, cafés, hospitals, classrooms, and sanctuaries. It is not always easy, yet Christ is the head. We are bound together in love, locally, regionally, and globally. Together we grow toward maturity, no matter our age.

### **Luke 5:1–11 — Jesus calls the first disciples, forming lives for mission**

Peter and companions return from a night of empty nets. Jesus borrows their boat to teach, then calls them to try again. Abundance follows: nets strain and boats nearly sink. Peter, overwhelmed, asks Jesus to depart. Jesus stays and calls them into lifelong mission. As we approach Miracle Sunday, a large offering for theological education would be wonderful, yet Jesus seeks more than gifts. He seeks us. He calls us to follow and to serve. Are we ready to leave fear, fatigue, stubbornness, or faintheartedness, and go where Christ leads?

## Prayer:

Holy God, you are life, love, and hope. We praise you and seek you with our whole heart. Speak to us and lead us on your way. Christ Jesus, our brother and savior, you proclaimed good news to the poor and set the oppressed free. You called Simon Peter, James, and John, and taught that discipleship is costly. Through death you brought new life, and you walked the road of hope with many witnesses. We hear your call. Form us in your image. Teach us to be your Church. Equip us to serve the world that God loves. Give resilience for many second miles. Above all, remind us that in you we have hope. God, through the Holy Spirit, renew us by resurrection power. Ignite us to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously wherever we are. Amen.

**Contributor:** Bishop Rosemarie Wenner      **Location:** Germany

## Sermon Preparation

- Formation begins with a posture of **seeking God’s ways** rather than relying on our own wisdom (Psalm 119).
- Discipleship requires both **grace and intentionality**; the psalmist desires to follow God yet asks for help.
- The Church matures when **every member contributes** their gifts under Christ’s leadership (Ephesians 4).
- True Christian maturity is measured by **unity, stability, and truthfulness**, not age or achievements.
- Jesus forms disciples in the **ordinary rhythms of daily life**, not only in sacred spaces (Luke 5).
- The call “**Do not be afraid**” shifts disciples from hesitation to mission.
- Formation leads to **mission**, not comfort, disciples leave old patterns to follow Christ.
- The Miracle Sunday campaign reflects this same formation process: Christ calls, forms, and sends leaders globally.

## Small Group Leader’s Overview

This week emphasizes that discipleship begins with formation: learning to walk in God’s ways, growing into maturity, and responding to Christ’s call. Formation is always both personal and communal.

### Discussion Questions

1. Psalm 119 speaks of walking in God’s ways. What practices help you stay aligned with God’s path?
2. Where do you feel most in need of God’s help to live wholeheartedly?
3. Ephesians 4 describes diverse gifts shaping one body. What gifts do you see in your community that strengthen the Church?
4. What does “maturity in Christ” look like in your cultural or congregational context?
5. In Luke 5, Jesus meets the disciples during ordinary work. Where does Jesus meet people in your community?
6. How does Jesus’ invitation “Do not be afraid” shape your understanding of calling?
7. Why is theological formation important for future leaders in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines?
8. What step is Christ inviting you or your congregation to take as you grow in discipleship?

## Video Testimony

**Today we hear Gabriella’s testimony**—a student at United Seminary in Harare who discovered joy, meaning, and purpose when life felt like it was falling apart. Her education was made possible through the generosity of United Methodists around the world. (Play video:

<https://vimeo.com/1139802748/c075d83177>)

Following the video: God is doing a powerful work through us. In the coming weeks, we will share how we can help raise up many more students like Gabriella to serve communities in some of the most challenging places. Let us continue to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously.

# WEEK 2 - Disciples Empowered by the Holy Spirit

## Introduction

Discipleship is not sustained by human strength alone. God’s Spirit fills, renews, and empowers believers to live with courage, joy, and faithfulness. Across cultures and contexts, Christians experience the Spirit in worship, prayer, community, and mission. This week we remember that the same Spirit who empowered the early Church continues to empower disciples today. The Spirit roots us in Christ, gives us fullness of life, and sends us out to bless the world. As we lift up theological education in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines, we affirm that Spirit-formed leaders are essential for vibrant churches. Through the Spirit, ordinary people receive extraordinary grace to witness, serve, and lead.

## Scriptural Texts

### Psalm 16

Psalm 16 is a song of trust and joy. The psalmist declares that security is found not in earthly power or possessions but in God alone. “You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you” expresses deep dependence on God’s presence. The line “in your presence there is fullness of joy” reveals that God’s companionship brings both peace and delight. This joy is not limited to one culture or place—it is the inheritance of all who belong to God. The psalmist also speaks of God as counselor and protector, guiding believers even in the night seasons. For global congregations, Psalm 16 reminds us that the Holy Spirit is the source of comfort, strength, and direction. Theological education helps future leaders discern God’s guidance and cultivate spiritual resilience. The Spirit empowers disciples to rejoice, trust, and serve with confident hope.

### Colossians 2:6–10

Paul encourages believers to continue living in Christ—rooted, built up, and established in faith. These images speak of stability and growth. Roots draw nourishment; buildings gain strength through solid foundations. In many cultures, these metaphors connect deeply with everyday life, reminding Christians that spiritual depth develops over time. Paul warns against teachings that distract from the fullness found in Christ. In Him “the whole fullness of deity dwells,” and believers are “filled” in Him. The Holy Spirit makes this fullness real, enabling disciples to grow in wisdom, discernment, and gratitude. For congregations worldwide, this passage emphasizes the importance of grounding faith in sound teaching. When communities invest in theological education, they help ensure that disciples remain rooted in Christ and equipped to resist pressures that distort the gospel. Empowered by the Spirit, the Church grows into mature faithfulness.

### John 10:10

Jesus contrasts the destructive intentions of a thief with His own mission: to bring life—abundant, overflowing, life-giving. Abundant life is not limited to material prosperity; it includes spiritual vitality, restored relationships, and meaningful purpose. Across cultures, people seek life that is whole and free, and Jesus promises exactly this. The abundance He offers flows from His identity as the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep and lays down His life for them. The Holy Spirit continues this work by guiding, comforting, and empowering believers. For global congregations, John 10:10 invites us to recognize that abundant life is both a gift and a calling. Communities empowered by the Spirit become channels of Christ’s life for others: feeding the hungry, comforting the grieving, advocating for justice, and proclaiming hope. Leaders formed through theological education help churches embody this abundant life in their contexts.

## **Meditation and Prayer from Global Leaders**

### **Colossians 2:6–10 — Rooted, Built Up, and Filled with the Fullness of God**

**Bible Text:** Colossians 2:6–10

#### **Meditation / Scripture Reflection:**

“How is your soul today?” John Wesley’s well-known question invites honest reflection. Paul writes to Colossae with courage, yet he writes from prison because of public witness to the lordship of Jesus Christ. How does Paul remain peaceful and courageous? He urges believers to sink roots into Christ and build life upon Him. Then faith grows strong and overflows with thankfulness.

In a world that challenges faithfulness, being rooted in Christ becomes the foundation of our whole being as servants and followers. Deep connection with Christ shapes obedience and extends reach. What we receive from Christ we share for the good of the world. Paul rejects empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that lead away from Christ.

We may face personal “prisons” that limit capacity. Let us kneel before God with humble commitment and serve God’s people. May our lives, churches, and communities reflect the power, love, and call of Christ. The world needs Christ, and servants who are rooted, built up, and fruitful will carry His word. Let us continue to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously for the glory of God.

#### **Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, we come with humble hearts. Strengthen the roots of our salvation. Fill us with your strength and power. Give depth for ministry on a strong foundation. Create hunger and thirst for your gifts and anointing. Bless us so that we become channels of blessing for others. We claim victory in your name over challenges that hinder service. Bless our households, our schools, our workplaces, and our churches with your love and power. In the mighty name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

**Contributor:** The Rev. Joseph Y. Reyes

**Location:** Zambales, Philippines

### **John 10:10 — Disciples Empowered by the Holy Spirit**

**Bible Text:** John 10:10

#### **Meditation / Scripture Reflection:**

In 1992 the All Africa Conference of Churches gathered in Harare under the theme “Abundant Life in Jesus Christ,” based on John 10:10. The question for many Africans was and remains pressing: have we experienced abundance of life or abundance of problems? The answer is hope. The declaration of Jesus is a realized promise. Jesus speaks to us within the realities of poverty, displacement, disease, and more.

Pastors formed through funds raised on Miracle Sunday cannot relegate this declaration to the periphery. People long for abundant life given now in Christ. Jesus dismantles hindrances that keep people from grasping this abundance. The essence of Miracle Sunday is raising support for theological education in designated regions. Where does the miracle lie? It lies in how each one responds to the nudges of the Holy Spirit to give abundantly. Servants of God who benefit from this offering will proclaim the gospel that brings peace of mind and hope as the core of abundant life. As we imagine new ways of being Church, may this Spirit-driven Miracle Sunday remind us to practice generous, sustained giving.

#### **Prayer:**

Gracious God, you have already given abundantly through Jesus Christ. Allow us to partner with you in mercy by giving wholeheartedly for the good of your ministry. Amen.

**Contributor:** Bishop Eben K. Nhiwatiwa

**Location:** Zimbabwe

## **John 10:10 — Abundant Life Received and Shared for the Sake of the World**

**Bible Text:** John 10:10

### **Meditation / Scripture Reflection:**

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” Jesus desires more than survival. He offers a life of meaning, purpose, joy, and spiritual fullness. Abundance is not measured by possessions or status. It is rooted in relationship with Christ, the Good Shepherd who guides, protects, and nourishes. This grace is a gift. Many seek fulfillment in achievement or pleasure and still feel empty. Jesus offers peace, hope, and identity that circumstances cannot shake. Abundant life transforms how we think, act, and relate.

This abundance is not for ourselves alone. We share it for the sake of the world. When we encounter the love of Christ, it flows outward in compassion, justice, and kindness. Sharing abundant life takes many forms: encouragement, forgiveness, practical help, and everyday acts of light. This calling carries responsibility. We use talents, time, and resources for the common good. In workplaces, families, and communities, we reflect the character of Christ and participate in God’s mission of healing and hope. Abundant life is both blessing and mission, a journey of growing in faith and extending love to others. Remaining connected to Christ, we live fully and help others experience the fullness He promises.

### **Prayer:**

Loving and gracious Lord, you came so that we may have abundant life. Teach us that abundance lies in your presence. Guard us from distractions that do not satisfy. Open our hearts to receive your grace and to share it generously through kindness, compassion, and service. Give courage to live fully in your light, and strength to witness even in trial. May our lives testify to your goodness, so that others experience the fullness you promise. We pray with gratitude, trusting your sustaining love. Amen.

**Contributor:** Venelyn D. Pascua

**Location:** Philippines

## **Sermon Preparation**

- The Holy Spirit is the **source of joy**, strength, and direction (Psalm 16).
- Joy in God’s presence sustains disciples during seasons of uncertainty.
- Being “rooted and built up” in Christ means **deep discipleship**, not surface-level faith (Colossians 2).
- The Spirit protects the Church from **false teaching and cultural pressures** that distort the gospel.
- Abundant life is **spiritual fullness**, meaningful purpose, and renewed community—not material excess (John 10:10).
- The Spirit empowers disciples to share life with the world, especially the marginalized.
- Empowered disciples become **givers of joy, truth, and compassion** within their communities.
- Supporting theological education is a way of strengthening Spirit-empowered leadership globally.

## **Small Group Leader’s Overview**

This week highlights the Spirit as the source of joy, wisdom, power, and discernment. Disciples are not only formed—they are empowered to live with courage and purpose.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Psalm 16 describes joy in God’s presence. What brings “fullness of joy” in your experience of faith?

2. Where does your community seek God's guidance during times of uncertainty?
3. Colossians 2 uses images of roots and foundations. What helps believers stay rooted in Christ?
4. What challenges in your context threaten to distract the Church from its foundation in Christ?
5. Jesus promises abundant life in John 10:10. How is abundant life understood in your culture?
6. How can your congregation help others experience Christ's abundant life?
7. How does the Holy Spirit empower disciples facing hardship or limited resources?
8. How might Spirit-empowered leadership strengthen theological education globally?

Today we will hear another powerful testimony from a leader whose ministry is transforming lives through evangelism in extraordinary circumstances. As you listen to Princes Knuckles Jalia, Liberia. I invite you to pray:

**Lord, how are you calling me to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously this week?**

(Play video: <https://vimeo.com/1153409450>)

Let us continue walking this journey together with open minds, expectant faith and generous hearts.

## **WEEK 3 — Love Boldly**

### **Introduction**

Bold love is active, courageous, and visible. It goes beyond sentiment to shape the way we treat neighbors, strangers, and even those who differ from us. Jesus teaches that love is the defining mark of discipleship, and Scripture shows that love expresses itself through justice, compassion, and faithful relationships. As congregations support the Miracle Sunday Campaign, we celebrate the bold love that expands access to theological education and strengthens ministry across continents. Bold love calls us to see Christ in others, to break down barriers, and to live in ways that make God's compassion unmistakable. This week's Scriptures guide us into a love that is rooted in God's character and lived out with courage.

### **Leviticus 19:9–18**

This passage reveals love expressed through practical justice. God instructs the people of Israel to leave part of their harvest for the poor and the immigrant, affirming that true holiness cares for the vulnerable. Commands against stealing, lying, exploitation, and oppression show that love shapes economic and social relationships. The instruction “do not stand idly by when your neighbor's life is at stake” emphasizes active responsibility. The passage culminates in the command “love your neighbor as yourself,” later echoed by Jesus. This vision applies across cultures: love is not abstract but concrete, embodied in fair dealings, generosity, and compassion. For congregations worldwide, Leviticus 19 offers a foundation for ministries that address poverty, injustice, and exclusion. Theological education equips leaders to interpret these principles faithfully and guide communities in living out God's compassionate justice.

### **John 13:34–35**

Jesus gives His disciples a “new commandment”: to love one another as He has loved them. His love is bold, sacrificial, humble, and steadfast. By washing the disciples' feet, forgiving their failures, and laying down His life, Jesus shows that love is the true measure of leadership. He also says that this love will be the primary way the world recognizes His followers. In diverse cultural contexts, the witness of love remains powerful. It breaks down divisions, builds unity, and reflects Christ's character. Loving boldly requires forgiveness, patience, and courage, especially in times of conflict or uncertainty. The Miracle Sunday Campaign calls the global church to embody this bold love by supporting theological education and strengthening Christian communities. Through trained leaders, churches model Christ-like love in schools, homes, marketplaces, and neighborhoods.

### **Mark 12:28–34**

When a scribe asks Jesus to identify the greatest commandment, Jesus unites love of God and love of neighbor. Love for God involves the whole person—heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love for neighbor reflects God's love in action. Jesus affirms that these two commandments summarize all of God's instruction. In many cultures, these verses provide a foundation for Christian ethics and community life. Jesus praises the scribe for understanding that love matters more than sacrifices alone. This challenges every generation to evaluate religious practice: Does it deepen our love for God? Does it strengthen our love for people? Theological education helps leaders and congregations discern how to apply this teaching in complex situations—poverty, conflict, cultural diversity, and social change. Loving boldly means allowing these commandments to shape every aspect of life.

## **Meditation and Prayers by Golbal Leaders**

### **John 13:34–35 — Love Boldly: Loving as Christ Has Loved**

**Bible Text:** John 13:34–35

#### **Meditation / Scripture Reflection:**

People of the United Methodist Church around the world, loving boldly as Christ has loved means putting others first. Jesus gives a new commandment: love one another as He has loved us. This love is pronounced, sacrificial, and unconditional. It does not depend on what others do for us but on what we have received from Christ. When we love in this way, we show the world what it means to follow Jesus.

Loving boldly with heart, strength, and mind means serving with gentleness, kindness, and humility. It means forgiving and doing good when it is hard. Love is not only a feeling; it is a daily choice to fulfill our Christian calling. Loving as Christ loved builds a community that reflects the Kingdom of God and reveals the heart of God to the world.

What does loving boldly look like in practice? It is loving family when love feels hard. It is serving those who cannot repay. It is choosing kindness, hospitality, and doing good over being right. Let us ask whether we are loving as Christ loves, putting others first, serving with compassion and humility, and showing the heart of God to those around us.

#### **Prayer:**

As we observe Miracle Sunday, may the Holy Spirit fill our hearts with the joy and unconditional love of Christ, so that we give joyfully, willingly, freely, and sacrificially. Amen.

**Contributor:** The Rev. (Dr) Amb. Philip Micah Dopah, FIMA

**Location:** Nigeria

### **Mark 12:28–34 — The Heartbeat of Faithful Living**

**Bible Text:** Mark 12:28–34

#### **Meditation / Scripture Reflection:**

A scribe asks Jesus for the first commandment. Jesus distills all Scripture into a single center: love for God with heart, soul, mind, and strength, and inseparable love for neighbor. The Shema defines the covenant relationship; love is total commitment, not a fleeting emotion. Jesus binds this love to Leviticus 19:18: love your neighbor as yourself. The vertical relationship with God becomes visible in horizontal relationships.

The scribe understands that this love matters more than sacrifices. Jesus tells him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” Miracle Sunday invites offerings for theological education. The Church cannot love what it does not know, and it cannot serve what it does not understand. To love God with the mind means taking the formation of leaders seriously. Theological education is a labor of love for God and neighbor. In South Africa, loving neighbor means seeing the image of God in every person and choosing solidarity, not only charity. It means asking what love requires in the face of unemployment, gender-based violence, xenophobia, and ecological harm.

#### **Prayer:**

Dear God, this passage is not a gentle suggestion but the core of our discipleship. Open our eyes to see the face of Christ in every person. Where there is inequality or exclusion, let our love dismantle injustice. Where there is hurt or division, let our love bring healing and reconciliation. Help us to love in deed and in truth. Unite us in this sacred calling. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who loved us completely and teaches us the way. Amen.

**Contributor:** Rev. Tracy Mballo-Tshungwana

**Location:** South Africa

## Sermon Preparation

- Bold love is **active love**—practical, just, compassionate (Leviticus 19).
- Loving neighbors includes **economic justice**, fair treatment, and protecting the vulnerable.
- Jesus' command to "love as I have loved you" invites **sacrificial, visible love** (John 13).
- Christians are known not by doctrine alone but by **how deeply they love** one another.
- Love of God and neighbor is the **central orientation** of discipleship (Mark 12).
- Bold love crosses boundaries of culture, tribe, ethnicity, and status.
- Bold love often requires **courage in difficult relationships** and systems.
- Investing in theological education is an act of bold love for future generations.

## Small Group Leader's Overview

This week calls the Church to a love that is active, courageous, and visible. Love is expressed through justice, compassion, and relationships that reflect Christ.

### Discussion Questions

1. Leviticus 19 connects love with justice. What acts of justice express love in your community?
2. What does "not standing idly by" look like in your context?
3. Jesus commands us to love as He loved. Where do you see bold, Christ-like love happening around you?
4. What makes bold love difficult, and how can the community support each other in practicing it?
5. In Mark 12, Jesus joins love of God and neighbor. How do you see these two connected in daily life?
6. How can love guide your church's response to community needs?
7. Where might God be calling your congregation to love more boldly?
8. How does supporting theological education express bold love across continents?

## Video Testimony

Today we hear another testimony from Rares (pronounced Rare – sh) from Romania whose ministry is shaping also lives of refugees who have fled war torn Ukraine refugees.

(Play video: <https://vimeo.com/1153774198>)

After video –

As we continue this journey, I encourage you to:

- Stay engaged in your small group
- Pray for pastors and students around the world
- Ask God how our congregation can be part of raising up the next generation of leaders

Together, we are learning what how we can make a difference around the world through our giving.

# **WEEK 4 — Serve Joyfully**

## **Introduction**

Christian service is not a burden but a joyful offering to God. In every culture, joyful service reflects gratitude for God’s grace and a desire to bless others. This week’s Scriptures show that joy and service belong together: we serve not to earn God’s love but because we already receive it. Joyful service strengthens communities, honors God, and becomes a powerful witness in the world. As congregations support the Miracle Sunday Campaign, we celebrate the joy that arises when believers use their gifts to teach, lead, encourage, and heal. Joyful service is a gift of the Spirit—shaped by humility, generosity, and love.

## **Psalm 100**

Psalm 100 calls all people to worship and serve the Lord with gladness. The psalmist reminds the community of its identity: “It is God who made us, and we are His.” Because we belong to God, service becomes an expression of gratitude. The imagery of entering God’s gates with thanksgiving conveys a spirit of openness, joy, and reverence. Across cultures, churches use this psalm in worship because it captures the universal call to joyful praise. Service rooted in joy changes how we work, relate, and give. Whether offering hospitality, teaching children, or helping neighbors in need, joyful service witnesses to God’s goodness. Theological education helps leaders nurture a spirit of joy in their ministries, guiding congregations to serve with gladness and confidence in God’s steadfast love.

## **1 Peter 4:8–11**

Peter urges believers to love deeply, practice hospitality, and use their God-given gifts to serve others. He emphasizes that every gift—whether speaking, teaching, helping, or encouraging—comes from God and should be offered for God’s glory. Serving joyfully means recognizing the value of every contribution, whether public or unseen. Peter also highlights the importance of mutual care within the Christian community. In many parts of the world, churches thrive when each member uses their gifts to strengthen the whole. This passage encourages congregations to view service not as obligation but as privilege. Theological education helps equip leaders to identify gifts within the community, empower laypeople, and nurture ministries that serve with joy and humility.

## **Mark 10:42–45**

Jesus redefines greatness by pointing to servanthood. In a world where power often means control or prestige, Jesus teaches that true leadership is marked by humility and service. He declares that He came “not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” This model challenges cultural norms everywhere. Serving joyfully often requires letting go of status and placing others’ needs first. For congregations, this passage invites reflection on how leaders—pastors, teachers, volunteers—can embody Christ’s humility. Theological education shapes leaders who serve with wisdom, compassion, and courage, following Jesus’ example in every context.

## **Sermon Preparation**

- Joyful service flows from **belonging to God** and knowing God’s goodness (Psalm 100).
- Joy is a spiritual testimony; it shows that serving God is a **privilege, not a burden**.
- Every believer has **Spirit-given gifts** meant to bless others (1 Peter 4).
- Service becomes powerful when offered “with the strength God supplies,” not self-reliance.
- Jesus redefines greatness as **servanthood**, not authority or recognition (Mark 10).
- Joyful service dismantles pride and builds bridges across cultural and social lines.
- Serving joyfully strengthens congregations and communities, especially in hardship.
- The Church’s witness grows when leaders and members serve with **gladness and humility**.

## Small Group Leader's Overview

Joyful service grows from gratitude for God's grace. Scripture teaches that when believers serve with gladness, the community is strengthened, God is honored, and the world sees a living witness to Christ's love. Psalm 100 calls us to serve the Lord with gladness. First Peter invites us to use our gifts for the good of others. Jesus in Mark 10 shows that true greatness comes through humility and service. As congregations participate in the Miracle Sunday Campaign, joyful service becomes a shared testimony of God's faithfulness and a reflection of the Spirit at work among us.

## Discussion Questions

1. Psalm 100 calls us to "serve the Lord with gladness." What practices help you serve God with joy rather than duty? Consider daily habits, worship, gratitude, or fellowship that lift your spirit as you serve.
2. The psalmist reminds the community, "It is God who made us, and we are His." How does belonging to God shape the way you serve others? How does your identity in Christ influence your motivation and attitude?
3. Across cultures, congregations express joyful service in many ways. How does your congregation show gladness through hospitality, teaching, music, or care for neighbors? Share examples of joyful ministry from your community.
4. In 1 Peter 4:8–11, every believer receives gifts to serve. What gifts do you see in yourself, and what gifts do you see in others in your group? How might those gifts strengthen your congregation?
5. Peter emphasizes deep love and hospitality. What helps a congregation practice hospitality that is warm, generous, and sustainable? Where do you see hospitality transforming relationships?
6. Peter teaches that serving joyfully brings glory to God. How do you keep your service focused on God rather than recognition or personal satisfaction? Share ways you stay centered on God's purpose.
7. In Mark 10:42–45, Jesus defines greatness as serving others. What examples of this kind of leadership have you seen in your church or community? How do humble leaders shape the life of a congregation?
8. Jesus says He came "not to be served but to serve." How does His example challenge cultural expectations about leadership, power, and success? What does joyful, Christlike service look like in your setting?
9. Joyful service often calls us to place others' needs before our own. When have you seen this kind of sacrificial love make a difference? How might your congregation grow in this area?
10. How does theological education help pastors, teachers, and lay leaders cultivate joyful service in the global Church? Consider the difference that well-formed, Spirit-led leadership makes in congregations everywhere.

## Video Testimony

Today we will hear another story of Philip Micah Dopah from Nigeria whose ministry is touching lives in powerful ways.

As we listen, let us remember:

- Our prayers matter
- Our participation matters
- Our generosity matters

(Play video: <https://vimeo.com/1153388500/75fbdd1708>)

In two weeks, on **May 17**, we will join thousands of congregations for **Miracle Sunday**, a day of sacrificial giving to permanently endow theological education for pastors around the world. Let us continue to open our hearts as God shapes us to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously.

# **WEEK 5 — Lead Courageously**

## **Introduction**

Courageous leadership arises from trust in God’s presence and strength. Christian leaders across the world face many challenges—limited resources, societal pressures, injustice, or uncertainty. Scripture teaches that courage does not come from confidence in ourselves but from God’s promise to be with us. This week focuses on leadership rooted in faith, shaped by integrity, and committed to justice. Through theological education, the Church invests in leaders who guide communities with wisdom and resilience. To “lead courageously” is to step forward even when the path is difficult, trusting that God strengthens, equips, and goes before us.

## **Joshua 1:5–9**

As Joshua prepares to lead Israel into a new land, God repeats a powerful command: “Be strong and courageous.” Joshua faces uncertainty and responsibility, yet God anchors his courage in a promise, “I am with you wherever you go.” This passage reminds leaders in every context that courage comes from God’s presence. Joshua is also instructed to meditate on God’s law, linking courageous leadership with faithful obedience. For pastors, lay leaders, and students preparing for ministry, this passage provides assurance that God equips those whom God calls. Theological education strengthens leaders with biblical grounding, spiritual discipline, and confidence to guide communities through change.

## **Psalms 27:1–3, 14**

Psalms 27 expresses profound trust: “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?” The psalmist faces real threats yet chooses confidence in God. This trust allows the believer to stand firm even when surrounded by difficulty. Verse 14 offers wise counsel: “Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage.” In cultures experiencing conflict, hardship, or uncertainty, these words provide comfort and resolve. Courageous leadership does not deny fear; it moves forward with trust in God’s protection and guidance. Theological education helps leaders cultivate spiritual resilience so they can encourage and strengthen others.

## **Ephesians 6:10–18**

Paul urges believers to “be strong in the Lord” and to put on the full armor of God. The imagery of truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God reveals the spiritual resources available to every leader. This armor equips the Church to stand firm against challenges, temptations, and injustice. Across cultures, Christian leaders face pressures that test their integrity and resolve. Paul’s teaching reminds us that strength comes not from human effort but from God’s power. Theological education equips leaders with biblical knowledge, ethical grounding, and spiritual discipline—essential tools for courageous leadership.

## **Isaiah 58:6–10**

Isaiah challenges God’s people to a form of worship that confronts injustice and brings liberation. True fasting means breaking chains of oppression, sharing bread with the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and caring for the vulnerable. Courageous leadership stands with those who suffer and works for transformation in society. God promises that when communities pursue justice, light will break forth and healing will come. This passage speaks across cultures where poverty, violence, and inequality persist. Courageous leaders advocate for dignity, fairness, and compassion. Theological education helps equip such leaders—prophetic, compassionate, and committed to God’s justice.

## **Meditation and Prayers from Global Leaders**

### **Ephesians 6:10–18 — Lead Courageously**

**Bible Text:** Ephesians 6:10–18

#### **Meditation / Scripture Reflection:**

The United Methodist Church is called to lead courageously. In secular contexts where public faith can seem out of place, courageous leadership is not loud or confrontational for its own sake. It is faithful to the gospel when speaking carries a cost. It names injustice, defends the vulnerable, and acts for what is right when silence would be safer.

Our struggle is not with people. Paul reminds believers that our adversary is not flesh and blood, but the forces of this present darkness. That darkness appears in unjust laws, environmental harm, persecution, inhuman treatment of minorities, and war. The question is how to stand firm without becoming hardened. The armor of God is both spiritual and practical: truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God. These are not weapons of aggression but resources for resilient, hope-filled leadership.

The prophets teach that true faith loosens bonds of injustice, shares bread with the hungry, shelters the unhoused, and refuses to turn away from suffering. The Church is called not only to pray but to act. We stand, not against people, but against whatever denies the image of God in them. Across cultures, let worship fuel justice, prayer become action, and leadership reflect the liberating love of Christ.

#### **Prayer:**

God of truth and compassion, you call your people to stand firm in love when fear tempts silence. Give strength and resilience to lead courageously. Clothe us with your Spirit to speak truth where lies prevail, seek justice where dignity is denied, and bring light where darkness wounds your beloved. Give courage in word and action to defend the vulnerable, challenge harmful systems, and walk humbly with those who suffer. Make the United Methodist Church a community where prayer becomes justice, worship becomes compassion, and leadership becomes service shaped by grace. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Contributor:** Rev. Albert Andersen Gjøstøl, District Superintendent

**Location:** Norway

### **Joshua 1:5–9**

**Bible Text:** Joshua 1:5–9

#### **Meditation / Scripture Reflection (Theme: Lead Courageously):**

God speaks to Joshua, a new leader facing uncertainty. Moses is gone, the wilderness journey is ending, and the promised land lies ahead. Joshua stands at a moment of transition with great responsibility and expectation. God begins not with a strategy, but with presence: "I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Courage in this passage is not self-confidence. It is God-confidence. Three times God commands Joshua to be strong and courageous. Courage is a decision rooted in trust. Joshua's strength will not come from military power or leadership skill alone, but from obedience to the word of God and reliance on the presence of God.

This speaks to the Lead Courageously – Miracle Sunday Initiative. As the United Methodist Church strengthens theological education in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines, we also stand at an edge moment, with vision and need before us. God's message remains the same: do not be afraid. The Lord our God is with us wherever we go. Courageous leadership trusts that the mission of God is larger than our resources, believes that investments in forming leaders will shape generations, and treats generosity as an act of faith. The miracle is not only in what we raise. The miracle is who we become: a people of bold faith, united purpose, and unwavering trust.

## Prayer:

Gracious and ever-faithful God, you called Joshua to lead with courage. As you promised him, anchor us in that truth this week. As the Lead Courageously – Miracle Sunday Initiative grows across the United Methodist Church, pour out your Spirit on every congregation, leader, and giver. Strengthen bishops, pastors, lay leaders, and members in this season of prayer, worship, and generosity. Grant bold faith when the future feels uncertain. Give generous hearts that see theological education in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines as shared Kingdom work. Remind us that investing in faithful leaders advances the Great Commission. Remove fear and replace hesitation with holy confidence. Root our courage in your presence. May our actions reflect trust, our giving reflect gratitude, and our leadership reflect Christ. In the mighty name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

**Contributor:** The Rev. Prosper Ntirenganya

**Location:** Rwanda

## Sermon Preparation

- Courage arises not from personality but from **God’s promise of presence** (Joshua 1).
- Leaders must be anchored in **Scripture and obedience** to withstand pressure.
- Courage includes both **action and waiting**—waiting on the Lord builds inner strength (Psalm 27).
- Spiritual warfare is real; leaders need the “armor of God” to stay faithful (Ephesians 6).
- Courageous leadership includes confronting **injustice and oppression** (Isaiah 58).
- God’s vision of leadership prioritizes the vulnerable, not the powerful.
- Courage grows when leaders act with **integrity, compassion, and perseverance**.
- Supporting theological education helps form leaders who can lead courageously in diverse settings.

## Small Group Leader’s Overview

Courageous leadership is grounded in trust in God, shaped by Scripture, and directed toward justice and compassion.

### Discussion Questions

1. In Joshua 1, courage comes from God’s presence. What reminds you that God is with you?
2. Psalm 27 speaks of waiting on the Lord. How does waiting build courage?
3. What challenges require courageous leadership in your community?
4. Ephesians 6 lists spiritual resources. Which of these do you rely on most?
5. How do leaders maintain integrity when facing pressure or opposition?
6. Isaiah 58 calls for justice. Where do you see injustice that requires courageous response?
7. What kind of courageous leaders does your congregation or region need today?
8. How does investing in theological education shape courageous leaders in the global Church?

## Video Testimony

Over the past several weeks, we have heard powerful stories from leaders serving in Zimbabwe, Liberia, Romania, and Nigeria. Their witness reminds us that courageous leadership often grows in places where challenges are great, but God’s faithfulness is greater.

Today we will hear another testimony from Pastor Simon Peter Koroma from Sierra Leone whose ministry is shaping lives in remarkable ways.

(Play video: <https://vimeo.com/1153700998>)

As we continue this journey, I invite you to reflect and pray:

- Where is God calling me to lead with courage?
- How can my life point others toward Christ’s love?
- What step of faith is God inviting me to take this week?

On Sunday, May 17, thousands of congregations will participate in **Miracle Sunday**, a day of sacrificial giving to permanently endow theological education for pastors around the world. Let us keep walking together with open hearts, trusting that God is forming us into people who love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously.

## **WEEK 6 — Disciples Transform the World – Miracle Sunday Offering**

### **Introduction**

Disciples of Jesus Christ are called not only to personal faithfulness but to global witness. God's vision extends to all nations and peoples, inviting the Church to proclaim good news and participate in God's transforming work. On Miracle Sunday, congregations join together to support theological education across Africa, Europe, and the Philippines—investing in leaders who will shape the future of the Church. Transformation begins with worship and extends into every sphere of life. Today we celebrate God's mission, give thanks for the global body of Christ, and commit ourselves to sharing God's glory with the world.

### **Psalm 96**

Psalm 96 is a song of global praise. It calls all peoples to sing a new song, proclaim God's salvation, and declare God's glory among the nations. The psalm affirms that God is not a local or tribal deity but the Creator of the whole earth. Worship becomes a witness: as communities praise God, they invite others into God's joy and truth. The psalm also speaks of God's justice—righteous, fair, and restorative. Creation itself rejoices at God's coming rule. For congregations around the world, this psalm celebrates the unity of global worship and mission. Miracle Sunday embodies this vision by empowering theological education in diverse contexts, raising new leaders who will teach, preach, and serve so that God's glory may be known everywhere. Disciples transform the world when they proclaim God's goodness, embody God's justice, and share God's love boldly.

### **Meditations and Prayers by Global Leaders**

#### **Psalm 96:1–3**

**Bible Text:** Psalm 96:1–3

#### **Meditation / Scripture Reflection:**

I love many traditional hymns that shaped my faith. I also value new songs that speak to present realities. In the United Methodist Church, we now sing a new song of mission in diverse global contexts. We seek freedom for contextually adapted ministry while remaining connected worldwide. Miracle Sunday is a new song as well: never before have we invited every local church in our connection to offer a generous gift for a common cause. This song of mutual contribution can strengthen theological education for generations in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines. Rooted in a Wesleyan tradition, such education prepares trusted leaders who address spiritual, social, and economic needs. They will help us declare the glory of God among the nations and the marvelous works of God among all peoples.

#### **Prayer:**

God, we praise you with thousands of United Methodist congregations across the earth on this special Sunday. We want to tell of your salvation from day to day, through generations. Bless this offering so that it forms leaders in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines for many years to come. To you be all honor and praise, now and forever. Amen.

**Contributor:** Bishop Patrick Streiff

**Location:** Switzerland

#### **Psalm 96 — Proclaiming the Glory of God Among the Nations**

**Bible Text:** Psalm 96

#### **Meditation / Scripture Reflection:**

Psalm 96 echoes the celebration when David brought the ark into Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 16:23–

33). The psalm proclaims that the Lord is King. In the midst of many deities, Israel confessed one true God, Creator of heaven and earth. Four essential truths emerge.

1. A call to renewed worship: the invitation to sing a new song reminds us that worship must remain living and sincere.
2. A universal proclamation: the people of God bear witness beyond church walls, beyond borders, cultures, and languages.
3. Holiness and sovereignty: reverence leads to consecration and a life that reflects the character of God.
4. Hope of righteous judgment: God will judge the earth; evil will not have the last word. Miracle Sunday invites deeper commitment to the work of God. Through our offering, leaders will be trained and the good news will continue to be proclaimed across the world. Are we ready for a life of shared worship, mission, consecration, and hope? Amen.

**Prayer:**

God our Creator, Almighty God, God of glory, we proclaim your majesty. Your splendor fills the earth and brightens our lives. You are holy and worthy of all praise. May your glory be revealed among us. May your Holy Spirit guide us on this miraculous Sunday. May our offering be pleasing to you. To you be honor and glory forever. Amen.

**Contributor:** Pastor Pierre Bandorayingwe

**Location:** Congo

**Bible Text:** Psalm 96

**Meditation / Scripture Reflection:**

Psalm 96 is a poetic, liturgical adaptation of 1 Chronicles 16:23–33. It is a vibrant call to worship that urges all creation and every nation to recognize the reign of the Lord. This is a missionary psalm: the glory of God is not confined to Israel; all the earth is invited to sing, praise, and proclaim the greatness of the Lord.

The psalm calls for a new song that crosses borders. Worship is not only personal; it is global and inclusive. The invitation extends to all people to become singers, not only hearers. Our lives should showcase the character of God by treating others with love and living with righteousness. Psalm 96 calls the Church to worship, to mission, and to hope in God’s final and just rule over all creation. Many congregations and pastors, especially in regional conferences such as the Philippines, need support for theological education. The invitation for 30,000 congregations and pastors to create a permanent endowment for theological education beyond the United States becomes a new song that unites people called United Methodists. Let us be disciples who make disciples and transform the world. Let our voices blend as one. Together, let us sing a new song.

**Prayer:**

Almighty God, we thank you for calling us to be your disciples in this world of instability. Grant us grace to be true agents of transformation, lighting dark places with your love and bringing hope where there is despair.

Empower us to move beyond our comfort zones, to be courageous witnesses of your truth, and to share your message of reconciliation and justice with everyone we meet. May our actions, not only our words, transform communities by breaking down walls of division and building bridges of unity, cooperation, and peace.

Strengthen us to serve the vulnerable, to help those in need, to lift up the brokenhearted, and to show your compassion to all creation. Unite us in purpose and love, so that the world may know you. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who calls us to change the world. Amen.

**Contributor:** Pastor Robert P. Baoidang, Administrative Pastor

**Location:** Maui United Methodist Church, Maui, Delfin Albano, Isabela, Philippines

## Sermon Preparation

- Worship is **mission-shaping**—when God’s people praise, the nations hear (Psalm 96).
- God’s glory is not confined to one culture; it is a **global calling**.
- Discipleship is outward-facing: transformed people become **agents of transformation**.
- Churches participate in God’s mission by proclaiming, serving, and giving with joy.
- Transformation includes justice, compassion, reconciliation, and evangelism.
- Miracle Sunday is an act of faith: giving so that others may be formed and sent.
- The global church is strengthened through shared commitment and sacrificial generosity.
- God invites every congregation, regardless of size, location or circumstances, to join the mission of **declaring God’s glory among the nations**.

## Small Group Leader’s Overview

Discipleship leads to mission. Worship becomes witness, and offering becomes participation in God’s global work. This week celebrates global unity and commitment.

### Discussion Questions

1. Psalm 96 calls all nations to praise. What does global worship look like to you?
2. How does your congregation experience being part of the worldwide Body of Christ?
3. What stories from your region show how disciples are transforming communities?
4. How can your church declare God’s glory in word and action?
5. What sacrifices or commitments help expand God’s mission globally?
6. Why does supporting theological education matter for worldwide transformation?
7. What transformation do you pray for in your community?
8. What new commitment is God inviting your congregation to make on Miracle Sunday?

## Video Testimony

As you listen to today’s testimony, of Caleb, a pastor from Liberia who ministers to people who live in a graveyard, I invite you to hold this prayer in your heart:  
Lord, use our gifts, our prayers, and our lives to transform the world like Jesus.

(Play video: <https://vimeo.com/1139482432/4c92767f13>)

Thank you for being part of this global movement of faith. May God continue to shape us into people who love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously.