

Great is Thy Faithfulness: Small Group Bible Study Outlines

(Created with assistance from ChatGPT)

The Great Commandment: Loving God and Neighbor - Mark 12:28–34

1. Opening Prayer (2–3 minutes)

Gracious God, You have called us to love you with all that we are and to love our neighbors as ourselves. By your Spirit, shape us in the way of Jesus— not only in what we believe, but in how we live. Open our hearts to your grace, our minds to your truth, and our hands to your work of justice and mercy. We pray in the name of Christ, our servant and Savior. Amen.

2. Opening Discussion Prompt (5–7 minutes)

Invite everyone to share briefly (no pressure to speak).

Prompt:

- When you hear the word “*commandment*,” what feelings or images come to mind?
- Does it feel more like an obligation, a guide, or an invitation? Why?

3. Scripture Reading (2–3 minutes)

Read **Mark 12:28–34** aloud.

Invite participants to listen for:

- A word or phrase that reveals who God is
- A word or phrase that reveals who God calls us to be

4. Watch the Video Sermon (10–15 minutes)

Listening invitation:

As you watch, notice how love of God and love of neighbor are connected to identity, practice, and resistance to false gods in every age.

5. Group Discussion Questions (30–40 minutes)

Question 1: Hearing and Remembering

Jesus begins with the Shema: “*Hear, O Israel...*”—a daily, embodied reminder of God’s identity and their own.

- What helps you remember who God is and who you are as God's beloved today?
- What competes most strongly for your attention, loyalty, or devotion?

Question 2: Loving God with Our Whole Selves

Jesus names loving God with heart, soul, mind, and strength.

- Which part of yourself feels most connected to God right now?
- Which part feels hardest to surrender or align with God's heart?

Question 3: Personal and Social Holiness

United Methodists understand holiness as both **personal devotion** and **public faithfulness**.

- Where have you seen love for God naturally overflow into love for others?
- Where do you notice a tension between personal faith and public action?

Question 4: Who Is Our Neighbor Today?

Drawing from Leviticus 19 and the Good Samaritan, neighbors include the vulnerable, marginalized, and even enemies.

- Who might God be inviting you to see differently as your "neighbor"?
- Are there individuals or groups it feels especially difficult to love right now?

(Leader note: Hold space gently; avoid debate, encourage listening.)

Question 5: Faith That Works Through Love (Application)

Wesley believed grace leads to action: *works of piety* and *works of mercy*.

- What is one **work of piety** (prayer, worship, Scripture, fasting) that could deepen your love for God this week?
- What is one **work of mercy or justice** (service, advocacy, generosity, accompaniment) through which you could love your neighbor?

(Encourage participants to name something realistic and concrete.)

6. Closing Prayer (3–5 minutes)

Holy and loving God, You have loved us first, and by your grace you continue to shape us. Form in us the mind of Christ, the compassion of Christ, and the courage of Christ. Where love is easy, help us practice it faithfully. Where love is costly, help us trust your grace. Send us out as people of personal devotion and social holiness, loving you with our whole lives and loving our neighbors for the sake of your world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Great Commission: Called, Sent, and Not Alone - *Matthew 28:16–20*

1. Opening Prayer (2–3 minutes)

Faithful and sending God, You call ordinary people into your extraordinary mission. As we gather, quiet our fears, name our doubts, and renew our trust in you. Open our hearts to your Word, our minds to your truth, and our lives to your transforming grace. Prepare us to hear again Christ's call to go, and to trust the promise that we are never alone. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

2. Opening Discussion Prompt (5–7 minutes)

Prompt:

- In the sermon we'll hear how *last words matter*. What are some "last words" or parting instructions you've received that stayed with you?
- Why do you think Jesus' final words to the disciples still matter for the church today?

(Leader note: Affirm doubt as part of faith—"they worshiped him, but some doubted.")

3. Scripture Reading (2–3 minutes)

Read **Matthew 28:16–20** aloud.

Invite participants to listen for:

- A phrase that feels challenging
- A phrase that feels comforting or hopeful

4. Watch the Video Sermon (12–15 minutes)

Listening invitation:

As you watch, listen for the assumptions the sermon names. Notice which ones resonate with you personally or reflect how you've experienced church. (Watch sermon.)

5. Group Discussion Questions (30–40 minutes)

Question 1: Authority, Grace, and Calling

Jesus begins with: "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*"

- How does remembering *who Jesus is* – his authority and initiative – affect how we respond to *what Jesus asks*?

Question 2: “Go” Instead of “Come”

The sermon challenges the assumption that people will simply come to church.

- Where do you see the church tempted to wait instead of go?
- What might it look like to “go” in everyday ways—relationships, workplaces, neighborhoods—rather than programs alone?

Question 3: Disciples Are Made, Not Born

Jesus commands us to *make disciples*, not just converts.

- John Wesley emphasized **methodical discipleship**—community, accountability, and spiritual practices. What experiences or relationships have helped you grow as a disciple?

Question 4: Discipleship Is Public and Communal

Baptism is named as a public act of allegiance and belonging.

- How does baptism remind us that faith is not only private, but communal and visible?
- United Methodists understand the sacraments as **means of grace**.
How have baptism or communion shaped your sense of identity and belonging in God’s family?

Question 5: Teaching Obedience and Trusting the Promise

Jesus commands teaching obedience *and* promises his presence.

- Which part of the Great Commission feels most intimidating to you right now—and why?
- How does Jesus’ promise, “*I am with you always*,” change the way you think about your role in God’s mission?
- What is one small step God may be inviting you to take—to go, to mentor, to learn, or to trust you are not alone?

6. Closing Prayer (3–5 minutes)

Sending God, You have called us by grace and entrusted us with your mission. Where we feel unsure, strengthen us. Where we feel unqualified, remind us that you delight in using ordinary people. Teach us to go in love, to make disciples with humility, and to trust your Spirit at work within and beyond us. Send us out with courage, compassion, and hope, for the transformation of the world. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Great Requirement: Justice, Mercy, and Humble Walking - Micah 6:8 (CEB)

1. Opening Prayer (2–3 minutes)

God of justice and mercy, You have already shown us what is good. As we gather, open our hearts to your Word and our lives to your transforming grace. Teach us how to live faithfully—doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with you each day. Shape us not only by what we believe, but by how we love and live. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

2. Opening Discussion Prompt (5–7 minutes)

Prompt:

- When you hear the phrase “*What does God require of you?*” what emotions or reactions come up?
- Does it feel heavy, freeing, or something in between? Why?

(Leader note: Emphasize that Micah’s words are not a checklist, but an invitation into relationship.)

3. Scripture Reading (2–3 minutes)

Read **Micah 6:8 (CEB)** aloud, slowly.

Invite participants to notice:

- A word or phrase that stands out
- A phrase that feels challenging or hopeful

4. Watch the Video Sermon (12–15 minutes)

Listening invitation:

As you watch, listen for how justice, mercy, and humility are described—not as abstract ideas, but as lived faith shaped by God’s grace. (Watch sermon.)

5. Group Discussion Questions (30–40 minutes)

Question 1: Faith as Relationship, Not Ritual

The sermon emphasizes that God desires integrity and relationship, not spectacle or perfection.

- Where are we tempted to focus on religious activity rather than faithful living?
- How does this connect with John Wesley’s emphasis on a “**religion of the heart**”?

Question 2: Doing Justice Together

Justice in Scripture is about restoration—setting things right.

- The United Methodist Social Principles affirm a commitment to justice, dignity, and the sacred worth of every person. Where do you see injustice in your community or world that troubles you most?
- How might justice become something we *do together* rather than something we debate?

Question 3: Embracing Faithful Love (Mercy)

The sermon lifts up loving enemies and practicing forgiveness as uniquely Christian.

- Why is mercy often harder than justice?
- The Amish forgiveness story shows faith as **transformational, not transactional**. How has forgiveness—given or received—changed you?

(Leader note: Allow space for silence; this may be tender.)

Question 4: Walking Humbly with God

Humility is described as a daily journey rooted in trust and dependence on God.

- What does humility look like in a culture that values achievement, recognition, and self-sufficiency?
- How does humility help us balance letting our light shine without making faith about ourselves?

Question 5: Application – Living Micah 6:8 This Week

Wesley taught that grace leads to action through **works of mercy and works of justice**.

- What is one concrete way you could:
 - **Do justice** this week?
 - **Embrace faithful love** toward someone difficult?
 - **Walk humbly** by making space for God's guidance?

Invite participants to name one small, intentional step.

6. Closing Prayer (3–5 minutes)

Holy and gracious God, You have shown us the way of life. Give us courage to do justice, compassion to love mercy, and humility to walk closely with you. Where our hearts are restless, bring peace. Where our love feels strained, renew it by your grace. Let our lives reflect your light—not for our glory, but for yours. Walk with us in the days ahead, that we may live as your faithful people. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Great Proclamation: God's countercultural Kingdom - Luke 4:14–21

1. Opening Prayer (2–3 minutes)

Holy and living God, We thank you for your Word made flesh in Jesus Christ. As we gather, open our hearts and minds to the movement of your Spirit. Help us hear not only ancient words, but a living proclamation for today. Shape us as disciples who seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with you. We offer this time to you, trusting in your grace. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

2. Opening Discussion Prompt (5–7 minutes)

Prompt:

- Think about a speech or message (religious, civic, or personal) that really shaped how you see the world. What made it powerful or memorable?

3. Scripture Reading (3–5 minutes)

Read **Luke 4:14–21** aloud (CEB or NRSV).

Invite participants to listen for:

- A word or phrase that stands out
- A phrase that feels hopeful or challenging

You may pause briefly for silence after the reading.

4. Watch the Video Sermon (12–15 minutes)

Listening invitation:

As you watch, listen for how Jesus' proclamation defines God's Kingdom, and how it challenges the limits we place on God's grace. (Watch sermon together.)

5. Discussion Questions (30–40 minutes)

Question 1: Jesus' Inaugural Address

In Nazareth, Jesus reads from Isaiah and declares, *"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."*

- Why do you think this moment is so significant for Jesus' ministry?
- How is Jesus' proclamation similar to—and different from—political or national "inaugural" speeches?

Question 2: The Power of the Spirit

The sermon emphasizes that Jesus is **empowered by the Spirit** following his time in the wilderness.

- Where do you see the Spirit at work in this passage?
- In Wesleyan theology, grace is always active and transforming. How does the Spirit still empower the church and individual disciples today?

Question 3: “Good News” for All

Jesus names the poor, captive, blind, and oppressed—and the sermon reminds us these take many forms.

- Which of these groups do you most notice in your community today?
- Where might we be “blind” or hesitant to see who is hurting around us?

(Leader note: Gently invite honesty without debate.)

Question 4: Limits on God’s Grace

The sermon challenges the church to examine how we sometimes limit God’s inclusive love.

- Why is it so tempting for the church—or for us personally—to put boundaries on grace?
- How does this challenge connect with United Methodist commitments to **radical hospitality, social holiness, and dignity for all people**?

Question 5: Living the Great Proclamation

The stories of the surgeon and *Martin the Cobbler* remind us that Christ often comes to us through our neighbors.

- What would it look like for you—or your congregation—to embody Jesus’ proclamation this week?
- What is one concrete way you could share good news, freedom, healing, or hope with someone else?

Encourage participants to name one small, faithful action.

6. Closing Prayer (3–5 minutes)

Jesus Christ, You are the Great Proclamation—the Word made flesh, the good news we long for. Fill us again with your Spirit, that we may not only hear your message, but live it. Break down the limits we place on love, open our eyes to our neighbors’ needs, and send us out as your hands and feet in the world. May your Kingdom come among us in word, in deed, and in grace. We pray in your holy name. Amen.