



+ Cross-generational Session

## Discipleship

Here is an intergenerational session for all members of the congregation exploring Discipleship, what does it mean to be a follower of Jesus in the world today. This session is designed to be conducted in about 90 minutes, and can be adapted for a shorter or longer timeframe.

### Introduction

Jesus drank water from an unlikely person. And, you'll think about Jesus' promise of living water. Saint Francis was born in Italy in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and became a faithful follower of Jesus. We remember Francis for his poverty, simplicity, and love of all of God's creation. Learn about Francis and then choose one or two activities to help you further explore his life. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor who was killed during World War II. Learn about his life, and listen to a piece of music that may have encouraged him when he was in prison.

### I. Gather

To begin the session, use the following adaptation of the Vibrant Faith @ Home activity called Living Water.

#### Prepare in Advance:

- Gather the following materials for this part of the session: soda crackers, drinking water and cups.
- Place crackers and cups of water at tables – enough for all participants.
- Mark your Bible to John 4:4-14
- YouTube video “Woman at the Well” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q49BbfgJbto>

#### Activity Plan

1. Invite participants to form family groups, or small groups, and to be seated at the tables. Ask them not to touch the crackers or cups just yet.
2. Begin your session with a prayer or song of your choosing.
3. Invite each participant to eat a cracker from the table. Instruct them not to drink water just yet. Instead, ask them what it means to be thirsty.
  - Think about a time when you were really thirsty.
  - Being thirsty can also mean that we long for something.
  - When have you felt thirsty for something? For someone? For God?

Invite some people to share their comments with the whole group.

4. Read aloud the story of the Woman at the Well, John 4:4-14. Take a moment of silence.
5. Show the YouTube video “Woman at the Well”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q49BbfgJbto>.
  - In Jesus’ day, people thought that Jesus shouldn’t talk to a Samaritan woman, or drink water with her. How do you think the woman felt when Jesus talked to her?
  - By talking to a Samaritan woman, Jesus shows us that God’s living water isn’t just for certain people, but for all people.
6. Now, invite participants to take a drink of water. Ask them to think about what it’s like to drink God’s living water. We drink God’s living water by reading the Bible, praying, and worshipping God together.
  - How does it feel when you take a big drink after being thirsty?
  - Think about a time when you went to church, prayed, or read from the Bible. Did you feel refreshed by God’s living water?
  - What does Jesus mean when he says, “Drink from me, and you will never thirst?”
7. Tell participants that Jesus’ living water gives us life, refreshes us and renews us, and even flows through us to other people.
  - Today, look for someone who seems tired and thirsty. Bring them a nice, cold glass of water.
  - How can Jesus’ living water flow through you to refresh others?Invite some people to share their comments with the whole group. Explain that this is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. We share his “living water” with others.
8. Conclude this part of the session by saying that in Baptism, God uses water to claim us as God’s children. We will now bless each other with water as a reminder of the living water that Jesus offers.

Invite participants to form pairs for the blessing. Instruct each person to put their finger into some water and then use the water to make a cross on their partner’s forehead.

Say: \_\_\_\_\_(name)\_\_\_\_\_, you are a disciple of Jesus. May God’s living water quench your thirst and flow through you to refresh others.

## **II. Grow**

Use the following adaptation of the Vibrant Faith @ Home activity Saint Francis of Assisi.

### **Needed**

- Text of the Story of Saint Francis
- Pictures of Saint Francis
- Paper, pen/pencil/markers
- YouTube video “Story of Saint Francis” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JtSvwOOOTBI>
- YouTube video “Canticle of Brother Son” [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IE\\_Ei6JRI1o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IE_Ei6JRI1o)

### **Activity Plan**

1. Gather participants into one large group. Have them sit close-in, like story time. Begin with a prayer. You might use the words below, or speak some words from your own heart.

*Loving God, thank you for your servant Francis. Thank you for what he taught about living in your love. Help me to learn from him today. Amen.*

2. Read aloud the story of Saint Francis.
3. Invite participants to form family groups or small groups of 4-6 persons. In their groups, ask them to discuss the following questions:
  - I wonder which part of Francis' story you like best?
  - I wonder why Francis was singing and dancing for joy when he walked away from his father and the bishop? (This was when he wore only a flimsy cloth around his waist!)
  - I wonder why Francis made it a rule that he and the Franciscans could not own any possessions? How would your life be better if you didn't own any possessions? How would it be worse?
4. Invite participants to choose one or more of the following activities to help you further explore the story of Saint Francis:
  - Watch this [cartoon story of Saint Francis](#) on YouTube. The story is set to rhyme, and shows a day in the life of Saint Francis when he and one of the Franciscans set out to preach the good news of God's love.
  - Enjoy this video based on the song Saint Francis wrote near the end of his life, [Canticle to Brother Sun](#). Perhaps you'd like to make a drawing that shows the beauty of God's creation. Or maybe you want to make a drawing that emphasizes the glory of just one part of God's creation, such as the wind, or water, or fire, or sun.
  - Look at the two pictures of Saint Francis. Each picture shows a different artist's depiction of Francis. Which picture do you prefer? Why? If you'd like, write a story from your imagination about Francis based on what you feel or think as you look at one of the pictures.
  - One of the questions above asked which part of Francis' story you like best. Draw that part of the story.
5. Conclude by asking participants this question: In what ways was Saint Francis a true disciple of Jesus? Invite people to share their responses with the whole group.

### **III. Go Forth**

To conclude this session use the following adaptation of the Vibrant Faith @ Home activity called a Disciple Named Dietrich.

#### **Needed**

- Story "The Courage to Follow Jesus"

#### **Activity Plan**

1. God is with us in everything we do, and prayer helps us to remember that. Begin this activity by praying this prayer:

"Thank you, God, for people who stand up for what is right even when it is scary or difficult. Give me the courage to do whatever you want me to do. Amen."

2. Read the story below about a man named Dietrich, "The Courage to Follow Jesus.". For him, following Jesus meant making some very unpopular choices.

3. Invite participants to discuss these questions in their family/small groups:

- What part of the story do you like best?
- In what ways was Dietrich a disciple of Jesus?

Ask some people to share their responses with the whole group.

# Living Water

By Amber Espinosa



At this stop on your Bible Trek, you'll learn how Jesus drank water from an unlikely person. And, you'll think about Jesus' promise of living water.

## For

Just For Kids

## Season

Fall

## Needed

Cracker, Glass of water, watercolor paints, markers, or crayons, your Bible Trek book, Bible

## Prepare in Advance

If you haven't already created your Bible Trek book, go to "Word Made Flesh," and find the directions for creating your own book.

## Activity Plan

1. Eat a cracker and think about what it means to be thirsty.
  - Think about a time when you were really thirsty.
  - Being thirsty can also mean that we long for something. When have you felt thirsty for something? For someone? For God?
2. Read John 4:4-14 from your Bible (or see text on next page).
  - In Jesus' day, people thought that Jesus shouldn't talk to a Samaritan woman, or drink water with her. How do you think the woman felt when Jesus talked to her?
  - By talking to a Samaritan woman, Jesus shows us that God's living water isn't just for certain people, but for all people.
3. Take a drink of water and think about what it's like to drink God's living water. We drink God's living water by reading the Bible, praying, and worshipping God together.
  - How does it feel when you take a big drink after being thirsty?
  - Think about a time when you went to church, prayed, or read from the Bible. Did you feel refreshed by God's living water?
  - What does Jesus mean when he says, "Drink from me, and you will never thirst?"
4. Jesus' living water gives us life, refreshes us and renews us, and even flows through us to other people.
  - Today, look for someone who seems tired and thirsty. Bring them a nice, cold glass of water.
  - How can Jesus' living water flow through you to refresh others?

5. Use watercolors to create a page of your Bible Trek: Jesus' Life and Ministry book. Write the words, "Jesus is... living water for all people."
6. In Baptism, God uses water to claim us as God's children. Use this blessing to remind yourself that Jesus is the living water.

Put your finger into some water and then use the water to make a cross on your partner's forehead.

Say: \_\_\_\_\_(name)\_\_\_\_\_, you are a child of God. May God's living water quench your thirst and flow through you to refresh others.

## Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

### John 4:4-14

And he had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

# Saint Francis of Assisi

By Beth Beall



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Saint Francis was born in Italy in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and became a faithful follower of Jesus. We remember Francis for his poverty, simplicity, and love of all of God's creation. Learn about Francis and then choose one or two activities to help you further explore his life.

## For

Just for Kids

## Season

Fall

## Needed

Story of Saint Francis, internet connection (optional), pictures of Saint Francis, paper, pen/pencil/markers

## Activity Plan

1. Begin this activity with a prayer. You might use the words below, or speak some words from your own heart, or simply be quiet for a moment.

*Loving God, thank you for your servant Francis. Thank you for what he taught about living in your love. Help me to learn from him today. Amen.*

2. On your own or with someone else, read the story of Saint Francis.
3. Pick one or more of the following questions to think about on your own or with someone else:
  - I wonder which part of Francis' story you like best?
  - I wonder why Francis was singing and dancing for joy when he walked away from his father and the bishop? (This was when he wore only a flimsy cloth around his waist!)
  - I wonder why Francis made it a rule that he and the Franciscans could not own any possessions? How would your life be better if you didn't own any possessions? How would it be worse?
4. Choose one or more of the following activities to help you further explore the story of Saint Francis:
  - Watch this [cartoon story of Saint Francis](#) on YouTube. The story is set to rhyme, and shows a day in the life of Saint Francis when he and one of the Franciscans set out to preach the good news of God's love.

- Enjoy this video based on the song Saint Francis wrote near the end of his life, [Canticle to Brother Sun](#). Perhaps you'd like to make a drawing that shows the beauty of God's creation. Or maybe you want to make a drawing that emphasizes the glory of just one part of God's creation, such as the wind, or water, or fire, or sun.
- Look at the two pictures of Saint Francis. Each picture shows a different artist's depiction of Francis. Which picture do you prefer? Why? If you'd like, write a story from your imagination about Francis based on what you feel or think as you look at one of the pictures.
- One of the questions above asked which part of Francis' story you like best. Draw that part of the story.
- Next time you are at the library, look for a copy of the book called *Saint Francis*, written and illustrated by Brian Wildsmith. The illustrations do a wonderful job of bringing the story to life.



## The Story of Saint Francis of Assisi

My name is Francis. I was born in the year 1181 in the city of Assisi, Italy. I had a very happy and carefree life growing up. My father was a wealthy businessman who bought and sold fancy cloth, and he let me have lots of free time. I loved to have fun with my friends. We dressed up in fancy clothes, told jokes, played musical instruments, and danced, danced, danced.

I wanted more than anything to win fame and glory by being a knight in shining armor. One day I got my chance! The city of Perugia was coming to attack Assisi. But Assisi lost to Perugia, and I was taken prisoner. Even in prison I laughed and told jokes to my fellow prisoners. I was very glad, though, when my father paid money so that I could be released.

I wanted to fight in war again. But one day God spoke in my heart as I prayed in the church of San Damiano. (San Damiano was very close to Assisi.) I was busy telling God about what I wanted to do in my life, when God said, "Francis, look around you. My church is falling apart. Repair it for me."

Immediately I was filled with an indescribable joy. Instead of being a knight, I would rebuild God's church! But how would I get money to buy the necessary materials to repair the church in San Damiano? Ah! Do you know what I did? I stole some of my father's expensive fabric and sold it.

My father was furious. He took me before the bishop (the head religious leader in our city) and told him what I'd done. The bishop said, "Francis, you need to repay your father." "Here," I said gently, as I gave my father his money. "You may have your money, and you may also have all of the fancy clothes you've given me. I love you, Father, but more than anything I love my Father in heaven." And then I stepped out of my clothes, and stood almost completely naked on the street! With just a small flimsy cloth covering my waist, I walked away, singing and dancing with joy.

From that time on, I wanted to live the life that Jesus had lived. I felt especially close to God when I spent time with poor people or with parts of the world that get taken for granted, such as animals, trees, the wind and the sun. I began to preach to everyone about how much God loved them and how beautiful God's world was.

Gradually, other people wanted to live the simple and poor life of Jesus that I was living. (I say "poor" but it was very rich in ways that many people never understood.) These people started to call themselves the "Franciscans." I told the Franciscans that we had a couple of rules to follow: 1) we owned no possessions, and 2) we shared God's love with everyone (including the birds, the rich people, the grass of the field, the poor people...everyone!). And that's what we did. Sometimes we preached the good news of God's love by talking about it. Other times we preached that good news through the example of how we treated other people and God's creation.

Living in poverty as I did can make life very difficult, and I grew quite sick around the age of 45. Some of my companions carried me to the palace of the Bishop. But I wanted to go back to the small, humble church of San Damiano. As the people carried me there, I sang for them a song I'd written called "The Canticle of Brother Sun." On October 4, 1226, I died. Today, all these years after my death, there are still people called Franciscans around the world who try to follow Jesus by living lives of simplicity and joy.



# A Disciple Named Dietrich

By Beth Beall

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor who was killed during World War II. Learn about his life, and listen to a piece of music that may have encouraged him when he was in prison.

## For

Just for Kids

## Season

Spring

## Needed

An internet connected audio device so that you can listen to a song on YouTube



## Activity Plan

1. God is with us in everything we do, and prayer helps us to remember that. Begin this activity by praying this prayer:

*“Thank you, God, for people who stand up for what is right even when it is scary or difficult. Give me the courage to do whatever you want me to do. Amen.”*

2. Read the story below about a man named Dietrich. For him, following Jesus meant making some very unpopular choices.

## The Courage to Follow Jesus

Tell me, what would you have done? What would you have done if your government said that certain people had no rights? What would you have done if some of the people in your church agreed with the government? Some of my friends told me to keep quiet. They said that I could not make a difference. But for me, it wasn't about whether I could make a difference. It was about doing what God wanted me to do. And I believed that God wanted me to speak out. And not only to speak out, but to act. Let me back up a little, and begin by introducing myself...

My name is Dietrich Bonhoeffer. I was born on February 4, 1906, in Germany. My twin sister and I had four other siblings. Our family loved music. We were not, however, a family that focused on God. So you can imagine my family's surprise when I told them, at age 14, that I wanted to become a pastor! I began to study the Bible, and after I graduated from college, I traveled to Spain and the United States and continued to study the Bible and learn about being a pastor in those places.

I returned to Germany and became a pastor in 1931. Those were difficult days in Germany, because many people were out of work. A man named Adolf Hitler promised to make life much better if the people would elect him as their new leader, and that's exactly what people did in 1933. From the very beginning, I opposed Hitler. He persecuted many different groups of people, most notably Jewish people. Even some people in churches supported this persecution. I spoke out on radio stations, in writing, in churches, and in person, saying that Jesus did *not* want us to persecute anyone. Slowly, some other individuals and churches began to speak out against Hitler, too. But it

was scary. To speak out against Hitler meant that a person might end up in prison. Yet, I believed then—and I say to you now—that if we are following Jesus, it might indeed sometimes be scary. We are holding up our light against a world that can be so very dark. But Jesus will never, ever abandon us.

There came a time when I became afraid that I would either have to pledge my allegiance to Hitler (as many people had to do), or else be arrested. And so I left Germany in 1939 and went to the United States. Over the next two years, I prayed and taught and learned many things. Finally I knew that I needed to go home to Germany. I knew in my heart that God wanted me to keep doing good work there. When I returned to Germany, life became very restrictive for me. I was not allowed to write any articles or to do any public speaking. I prayed about what work God wanted me to do, and soon I found myself working for an organization called Abwehr. Some other Abwehr workers and I began helping Jewish people escape to Switzerland from Germany. I believed very much that God is always on the side of freedom.

One day, I was arrested for my work in helping Jews escape to Switzerland. I spent the next year and a half at a military prison. While in prison, I continued to write about following Jesus. Some of the guards helped me by smuggling my writings out of the prison. The guards gave my writings to people who shared them with others. After 18 months in prison, I was transferred to a concentration camp. The concentration camps were the places where Hitler kept Jewish people and the many other people he persecuted. On April 8, 1945, I was sentenced to die by hanging the next day. Was I scared when I heard that I was to die? Yes, of course. But I also knew that Jesus was with me, and that the power of God was greater than the power of Hitler. As I prepared to die, I asked one of my fellow prisoners to share this message with a friend of mine: “This is the end, but for me the beginning, of life.”

Thank you for listening to my story. I hope you will keep following Jesus, even if it makes you unpopular, even if it requires great courage.

3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer grew up in a home where music was very important. It is likely that music fed his soul and gave him courage over the years. At one point in his life, Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “**Music will help dissolve your perplexities...and in time of care and sorrow, it will keep a fountain of joy alive in you.**”