

Christ Calls Us to Wholeness

A Bible Study Based on the Wholeness Wheel



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Find this study along with more information and resources about the Wholeness Wheel at PorticoBenefits.org/wheel.

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WELCOME.

In John 10:10, Jesus tells his followers, "I came that [you] might have life, and have it abundantly." Living well is a personal journey that presents each of us with unique opportunities to steward all dimensions of our lives.

This study is meant to help you on that journey as you consider the ways God has created and blessed you. The Wholeness Wheel reminds us that as baptized believers, every aspect of our being belongs to God. When we pay attention to all aspects of our humanity — our bodies, our relationships, our money, our minds, our feelings, our work, our faith — we more fully experience that abundant life in Christ and radiate God's love to others.

As you progress through this study, you are invited to reflect on these three questions. Notice how your understanding grows or changes from week to week:

- **What does abundant life look like for you?**
- **Which dimensions of the Wholeness Wheel seem the most life-giving for you right now?**
- **Which dimensions of the Wholeness Wheel do you feel might be calling for more of your attention?**

How to Use This Study

This is an eight-week study designed to be used alone or with others. Each week you'll be guided through a consistent format:

- **Read:** A brief passage from the New Testament
- **Recap:** Conversation around the text and its context
- **Review:** Questions related to the session's wellness topic
- **Reveal:** Integrating the text and the topic
- **Engage:** Brainstorming ways to grow in that dimension of well-being
- **Pray:** Suggested prayer language for the week

Feel free to work through the dimensions of the Wholeness Wheel in whatever order you wish. It is, however, recommended that you start at the center, since as people of faith we are grounded in our identity as baptized believers. You may wish to use a study Bible for additional notes and context of the scripture text. There is space on each session's page to take notes or use for journaling.

In Baptism: A New Creation in Christ

At our core, we are a new creation through the waters of baptism. Christ lives in us and through us, and calls us to love and serve one another. We have received the gift of grace through Christ, who came that we might have abundant life. Abundant life comes when we are being grounded and centered in Christ and when we love our neighbor as ourselves. It is when we are living well in Christ that we are best equipped to pass on our faith.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21



Recap: Paul wrote 2 Corinthians as part of ongoing ministry and mentorship to the early church in Corinth. What good news might the promise of being a “new creation” have meant for this new church?

Notes: _____

Review: How has being baptized changed your life? What experiences of baptisms have you been part of? How have you seen others affected by their own baptism?

Reveal: When have you experienced a new creation? How do you hope that studying wholeness and wellness will help you in your faith journey?

Engage: Take a look at the Wholeness Wheel on the back cover of this booklet. Notice how the different spaces come from the promise of new creation in baptism and are surrounded by spiritual well-being. Like a wheel on a wagon, each part is vital: hub, spokes, outer circle. Looking ahead to this study, how might trusting in the promises that God makes in baptism help you along the way?

Pray: *Lord of abundant life, we give you thanks for the waters of baptism and the ways in which you make all things new. Create newness in us and guide us toward lives of wholeness and peace. Amen.*

Notes: _____

Spiritual Well-Being

Living a centered life focused on God affects each aspect of our well-being. Turn to God for strength as you seek to live well in Christ. Nurture your relationship with God through prayer, devotions, worship, nature, art, and music. Explore who you are and know whose you are.

Read: John 17:10-26



Recap: Jesus prays this prayer where the disciples can hear him, after having washed their feet and before going to the garden at the beginning of the Passion. How do you think the disciples felt having Jesus pray for them?

Notes: _____

Review: Where is God in your day-to-day life? What are your favorite ways to pray? How would you describe your relationship with God?

Reveal: Notice that Jesus prayed not only for his disciples but for “those who will believe in [Jesus] through their word.” How do you feel when someone prays for you? How do you feel knowing that Jesus prayed for you?

Engage: How might you experiment with different ways of deepening your relationship with God? What prayer practices have you thought about trying, but haven’t yet? Why?

Pray: *Holy God, you have been in relationship with humanity since you first created us. We give you thanks for Jesus’ example of prayer and relationship with you. Help us overcome the barriers that keep us from knowing you more deeply. Just as you hear us when we pray, open our ears to hear you. Amen.*

Notes: _____

Social/Interpersonal Well-Being

We are created by God to be social beings, living in community and instructed to help and love each other. We maintain social well-being through interaction, play, and forgiveness. Take time to nurture your relationships with family, friends, congregation, and co-workers.

Read: Colossians 3:12-17



Recap: In the letter to the Colossians, Paul gives the early church teaching on how to be church together. What challenges in forming community might have faced the first receivers of this text?

Notes: _____

Review: When have you experienced communities focused on building up instead of dividing? How have you found ways to be open to hearing viewpoints you don't agree with from people with whom you have a lasting relationship?

Reveal: What relationship "clothes" do we wear when we encounter the world? In what ways do we "put on armor" when reading social media or the news, and how might that affect us? What might it look like to "clothe ourselves with love" when we interact with those who have hurt us, or whom we have hurt?

Engage: When in disagreement, how can we model the ability to disagree with a person without diminishing their humanity? Consider Luther's explanation to the 8th Commandment in the Small Catechism: not only are we to not bear false witness through lies, but also we are to interpret everything our neighbor does in the best possible light. How might that impact our interpersonal relationships?

Pray: *Holy One, your very heart is relationship. We give you thanks that you call us into community. Help us to live and serve together in your peace. Amen.*

Notes: _____

Emotional Well-Being

Being emotionally well means feeling the full range of human emotions and expressing them appropriately. Self-awareness is the first step. Recognizing and honoring your own feelings and those of others — stress, contentment, anger, love, sadness, joy, resentment — will help you live life abundantly.

Read: John 11:17-37



Recap: This is but a portion of the longer narrative about Jesus and Lazarus. We are often quick to want to get to the resurrection part of the story, but there is much to be gleaned in these 20 verses about what it means to be fully human. What emotions are named here, and which others can you imagine were present in the various characters?

Notes: _____

Review: What pain are you hanging on to, and how would it feel to let it go? What emotions are you quick to avoid? Which emotions trouble you when you see them in others? How does our society respond to different displays of emotion?

Reveal: How did the different characters in these verses respond to the emotions others displayed? When you read this text, what emotions resonate within you?

Engage: What emotions do you feel unable to acknowledge in yourself, or struggle to let others acknowledge with you? What are some healthy ways that you can practice naming and experiencing emotions, especially the ones that our society prefers to “shush” away?

Pray: *Incarnate God, we give you thanks that you know the fullness of our humanity. Grant us your compassion. Amen.*

Notes: _____

Physical Well-Being

While we are not all born perfectly healthy or able to live life without injury or illness, we can live well by tending and nurturing our body as a gift from God. Feed it healthy foods, keep it hydrated, build up physical endurance through regular exercise, and respect your body's need for rest.

Read: Mark 6:30-32



Recap: After Jesus sends out the 12 disciples to preach, teach, and heal in his name, they return with news of their ministry. The first thing Jesus has them do next is rest and care for themselves. Why? Can you think of other times when Jesus and his disciples are overwhelmed by the needs of others?

Notes: _____

Review: How are you intentional about taking care of yourself physically? What aspect of physical wellness is most important for you? What aspect of physical wellness is your biggest struggle?

Reveal: Have you ever been so busy that you “had no leisure even to eat?” How is Jesus’ instruction to the disciples also good news for you?

Engage: How can you practice saying “no” when you are overwhelmed by the needs of others? How might you make space to care for yourself physically while also attending to the other aspects of wholeness (vocation, relationships, etc.)?

Pray: *God of the Sabbath, even you rested amidst your work of creation. We give you thanks for our bodies. Help us to remember to rest and care for what you have given us. Amen.*

Notes: _____

Financial Well-Being

Being financially well involves making decisions based on our values, as reflected in the way we save, spend, and share. Tending to one's financial well-being in this way requires us to be resilient, generous, and focused on sustainability.

Read: Luke 14:28-33



Recap: Luke 14 comes in the midst of Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem and focuses primarily on what it means to be a disciple. These two parables come in the middle of a discourse on the cost of discipleship and the need to give up what one has in order to follow Christ. How does planning of resources relate to giving up what one has in order to be a disciple?

Notes: _____

Review: Financial well-being might be one of the more anxiety-producing topics in our society today. What practices do you have around finances? Do you plan ahead as carefully as Jesus describes?

Reveal: In the gospels, Jesus talks about money more than almost anything else. What might these two parables tell us about Jesus' thoughts around planning ahead and measuring resources? How can Jesus' focus on money remind us of the importance of financial wellness in our own lives?

Engage: What small, concrete steps can you experiment with in order to work toward financial wellness? What resources do you need? How can our Christian community lift each other up and support each other in working toward financial wellness?

Pray: *God of abundance, we give you thanks that you have given us all we have. Send your Spirit of peace as we tend our financial well-being. Amen.*

Notes: _____

Vocational Well-Being

We all have a calling — a vocation — to follow Christ’s example by living a life of meaning, purpose, and service to our neighbor. Our vocations make up our life’s work and passions — they are the everyday roles through which God calls us to help make this world a better place. Those who are vocationally well are faithful stewards of their talents and abilities, and find opportunities to build and use them.

Read: Ephesians 4:1-16



Recap: Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is an example of Paul’s encouragement and support of the early Christian churches. In chapter four, he points out the number of different callings in the church. What are some callings he names? What might he have included if writing to your congregation today?

Notes: _____

Review: What do you do that “makes you the most you?” How do you see yourself living into your calling? Have you had a major change in your life that makes you question what your call might be now? What would you describe as the difference between call, career, and job?

Reveal: How does Paul describe why God gave different gifts to different people? What does it look like to “no longer be children” when it comes to following our callings?

Engage: Are you comfortable in how you are serving God in following Christ’s call to you? In what ways might you be called more deeply into your calling? What gifts and passions do you think you might explore more deeply?

Pray: *Lord, you have called us to follow you. We give you thanks for the different gifts you have given each of us and ask that you guide us as we strive to serve you. Amen.*

Notes: _____

Intellectual Well-Being

Using our minds keeps us alert and active. Stay curious, ask questions, and seek answers. Explore new responsibilities, experience new things, and keep an open mind. And remember, knowing when and how to let your mind rest is as important as keeping it active.

Read: Matthew 19:16-26



Recap: In this parable, Jesus listens and responds to many questions. Can you think of other times when the disciples (or others) asked Jesus questions? Notice in verse 23 that Jesus begins to explain his teaching even before the disciples ask questions. What questions would you have for Jesus if you had been there for this conversation?

Notes: _____

Review: Intellectual wellness is not simply about formal education, but about nourishing our brains and feeding our curiosity. How do you keep your mind active? What do you do that challenges your intellectual wellness?

Reveal: Having questions or not understanding matters of faith, the Bible, and church teachings does not mean that we are not “good Christians.” Even those who met Jesus face to face, including his disciples who traveled with him and learned from him, had questions. Look through the gospels and notice the times when the disciples ask questions and engage their curiosity.

Engage: What are you curious about? What is one thing you would like to know more about?

Pray: *God of mystery, we give you thanks for your teachings. As we were created in your likeness, help us to seek to understand ourselves and your creation. Grant us a spirit of curiosity. Amen.*

Notes: _____

The Wholeness Wheel



As the ELCA's benefit ministry, Portico champions wellness in our church and its leaders by providing resources and inspiration grounded in Christ's promise of abundant life (John 10:10). Print additional copies of this study at PorticoBenefits.org/wheel and find other faith-based wellness activities at PorticoBenefits.org/wellness.