



NAZARENE
ESSENTIALS

S M A L L G R O U P

A 13-WEEK STUDY ON WHO WE
ARE AND WHAT WE BELIEVE

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

NAZARENE
ESSENTIALS
S M A L L G R O U P

A 13 - W E E K S T U D Y O N W H O W E
A R E A N D W H A T W E B E L I E V E

Writers

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NAZARENE ESSENTIALS SMALL GROUP

Thank you for choosing *Nazarene Essentials Small Group*. To lead this 13-week course, you will need the *Nazarene Essentials* leader's guide, a participant's handout for each group member, and copies of *Nazarene Essentials* for each participant. A downloadable copy of *Nazarene Essentials* is available online at **Nazarene.org/essentials**. Additional print copies are available by writing **generaleditor@nazarene.org**. We recommend sending out an email to all participants before the first session (include the link **Nazarene.org/essentials**) and invite participants to download a personal copy of *Nazarene Essentials*.

This small group study was created to help participants understand the church's purpose of spreading scriptural holiness and its mission to make Christlike disciples in the nations. We will cover the history of the denomination, the core values of the church, the seven characteristics of the Church of the Nazarene, our theology, and our global reach. This series is designed to give a basic overview of the Church of the Nazarene—where we came from, what we believe, and our vision for the future.

Each week, you will find:

- *An opening activity* to focus and engage the interest of your group members.
- *A video presentation* by a church leader and/or scholar related to the session topic.
- *A discussion time*. This includes talking points and excerpts from *Nazarene Essentials* from which you can feel free to summarize or read aloud to the group as a lead-in to your discussion questions.
- *A wrap-up activity or question*. This is always included on the participant's handout since it also acts as a take-away thought or concept from the session.

The Articles of Faith are very briefly covered in Session 11, but we recommend following this series with a deeper look into the Articles of Faith with *The Christian Belief Series: The Articles of Faith* (www.nph.com/go/articlesoffaith). You may also find that some participants are interested in membership after reading through *Nazarene Essentials*. *Our Church, Your Home* (www.nph.com/go/ourchurchoyourhome) will take participants from a basic overview of the denomination (found in *Nazarene Essentials*) and go deeper into the church's history, the articles of faith and core values, and what it means to be a member in the local church body.

Thank you for choosing *Nazarene Essentials* for your small group or Sunday school class.





SESSION 1: WELCOME TO *NAZARENE ESSENTIALS*

Preparation

Before teaching, take a few moments to review the work of the Church of the Nazarene on the world map in *Nazarene Essentials*. This will give you a more comprehensive overview before facilitating the discussion. The map may be located under the 'Artwork and Resources' tab at nazarene.org/essentials.

Opening Prayer

Gather everyone together and begin with a time of prayer requests and prayer. Allow for members of the group to share.

Opening Activity

Because this is the first week, take the time to go around the group and allow each person to introduce themselves. (You may also consider playing the Session 1 video, *Welcome to Nazarene Essentials*.)

Discussion

Over the next 13 weeks, we will learn about the Church of the Nazarene. This study was created to help you understand the church's purpose of spreading scriptural holiness and its mission to make Christlike disciples in the nations. We will cover the history of the denomination, our core values, the seven characteristics of the Church of the Nazarene, our theology, and our global reach. This series is designed to give you a basic overview of the Church of the Nazarene—where we came from, what we believe and our vision for the future.

- *Were you raised in a particular religious tradition? What was that like?*
- *What are one or two things that you already know about the Church of the Nazarene?*
- *What are you hoping to learn about the Church of the Nazarene through this study?*

There are seven characteristics of the Church of the Nazarene. You will find them listed on the participant's handout.

- *After reading through the list, what stands out to you most about these characteristics?*

Wrap Up

Give each participant a few minutes to write down questions they hope to have answered through this 13-week study. Invite each participant to read aloud one of the questions they wrote down.

Don't Forget: Remind each participant they can download a full copy of *Nazarene Essentials* at Nazarene.org/essentials.

Close your group time in prayer.



John Wesley, 1703-1791
Founder of Methodist Movement



SESSION 2:

OUR WESLEYAN -HOLINESS HERITAGE

Preparation

In preparation for this session, read the sections “Our Wesleyan Holiness Heritage” and “Our Global Church” in *Nazarene Essentials*. [You may want to check out the denominational family tree entitled “A Family Tree of Religious Groups” on the *Nazarene Essentials* website.]

Opening Prayer

Gather everyone together and begin with a time of prayer requests and prayer. Allow for members of the group to share.

Opening Question

This week we will be discussing the Church of the Nazarene’s history. To get your group thinking about one’s heritage, ask the following question and allow different members of the group to answer:

- *If your family could leave one legacy behind to your children and your children’s children, what would it be? Why?*

Video Presentation

Before beginning the discussion, play the Session 2 video, *Our Wesleyan-Holiness Heritage*, featuring Scott Daniels.

Follow up the video by asking,

- *From what Scott Daniels shared about the Wesleyan tradition, what stood out to you the most? Why?*
- *Why do you think that God’s “love” and “grace” are a central focus of the Wesleyan tradition?*

Discussion

Common Foundations

Feel free to summarize or read this aloud to the group.

The Church of the Nazarene confesses itself to be a branch of Christ's "**one, holy, catholic, and apostolic**" church, embracing as its own the history of God's people recorded in the Old and New Testaments and by God's people through the ages.

It receives the ecumenical creeds of the first five Christian centuries as expressions of its own faith. It identifies with the historic church in preaching the Word, administering the sacraments, maintaining a ministry of apostolic faith and practice, and instilling the disciplines of Christlike living and service. It joins the saints in heeding the biblical call to holy living and entire devotion to God, which it proclaims through the theology of entire sanctification.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *What do you think it means to be a part of "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church"?*

At this time, have someone in the group read aloud the *Apostles' Creed* (available on the participant's handout).

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended into hell.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

After the Apostles' Creed has been read aloud, ask the following questions.

- *What is the purpose and function of a creed?*
- *Why do you think the Church felt the need to develop creeds throughout its history?*
- *How does the Apostles' Creed help protect the Church?*
- *What dangers could the Global Church face if there weren't any creeds?*

The Wesleyan Revival

Feel free to summarize or read this aloud to the group.

Through the preaching of John and Charles Wesley, people throughout England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales turned from sin and were empowered for holy living and Christian service.

This revival was characterized by lay preaching, testimonies, discipline, and circles of earnest disciples known as "societies," "classes," and "bands." The Wesleyan revival's theological landmarks included: justification by grace through faith; entire sanctification, or Christian perfection, likewise by grace through faith; and the witness of the Spirit to the assurance of grace.

John Wesley's distinctive contributions included an emphasis on entire sanctification as God's gracious provision for the Christian life. His emphases were disseminated worldwide. In North America, the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1784 "to reform the Continent, and to spread scriptural Holiness over these Lands."

-Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *How would you define the word "holiness"?*
- *What does the pursuit of holiness look like for the Christian?*
- *In what ways is holiness both individualistic and corporate?*
- *Why do you think John and Charles Wesley were intentional about creating "circles of earnest disciples"?*
- *Why is it essential for believers to regularly meet together in order to grow as Christlike disciples?*

Phineas F. Bresee and Joseph P. Widney, with about 100 others, organized the Church of the Nazarene at Los Angeles in 1895. They held that Christians sanctified by faith should follow Christ's example and preach the gospel to the poor. They believed that their time and money should be given to Christlike ministries for the salvation of souls and the relief of the needy. The Church of the Nazarene spread chiefly along the West Coast of the United States, with some congregations as far east as Illinois. They supported an indigenous mission in Calcutta, India.

The Church of the Nazarene's strong international dimension was clearly seen as early as 1915. The denomination already supported fully organized churches in the United States, India, Cape Verde, Cuba, Canada, Mexico, Guatemala, Japan, Argentina, the United Kingdom, Swaziland, China, and Peru. By 1930, it also reached into South Africa, Syria, Palestine, Mozambique, Barbados, and Trinidad. Nazarene strategic ministries have centered historically around evangelism, social ministry, and education. They flourish through the mutual cooperation of cross-cultural missionaries and thousands of pastors and lay workers who have indigenized Wesleyan principles within their respective cultures. —Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *Why is it essential for Christians to have a deep care and concern for the poor?*
- *What does the international presence of the Church of the Nazarene say about its character?*

Wrap Up

As you close your group time together, read Matthew 22:34-40. After you have read the passage ask: *How is the "Greatest Commandment" and the call to holiness impossible to separate from one another?*

Close your group time in prayer.

SESSION 3: OUR CORE VALUES

Preparation

Before teaching, take a few moments to read through “Our Core Values” in *Nazarene Essentials*. This will give you a more comprehensive overview before facilitating the discussion.

Opening Prayer

Gather everyone together and begin with a time of prayer requests and prayer. Allow for members of the group to share.

Opening Activity

Everyone has core values, values on which they base their decisions and lifestyle. The Church of the Nazarene has three core values that express the mission of the church. To begin the session, ask each member of the group to think of what their personal core values are—what expresses their life mission. Have them write down on their participant’s handout their top three core values.

Once everyone has done this, have members of the group share what they wrote.



Video Presentation

Before beginning the discussion, play the Session 3 video, *Our Core Values*, featuring David Busic. Follow up the video by asking,

- *From what David Busic shared, what stood out to you the most? Why?*
- *Why do “core values” play such an important role in the life of the church?*

Discussion

As you discuss each of the three core values of the Church of the Nazarene, have each participant fill-in the blank of each core value statement on their participant’s handout.

We Are A Christian People

Read Ephesians 4:3-5.

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”

As members of the Church Universal, we join with all true believers in proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ and in affirming the historic Trinitarian creeds and beliefs of the Christian faith. We value our Wesleyan-Holiness heritage and believe it to be a way of understanding the faith that is true to Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience.

We are united with all believers in proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

In Ephesians 4:3-5, it mentions “one body, one spirit, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.”

- *How does this passage relate to the core value that we are a Christian people?*
- *What does it mean to be united with all believers in proclaiming the Lordship of Christ? What does that look like across denominational lines?*

We Are A Holiness People

Read Leviticus 11:44.

“I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy.”

God, who is holy, calls us to a life of holiness. We believe that the Holy Spirit seeks to do in us a second work of grace, called by various terms including “entire sanctification” and “baptism with the Holy Spirit”—cleansing us from all sin, renewing us in the image of God, empowering us to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves, and producing in us the

character of Christ. Holiness in the life of believers is most clearly understood as Christlikeness.
—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *What does it look like to live out Christlikeness in our everyday lives?*
- *Who is someone that comes to mind, who faithfully embodies the call to holiness?*

We Are A Missional People

Read Matthew 28:19-20.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Read 2 Corinthians 6:1.

“As God’s co-workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain.”

We are a sent people, responding to the call of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to go into all the world, witnessing to the Lordship of Christ and participating with God in the building of the Church and the extension of His kingdom. Our mission begins in worship, ministers to the world in evangelism and compassion, encourages believers toward Christian maturity through discipleship, and prepares women and men for Christian service through Christian higher education.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *Why do you think it is important that our missional work begins in worship?*

In 2 Corinthians 6:1, Paul states that we are “God’s co-workers.”

- *Why is it so important to remember we are an extension of His kingdom when we minister, serve, and disciple?*

Wrap Up

In light of our discussion of the three core values of the Church of the Nazarene,

- *Which core value stood out to you the most?*
- *Why do you think the Church of the Nazarene emphasizes these three core values?*

Close your group time in prayer.



SESSION 4: MEANINGFUL WORSHIP

Preparation

The next seven weeks of this series we will be discussing the seven characteristics of the Church of the Nazarene. Comprehensive descriptions of these characteristics can be found in *Nazarene Essentials* under “Our Nazarene Characteristics.” Take a few moments to read through the first characteristic, “Meaningful Worship.” This will give you a more comprehensive overview before facilitating the discussion.

Opening Prayer

Gather everyone together and begin with a time of prayer requests and prayer. Allow for members of the group to share.

Opening Activity

There are many ways that one can participate in worship.

- *What are ways that you experience meaningful worship, both personally and corporately?*

Video Presentation

Before beginning the discussion, play the Session 4 video, *Meaningful Worship*, featuring Charles Tillman. Follow up the video by asking,

- *From what Charles Tillman shared about worship, what stood out to you most? Why?*
- *In what ways have you found worship to be both engaging and empowering?*

Discussion

The disciples of Jesus lived in His presence. They ate with Him, prayed with Him, traveled with Him, and ministered alongside Him. They had a relationship with Jesus. Because of their encounters with Jesus, the disciples were able to then be His ambassadors. They witnessed and ministered on His behalf—as an extension of Jesus and His mission.

- *Why are personal encounters with God so critical to meaningful worship?*

- *When was a time in your life where you felt the presence of God?*
- *How were the disciples more effective because of their intimate knowledge and relationship with Jesus?*

Meaningful worship takes place as we practice the disciplines of the Spirit, such as fasting and prayer. In our fast-paced lives, it is important for us to intentionally take the time for personal worship experiences. These times allow us to experience divine encounters and help shape us into the holy image of Jesus.

The following questions are also listed on the participant's handout. Either allow group members a few moments to answer them separately, or talk about them together as a group.

- *What does your personal time with God look like?*
- *What are ways you can carve out time to experience personal encounters with God?*

Meaningful worship allows time in corporate services for God to move among us in His own way. The early church did not conduct business through committees or seminars. Rather, they gathered frequently for community worship services and allowed God to work freely among them. When we are willing to stop our agendas and allow time for God to complete His agenda among us, we allow time for God to reveal himself and to convince, move, touch, save, and sanctify people in His own way and on His timetable. Nothing can substitute for the human spirit being energized by God's Divine Spirit. This happens best in times of meaningful corporate worship.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *Is it hard to stop your own agenda to make room for God's agenda? How can you make community worship time more of a focused and intentional time?*
- *How is your spirit "energized" by meaningful corporate worship?*

Wrap Up

After discussing the different aspects of meaningful worship,

- *Which aspect could you work to improve?*
- *Is there an area of worship you feel needs more attention in your own life?*

Close your group time in prayer.

SESSION 5: THEOLOGICAL COHERENCE

Preparation

In preparation for this session, read the section “Theological Coherence” in *Nazarene Essentials*.

Opening Prayer

Gather everyone together and begin with a time of prayer requests and prayer. Allow for members of the group to share.

Opening Activity

Ask your group members the following question:

- *If someone asked you how the Bible was different than any other book in history, what would you tell them?*

Video Presentation

Before beginning the discussion, play the Session 5 video, *Theological Coherence*, featuring Brannon Hancock.

Follow up the video by asking,

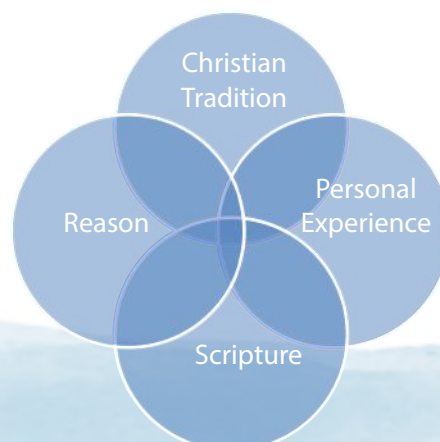
- *From what Brannon Hancock shared, what stood out to you most? Why?*
- *Why is it important to know what you believe and why you believe it?*

Discussion

In our pursuit of theological coherence, the Church of the Nazarene looks to four main sources.

Scripture: We believe the holy Scriptures are foundational and vital in forming our identity in Christ.

Christian tradition: We celebrate the orthodox teachings of



Sources for Theological Coherence

2,000 years of history through various Christian traditions.

Reason: We believe the Spirit of God works through our intellects and gives us discerning minds.

Personal experience: We believe God works in and through the lives of individuals and communities who follow Christ.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *Why are all of these sources needed to gain theological coherence? Is there one source that you believe is more important than the others?*
- *What danger could someone encounter if they looked to the Scriptures while ignoring reason, personal experience, and Christian tradition?*

The Church of the Nazarene identifies itself as Wesleyan, which means:

- We believe the essential nature of God around which all theology builds—“God is love” (1 John 4:8).
- We believe humans exercise free will in order to have meaningful relationships with God.
- We believe God exercises grace and mercy toward humanity.
- We believe God’s prevenient grace goes before a person, keeps that person from going deeper into sin, and draws him or her back to God.
- We believe God’s seeking, redeeming, saving, sanctifying, and sufficient grace works with a person to make him or her into a child of God and gives ongoing victory in the Christian walk.
- We believe in the optimism of grace to break the power of sin in a person’s life and transform the individual from a sinner into a child of God who willfully obeys the Lord with a heart of love.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *Why is it necessary that humans have free will in order to have a genuine and meaningful relationship with God?*
- *What do the words “grace” and “mercy” mean to you? How do you believe God exercises grace and mercy toward humanity?*
- *What are some ways that people often ignore or disregard the voice of God in their life?*

The Church of the Nazarene believes that there are four essential aspects to the Christian life:

Christlikeness—being transformed daily into the image of Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit as we make ourselves available to God’s work in us. “Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind” (Philippians 2:1).

Lifestyle—being set apart for holy purposes to do God’s work in our world. “My prayer is not that you

take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:15-17).

Temptation and Power to Choose—having the ability to not surrender to addictions or suggestions of the flesh or the evil one but power from God to live the holy life. "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 1:18-20).

Fruit of the Spirit—the perfect love of God that manifests itself in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18).
—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *What are some disciplines and practices that we as believers can incorporate into our lives to further the work of the Holy Spirit within us?*
- *What are some things that we as believers need to intentionally say "no" to that might draw us away from the holy life God has called us to?*

Wrap Up

As you prepare to end your time together, encourage group members to write a prayer to God, articulating the ways in which they would like to see God work in and through their lives.

Close your group time in prayer.



SESSION 6:

PASSIONATE EVANGELISM

Preparation

In *Nazarene Essentials* under “Our Nazarene Characteristics,” take a few moments to read through the characteristic, “Passionate Evangelism.” This will give you a more comprehensive overview before facilitating the discussion.

Opening Prayer

Gather everyone together and begin with a time of prayer requests and prayer. Allow for members of the group to share.

Opening Activity

Begin by asking your group,

- *How would you define evangelism?*
- *When is your first memory of someone telling you about Jesus? Who shared the message of Jesus with you and how did it impact your life?*

Video Presentation

Before beginning the discussion, play the Session 6 video, *Passionate Evangelism*, featuring Grant Zweigle.

Follow up the video by asking,

- *From what Grant Zweigle shared about passionate evangelism, what stood out to you most? Why?*
- *In what ways has evangelism impacted your life? In what ways have you seen evangelism impact the lives of others?*

Discussion

Passionate evangelism is our response to Jesus' love and grace for humanity. The Church of the Nazarene started with passionate evangelism. It continues to be the heart of who we are. In his call to evangelism, Phineas Bresee, the Church of the Nazarene's first general superintendent, said, "We are indebted to give the gospel to every [person] in the same measure in which we have received it." We focus on helping people discover a personal saving faith in Jesus Christ.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

Read Matthew 9:36-38.

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'"

Jesus uses the story of workers needed for a harvest.

- *How is this story a direct parallel to our call to passionate evangelism?*
- *Why do you think evangelism is central to the Church of the Nazarene's teachings?*

We are called to share the message of Christ.

- *Share a time when you felt called to share Jesus with someone.*

Read Acts 1:8.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

The Holy Spirit empowers us individually and corporately to live and witness holiness. The Holy Spirit working through us is evident in the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

We are a witness, not only through our words, but through our actions as well. When we live by the Spirit, we embody the fruit of the Spirit.

- *Why are the fruit of the Spirit so important to our evangelism?*
- *Which fruit of the Spirit do you find the hardest to embody?*

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

- *How does passionate evangelism bring new life to both individuals and the church?*
- *Why is it so important to be in the Word and know the Word if you are going to evangelize?*

Wrap Up

This is provided on the participant's handout. Invite someone to read it aloud.

Passionate evangelism propels us to knowing Christ more completely: It conveys who we are, our lifestyle. Our passion for life is no greater than our passion for evangelism. **By choosing to live we choose to evangelize.**

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

Reread the last sentence above: "By choosing to live we choose to evangelize."

- *Have you ever thought of evangelism so closely intertwined with your every day life before? How does this change the way you think and act?*

Close your group time in prayer.



SESSION 7:

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Preparation

In *Nazarene Essentials* under “Our Nazarene Characteristics,” take a few moments to read through the characteristic, “Intentional Discipleship.” This will give you a more comprehensive overview before facilitating the discussion.

Opening Prayer

Gather everyone together and begin with a time of prayer requests and prayer. Allow for members of the group to share.

Opening Activity

Have each person spend a moment and write down their own definition of the word “Discipleship” on their participant’s handout. Once everyone has written their definition, encourage them to share their definitions with the group. Discuss the similarities and differences between definitions.

Video Presentation

Before beginning the discussion, play the Session 7 video, *Intentional Discipleship*, featuring Janine Metcalf.

Follow up the video by asking,

- *From what Janine Metcalf shared, what stood out to you most? Why?*
- *Why must discipleship be intentional, rather than something that happens by accident?*

Discussion

Jesus called the church to intentionally make disciples. Christlike disciples are people who dwell in Christ, grow in Christlikeness and do what He does. They deny themselves, love and obey God with all their hearts, souls, minds, and strength. Intentional relational discipleship is helping people develop obedient intimate relationships with Jesus. In these relationships, Christ’s Spirit transforms their character into Christlikeness—changing new believers’ values into kingdom values, and involving them in His mission of investing in others in their homes, churches, and world.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

Discipleship first requires relationship.

- *What are some ways one can begin a relationship that leads towards discipleship?*
- *What are some characteristics of a healthy discipleship relationship?*

We intentionally develop Christlike disciples through a strong pulpit ministry. Our pastors strive to preach instructional sermons on how to grow in our faith in Christ, allowing the Word of God to become the basis of all discipleship efforts.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

Jesus preached to the multitudes and carefully taught His disciples in a small group.

- *How can we follow Jesus' model when we think of our church and our discipleship ministries?*

Intentional ministries throughout the church help foster discipleship. From Sunday school, to small groups, to encouraging personal faith practices, opportunities for discipleship need to be present in the church.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *How are Sunday school classes and small groups beneficial to intentional discipleship?*

Refer to the list of examples on the participant's handout of ways one can grow and develop their personal faith. Discuss how each one can be beneficial and encourage participants to share what they do to carve out time for God.

- Read the Bible with study helps; listen to the Bible on audio files.
- Pray daily.
- Listen to Christian music.
- Read Christian literature.
- Find an accountability partner who will pray every day that you will be Christlike.
- Find an accountability partner who loves you so much they will ask you hard questions.
- Develop the discipline of regularly telling others what God is doing in your life.

Wrap Up

"Prayer, the Word of God, and intentionally helping each other to be more like Jesus characterize dynamic discipleship in the church."

- *Do you agree with this statement? Do you think these are the three main elements needed in intentional discipleship?*

Close your group time in prayer.

**INTENTIONAL
MINISTRIES
THROUGHOUT THE
CHURCH HELP
FOSTER
DISCIPLESHIP.**



SESSION 8: CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

Preparation

Before teaching the session, take a few minutes to read the section entitled “Church Development” in *Nazarene Essentials*.

Opening Prayer

Gather everyone together and begin with a time of prayer requests and prayer. Allow for members of the group to share.

Opening Activity

Have each member of the group write down in their participant’s handout two or three attributes that they believe are essential for a local church to possess. After group members are finished, have them share some of the qualities they wrote down and why.

Video Presentation

Before beginning the discussion, play the Session 8 video, *Church Development*, featuring Mark Bane.

Follow up the video by asking,

- *From what Mark Bane shared about church planting, what stood out to you most? Why?*
- *Why do you think church planting is a crucial part of building God’s kingdom?*

Discussion

The Christian Church began with Jesus Christ who started the first community of faith. Following Pentecost, the Holy Spirit worked in and through people like Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and others to spread the Good News of the gospel and to plant new churches. While the Christian Church began to expand, the work was not easy. Many of the first missionaries endured great hardship and persecution as a result of their preaching and teachings. Some were put in prison, others were beaten, and still, some were even put to death as a result of their ministry. There was no counting the cost to remain faithful to the gospel.

The same must be true for us today. If we wish to see the Church grow and the Gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed throughout our communities and world, we must be willing to offer our tears, toil, effort, money, and sometimes even bloodshed to see this through. We don’t do this through our own efforts

alone, but it begins by submitting ourselves before God as we welcome the Holy Spirit's leading and guiding upon our lives and churches.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *What do you believe will be the byproducts of a church that is truly seeking to be a Spirit-led Church?*
- *Where do you see God working in and through your church?*

"Church attendance is the best way to measure the health and well-being of a church."

- *Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?*
- *What do you believe are the most common barriers within the church today that keep people from truly seeking and listening to God?*

"God cannot and will not work through a church that is unwilling to give sacrificially to the work of the Kingdom."

- *Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?*

"In the Church of the Nazarene, our definition of a church reads: Any group that meets regularly for spiritual nurture, worship, or instruction at an announced time and place with an identified leader, and aligned with the message and mission of the Church of the Nazarene may be recognized as a church and reported as such for district and general church statistics. In other words, a church is a cluster of believers, not a building or a property."

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

The purpose of church development is to reach new people for Jesus Christ.

What do you believe the Christian Church needs to do to reach those who may have a negative view of Christians and Christianity? "A church is a cluster of believers, not a building or a property."

- *How does this statement change the way we view church? What does this mean about where and when church can take place?*

Wrap Up

- *How could God use you and your church to be an extension of His hands, feet, and voice in the world?*

Once group members have responded, end your time by encouraging people to pray aloud as you remember people's responses to the question.

Close your group time in prayer.

SESSION 9: TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Preparation

Before teaching the session, take a few minutes to read the section entitled “Transformational Leadership” in *Nazarene Essentials*.

Opening Prayer

Gather everyone together and begin with a time of prayer requests and prayer. Allow for members of the group to share.

Opening Activity

To begin this session, have the group members write down in their participant’s handout someone who they think is an effective leader.

- *What qualities make him/her an effective leader?*

Video Presentation

Before beginning the discussion, play the Session 9 video, *Transformational Leadership*, featuring Carla Sunberg.

Follow up the video by asking,

- *From what Carla Sunberg shared about transformational leadership, what stood out to you most? Why?*
- *In what ways is the holiness message to be transformational for a person who is in a place of leadership within the church?*

Discussion

The Church of the Nazarene seeks to develop leaders through a model of Christlikeness. Jesus is our greatest example.

There are also eight attributes that we believe are necessary for one to possess in order to practice transformational leadership. We believe transformational leaders are:

- humble and submissive
- servants
- visionary
- strategic thinkers
- team builders
- compassionately assertive
- clear communicators
- empowering the next generation to lead & build the kingdom
- Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *Out of the eight characteristics listed, do you believe there is one that is most important? Why?*
- *Do you believe people are more or less likely to follow a leader who is humble and submissive? Why?*

Mark 10:45 reads, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

- *Besides Jesus, can you think of someone who practiced transformational leadership by being a servant? What did this look like?*
- *How did Jesus paint pictures and cast a vision to those who listened to Him? How can we strive to do this today?*
- *What might occur if a leader possesses humility, servitude, and compassion, but lacks the ability to think strategically?*

When Jesus launched His disciples into evangelistic work, He instructed them, "to be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16).

- *What do you think Jesus meant by this?*

Transformational leaders empower others to raise up the next generation to lead the kingdom.

- In the Old Testament, Joshua's leadership style failed to do this, and as a result, he only led for his generation.
- Transformational leaders do not build empires for their tenure, they train both the present and the next generation.
- They identify, equip, and train mentors who equip, empower, and release leaders for the sake of God's kingdom.
- No leadership is successful without leadership succession. "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:2).

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *How is your church doing at equipping and empowering other people to serve and lead?*
- *What do you believe is the one or two most important lessons and truths to hand down to the next generation?*

Wrap Up

To close your time together, challenge your group members to reflect on the eight different attributes and characteristics that were mentioned in this session. Have them write down one or two that they believe they could work on specifically. If you wish, have the group members share what they wrote and why.

Close your group time in prayer.



SESSION 10: PURPOSEFUL COMPASSION

Preparation

In *Nazarene Essentials* under “Our Nazarene Characteristics,” take a few moments to read through the characteristic, “Purposeful Compassion.” This will give you a more comprehensive overview before facilitating the discussion.

Opening Prayer

Gather everyone together and begin with a time of prayer requests and prayer. Allow for members of the group to share.

Opening Activity

Everyone has been shown compassion in his/her life. Begin by sharing a story of a time you were shown compassion. Then ask others in the group to share.

Video Presentation

Before beginning the discussion, play the Session 10 video *Purposeful Compassion*, featuring Tim Gaines.

Follow up the video by asking,

- *From what Tim Gaines shared, what stood out to you most? Why?*
- *What do you think it means to follow Jesus’ example and walk with the feet of compassion?*

Discussion

Purposeful compassion displays the loving heart of God. Jesus’ life, ministry, and death, is our model for compassion. Jesus was particularly moved with compassion in love and care for those who were poor, lost, sick, marginalized, and vulnerable.

—Paraphrased from *Nazarene Essentials*

Refer to the participant’s handout. Talk about each aspect of Jesus’ time here on earth. Discuss how each showed Jesus’ compassion.

- Jesus' Life
- Jesus' Ministry
- Jesus' Death
 - *What would Jesus' ministry look like without compassion? Why is compassion such a foundational part of His ministry, and all ministry?*

Purposeful compassion flows naturally from transformed believers. The church is called to embody God's own love and compassion in the world and the work of compassion is never completed by human effort or social activism alone. As the Body of Christ, our compassionate calling touches all areas of life.
—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

Nazarene Essentials states that compassion should “flow naturally from transformed believers.”

- *What does it look like for this to happen? Do you think we, as a church, are successful at doing this?*
- *Can you be compassionate without the love of Christ?*
- *What is the difference between social activism and purposeful compassion?*

Purposeful compassion is our Wesleyan definition of holistic mission. It flows from our lives as an expression of our commitment to God's mission to redeem a broken world. We seek to see, hear, and respond to broken and hurting humanity in the same way God does.
—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *If compassion is our mission, how do we best join and commit to this mission?*
- *If you walk down the street or talk to your neighbors, you will see hurt in the world. How do we go beyond seeing the lost and broken and begin to hear and respond?*

Wrap Up

On the participant's handout, there are two columns—Church and Individual. Ask each person to write down, in the appropriate column, ways the church can respond and ways we can respond as individuals to the lost and broken in our community.

You can either talk about each example together or allow them to answer silently and choose one or two to discuss collectively.

Close your group time in prayer.

P U R P O S E F U L

COMPASSION

F L O W S F R O M

OUR LIVES TO

E X P R E S S G O D ' S

M I S S I O N T O

REDEEM

A B R O K E N

WORLD



SESSION 11: OUR WESLEYAN THEOLOGY

Preparation

Before teaching, take a few moments to read through “Our Wesleyan Theology” in *Nazarene Essentials*. This will give you a more comprehensive overview before facilitating the discussion.

Opening Prayer

Gather everyone together and begin with a time of prayer requests and prayer. Allow for members of the group to share.

Opening Activity

Give group members a few minutes to respond to the following question in their participant’s handout. Imagine you have met someone who is completely unfamiliar with the Christian faith and they ask you, “What are the one or two most important and foundational teachings in all of Christianity?”

- *How would you respond to the question?*

Once group members have finished writing, invite them to share their responses.

Video Presentation

Before beginning the discussion, play the Session 11 video, *Our Wesleyan Theology*, featuring Tom Noble.

Follow up the video by asking,

- *From what Tom Noble shared, what stood out to you the most? Why?*
- *In what ways can denominations work together, and at the same time stay true to their theology and tradition?*

Discussion

In Jesus, God became incarnate and acted decisively to reconcile the world to himself (John 3:15-16; Romans 1:1-16). While we were still sinners, God offered His own Son “as a sacrifice of atonement” for sin (Romans 3:25). The Lord of all creation took on himself the sin of the world and provided salvation for us all!

Long before we become aware of it, the Holy Spirit is at work, attempting to draw us to salvation. The Psalmist says there is no place where the voice of God is not heard (Psalm 19:3). Paul tells us that, moment by moment, the whole creation depends upon Christ for its existence (Colossians 1:15-17). John declares that Christ enlightens everyone (John 1:9).

In ways matched only by the creativity and faithfulness of God, the Holy Spirit works in both individual and social histories to open pathways for the gospel. He goes before the explicit proclamation of the Gospel and prepares persons to hear—and hopefully receive—the Good News.

In retrospect, all Christians can trace a pattern by which the Spirit brought them to Christian redemption. We refer to this preparatory dimension of God's grace as "prevenient grace," or the grace that goes before.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *If the Holy Spirit is always trying to open pathways to the gospel in people's lives, why do you think there are still so many people in the world that ignore or reject the gospel?*
- *What are some of the ways that the Holy Spirit desires to work in and through people today?*
- *Where have you seen evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in your own life?*

Whatever the language, by the miracle of divine grace, the Holy Spirit actually takes up residence in the Christian and effects a transformation. Where once there was death, now there is life; peace with God where once there was warfare; hope where once there was despair.

The New Testament announces: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God" (2 Corinthians 5:17-18a). The New Testament speaks of Christians as being "in Christ" and of Christ as being in them. On the one hand, Christians are now reconciled to God because by faith they are "in Christ" (Romans 8:1), in him who reconciles repentant sinners to the Father.

But the New Testament also speaks of Christ in us as "the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). Through the Holy Spirit, the resurrected Christ imparts His life—himself—in His people. He abides in them and cultivates within them the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

"But," many ask, "realistically, what kind of spiritual life can I expect as a Christian? Will not the pull of old sinful habits still set the pattern for my life? Or, does the Spirit of God now within me offer a better life?" The New Testament answers: "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone the new has come! All this is from God..." (2 Corinthians 5:17-18a).

- *What do you think Paul means by “new creation”?*
- *If God is to work in the hearts and lives of people, in what ways is our cooperation required if transformation is going to take place?*
- *What disciplines can a person incorporate into his or her life to better welcome the work and power of the Holy Spirit?*

The Church of the Nazarene has 16 Articles of Faith that express what we believe about God, the Scriptures, salvation, the Church, and the end times. These articles help define the theological framework that the Church of the Nazarene affirms.

The 16 Articles of Faith:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. <i>The Triune God</i> | 9. <i>Justification, Regeneration, Adoption</i> |
| 2. <i>Jesus Christ</i> | 10. <i>Christian Holiness & Entire Sanctification</i> |
| 3. <i>The Holy Spirit</i> | 11. <i>The Church</i> |
| 4. <i>The Holy Scriptures</i> | 12. <i>Baptism</i> |
| 5. <i>Sin, Original and Personal</i> | 13. <i>The Lord’s Supper</i> |
| 6. <i>Atonement</i> | 14. <i>Divine Healing</i> |
| 7. <i>Prevenient Grace</i> | 15. <i>Second Coming of Christ</i> |
| 8. <i>Repentance</i> | 16. <i>Resurrection, Judgment, and Destiny</i> |

- *Why do you think the Church of the Nazarene thought it was important to define these 16 articles?*
- *In what ways do the Articles of Faith help protect the Church of the Nazarene?*
- *In what ways do the Articles of Faith provide clarity for the Church of the Nazarene?*

Wrap Up

In today’s world, there are many distractions and barriers when it comes to being a devoted disciple of Jesus Christ.

- *What do you believe are some of these distractions and barriers? How can Christians ensure that they don’t get caught up in them?*

Close your group time in prayer.



SESSION 12: OUR CHURCH

Preparation

Before teaching, take a few moments to read through “Our Ecclesiology,” “Our Polity,” and “The Church” in *Nazarene Essentials*. This will give you a more comprehensive overview before facilitating the discussion.

Opening Prayer

Gather everyone together and begin with a time of prayer requests and prayer. Allow for members of the group to share.

Opening Activity

How familiar is everyone with the structure of the Church of the Nazarene? Begin this session by asking the group to share their understanding of the governing structure of the Church of the Nazarene.

Video Presentation

Before beginning the discussion, play the Session 12 video, *Our Church*, featuring Annette Mondragon.

Follow up the video by asking,

- *From what Annette Mondragon shared, what stood out to you most? Why?*
- *What are the benefits of organization and structure within the church?*

Discussion

We identify with the Scriptural account of “the people of God,” confessing ourselves to be part of “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” God’s mission in the world is primary, and we derive our mission from God—to help restore all creation to God’s creation purposes.

John Wesley defined this as **sanctification**, or “the renewal of our soul in the image of God,” characterized as “righteousness and true holiness.” God’s mission was reflected in the call of Abraham, chosen for blessing that his seed could “be a blessing to all nations” (Genesis 12:1-2), and manifested in the history of the

Hebrews, who bore witness to the One God, whose name they proclaimed to the nations of earth.

We join other Christians in God's mission and believe this mission is a global one. We are an international church in which national boundaries do not define ecclesiastical ones.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *What does it mean to be a "person of God"?*

The Nazarene Church firmly believes our denominational life should be an international one—meaning we are a "global" church.

- *Why is global connectedness so important to the mission of God?*

The Church of the Nazarene embraces a democratic version of the Methodist Episcopal polity that expanded the voice of clergy and laity and imposed limits on the episcopal office. The Church of the Nazarene has three levels of government: local, district, and general.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

On the participant's handout, there is a description of the three levels of government. Have one person read the description of the "Local Church," then ask the following questions.

- *As someone who participates in a local church, do you agree with this description? Do you think it accurately describes the mission of your church?*
- *What are examples of ministries in place at your local church that help with the saving, perfecting, teaching, and commissioning of believers?*
- *What are some ministries and opportunities that could be added to the local church to help further the mission of God?*

Have one person read the description of the "District Church," then ask the following questions.

- *What are the benefits of having local churches grouped into larger districts?*
- *What kind of support could local churches offer to one another?*
- *Who is your District Superintendent? What role does he/she play for pastors and leaders on your district?*

Optional: Before the session, ask your pastor about how the District Superintendent supports him/her in ministry. District Superintendents can be a great support for pastors in ministry and your pastor may be able to best articulate the benefits of the district level of government.

Have one person read the description of the “General Church,” then ask the following questions.

- *Why are the Articles of Faith so important? How do they help unify the denomination?*
- *How does accountability play a role in the three levels of government in the Church of the Nazarene?*

Wrap Up

“The church is more than connected. It is interconnected. The ties that bind us are stronger than a single cord that can be cut at any given time. What is the source of our common bond? It is Jesus Christ.”

—Excerpt from Nazarene Essentials

- *What does the word “interconnected” mean to you?*
- *Why is it so crucial for our common bond to be Jesus Christ?*

Close your group time in prayer.



SESSION 13: OUR GLOBAL FAMILY

Preparation

Before teaching, take a few moments to read through “A Connected Church” in *Nazarene Essentials*. This will give you a more comprehensive overview before facilitating the discussion.

Opening Prayer

Gather everyone together and begin with a time of prayer requests and prayer. Allow for members of the group to share.

Opening Activity

Give group members a few minutes to write down in their participant’s handout their response to the following question: *In one sentence, what do you believe ought to be the central mission of the Christian Church throughout the world?*

Once finished, have group members share their responses.

Video Presentation

Before beginning the discussion, play the Session 13 video, *Our Global Family*, featuring Filimao Chambo.

Follow up the video by asking,

- *From what Filimao Chambo shared, what stood out to you most? Why?*
- *How does it make you feel to know you are a part of a global family? Why?*

Discussion

The Church of the Nazarene is a well-connected “holiness communion.” It is not a loose affiliation of independent churches, nor is the denomination merely an association of churches having some commonality of belief and purpose but no real organic relationship.

The church is unapologetically connectional.

By that we mean we are an interdependent body of local churches organized into districts in order to carry out our mutual mission of “making Christlike disciples in the nations.” The commitment is to be accountable to one another for the sake of the mission and to maintain the integrity of our commonly held beliefs.

As a connected church we:

- Share beliefs.
- Share values.
- Share mission.
- Share responsibilities.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

- *Why do you think it is important for all Nazarene churches to share the same mission of “making Christ-like disciples in all the nations”?*
- *Can you think of any passages or examples from the Scriptures that speak to the importance of being connected, united, and accountable to one another?*

The Church of the Nazarene holds to the principle of equal sacrifice, not equal giving. This is a biblical position essential to a global church that includes first world economics and developing areas. The World Evangelism Fund is the denominational funding plan. Sometimes you might hear the term “funding the mission.” This is a broader term than World Evangelism Fund, used to recognize the various ways mission is funded in different parts of the world.

Supporting the mission and ministries of the church is alive and well throughout Global Mission regions. Funding the mission has great significance for the church in terms of sacrificial giving for many.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

“The Church of the Nazarene holds to the principle of equal sacrifice, not equal giving.”

- *Why do you think the denomination affirms this? Do you agree or disagree with this principle? Why or why not?*
- *How would you finish this sentence, I believe it is most important for church funding to help support...?*
- *Do you think church funds should only be used to help communities that are primarily Christian? Why or why not?*

The church’s mission “to make Christlike disciples in the nations” reminds us that we are given a spiritual charge, and at the same time we are to be good stewards of all the resources provided by the Lord.

—Excerpt from *Nazarene Essentials*

The following two questions are also included in the participant's handout. Allow people some time to write their responses and then discuss them together as a group.

- *What one or two things must the Church do to help fulfill its mission of "making Christlike disciples in the nations"?*
- *How might the actual work of fulfilling the mission look different depending on the location or country that the ministry is taking place?*

Wrap Up

As you close your time together, ask the group how God might want to specifically use your local church to help fulfill the mission of "making Christlike disciples in the nations." After group members have finished sharing, spend some time in prayer asking God to use your church to do great things for His kingdom.

Close your group time in prayer.

Order free copies of *Nazarene Essentials* at
generaleditor@nazarene.org





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LORD

As a followup to your study of the Nazarene Essentials, we recommend the study Jesus is Lord, a 7-week series designed to bring faith communities together to make the life-changing declaration that Jesus is Lord over every aspect of our lives.

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Dear WordAction Teacher,

Please accept the gift of this Nazarene Essentials Leader's Guide as an expression of our gratitude to you for your commitment to Kingdom ministry. The Leader's Guide is designed to help you facilitate conversation about Nazarene Essentials: *Who We Are and What We Believe*. You will find weekly curriculum guides to assist you in leading small groups of people in discussing the various topics that help describe the Church of the Nazarene. The discussions are divided into 13 studies. So, you will find enough material here to guide your small group through a three-month study. I trust you will find this curriculum valuable in considering who we are, what we believe, and how we live as Nazarenes. **This resource can be used at any time during the year with your Sunday School class, small group, or mid-week gathering.**

This Leader's Guide comes with a DVD which contains helpful resources for your discussion time together with your group. On the DVD you will find videos that feature Nazarene ministers and lay leaders who speak passionately about each of the discussion topics, along with a digital copy of the Leader's Guide and participant's handouts. Further resources for your study may also be found on the Nazarene Essentials website. The address to these materials is www.nazarene.org/essentials. **Additional copies of the Leader's Guide may be purchased at www.nph.com.**

You will want to provide every small group member a copy (free of charge) of Nazarene Essentials to read before each session's discussion. You may order paper copies by emailing generaleditor@nazarene.org with your request. Digital copies for computers and tablets are available at www.nazarene.org/essentials. You will find the document in a variety of languages under the documents tab.

Thank you for your leadership in directing a study of Nazarene Essentials with your small group. I hope we can get this material in the hands of every interested individual, every new Nazarene, every Nazarene family member. Our prayer is that through Nazarene Essentials, our global family can declare "this is who we are— this is what we believe" as we make Christlike disciples in the nations.

Friend,
Frank

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