



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Called to Lead

A Galactic-themed Journey of Discovery

This Bible study guide is an opportunity for youth and young adults to explore their baptism, spiritual gifts and call to lead, using a galactic theme. The guide was written as a complement to the "Called to Lead" spiritual gifts interactive activity offered at the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston, Texas. Like the interactive experience, the guide was designed for middle school and high school youth; however, it can be adapted for use with young adults. The guide can be used online or in person, depending on your context.

This five-part guide is intended to be used as a whole. If you do not want to use it in its entirety, sessions 3 and 4 can be paired in a single, longer session. Feel free to use these sessions as starting points and to tailor the studies to meet your needs. We have designed each session to take between 30 and 45 minutes.

While watching galactic science fiction films, we might feel the urge to grab a laser sword and join the universal battle, fighting evil and standing for all that is good. These stories resonate strongly because they tap into our desire to rise above what we know and challenge us to become more than we think we can be.

For young people who love science fiction and pop culture but struggle to talk about God and the Bible, we hope these Bible studies offer a starting place for discussion of their inner selves, their vocation and their call to lead. We encourage you to use this study guide in conjunction with the ELCA's "Called to Lead" spiritual gifts inventory. In addition, feel free to find galactic cultural pieces, especially films, through which you can relate to these studies, so that all participants might have a general understanding of the theme.

Called to Lead

Called to Lead — Session 1 | Gift of the Way: Baptism

Everyone has a beginning. Today we will explore our beginnings at the baptismal font.

Supplies: Baptismal font or bowl of water

Setting the Stage

In a galaxy not so far away, a number of up-and-coming Apprentices of the Way have been called to learn and grow so that they can join the universal battle to fight evil and stand for all that is good. However, no Apprentice of the Way is left to their own devices. Each has been given special gifts. Eventually, those who develop their gifts can be relied upon not only to use them but also to lead, training other Apprentices of the Way to use their gifts for good as well.

Opening Discussion

If you have been baptized, when were you baptized? Do you remember the experience? If you were too young to remember, do you know any stories about your baptism that people have told you?

Teaching

If you are familiar with space-themed stories, you know that many characters in these stories understand their greatest gift to be their connection with a force, which we will refer to in this Bible study as “the Way.” You may also know that many of these characters progress from learner to Apprentice of the Way to Teacher of the Way. We too have a journey of growth and discovery that starts with a gift. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we begin with the gift of the Holy Spirit, given to us through the waters of baptism.

Bible Story: Jesus’ Baptism (Matthew 3:13-17)

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

Called to Lead

The gift of the Holy Spirit connects us to Jesus and empowers us for a lifetime of faith and faithfulness. This gift gives us the confidence of knowing that God in Christ accompanies us on every step of our journey. There is nowhere we can go and nothing we can do that separates us from the love of God. Yet along with the gift of baptism comes a call. God helps and inspires us to not take the gift lightly but instead to hear the call on each of our lives to continue the ministry of Jesus in our own time.

Reflection Questions

1. What gift was given to Jesus?
2. What does God call Jesus?
3. How is Jesus' baptism a beginning?
4. What gift do we receive in baptism?
5. What does God call us in our baptism?
6. How is our baptism a beginning?

Closing Activity

We remember our baptism. Have each participant make the sign of the cross on their own forehead using water. Take some time for silence and reflection. End in prayer.

Other Scripture: Titus 3:4-7, Romans 6:3-4

Called to Lead

Called to Lead — Session 2 | Call of the Way: God's Call to Discipleship

Before we can be leaders in the church, we must first be apprentices or followers (disciples) of Jesus.

Supplies: None needed

Setting the Stage

Once up-and-coming Apprentices of the Way have received the gift of the Way, they prepare themselves to learn from their Teacher, who teaches them the ropes and prepares them for what is to come.

Opening Discussion

Is there someone you admire who has helped you grow as a person or learn a new skill? Who?

Teaching

Connecting to the Way is only one step on the path to becoming an Apprentice of the Way. In galactic stories, the Apprentice of the Way learns from a Teacher. This leader helps develop each Apprentice of the Way in hope that they can mature and one day assume leadership roles. Just as the Teacher teaches the Apprentice and helps them to mature, in our baptism we accept Jesus as our Lord, the leader we follow and learn from. As we discussed in the last session, we have been given the Holy Spirit in baptism and through that same Spirit are called to follow Jesus as disciples and servants. "Disciple" is not just a title but a way of being that involves growing and maturing throughout our life's journey. Following that call of discipleship can be scary, but we trust that Jesus is guiding and supporting us. Remember, the Lord is with you. Always.

Bible Story: Call of the Disciples (Luke 5:1-11)

¹Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, ²he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. ⁴When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." ⁶When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. ⁷So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" ⁹For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; ¹⁰and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." ¹¹When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Called to Lead

Reflection Questions

1. How does Simon Peter react to Jesus?
2. What is Jesus' message to Simon Peter, James and John?
3. In this passage, Jesus talks to fishermen. What do you think he means by "catching people" when speaking with them?
4. Why do Simon Peter, James and John follow Jesus?
5. How can following Jesus be scary? What makes it scary?
6. What gets in the way of our answering God's call?
7. Why do you follow Jesus?

Closing Activity

Bless each other as you answer God's call to discipleship and service. End with "The Lord is with you. Always." End in prayer.

Other Scripture: Call of Moses (Exodus 3), Call of Isaiah (Isaiah 6)

Called to Lead

Called to Lead — Session 3 | Growing in the Way: Identifying Spiritual Gifts

We all have gifts that make us unique. In this session we will learn about our spiritual gifts and how we are called to use them as we follow Jesus. To help us in discerning our spiritual gifts, we will use the “Called to Lead” spiritual gifts interactive activity on which this study guide is based.

This will be a fun way to get young people thinking about the gifts they have received. However, if they would like to grow deeper in their understanding of these gifts, we recommend “Gifts for You: Opening Your Spiritual Gifts,” the Women of the ELCA spiritual gifts assessment on which the “Called to Lead” spiritual gifts interactive activity is based.

Supplies: Six sheets of spiritual gifts questions, answer sheets, planet description sheets, pens (all supplies except pens available at [ELCA.org/TheWay](https://www.elca.org/TheWay))

Setting the Stage

Apprentices of the Way have their own gifts and skills that help them fight evil and stand for what is good. They go through a time of identifying their gifts and abilities so that they can better utilize them in the mission. In this “Called to Lead” spiritual gifts interactive activity, once they have identified these gifts, they will be sent to a planet that offers them appropriate training so that they can become the best protector of the galaxy they can be!

Opening Discussion

What is a particular talent or hobby you have?

Bible Story: Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

Called to Lead

Teaching

Apprentices of the Way grow in their knowledge of the Way and their particular gifts by training with a Teacher of the Way. Just as galactic characters differ, each follower of Jesus is unique. The Spirit gives each of us gifts. We must learn more about the gifts we've received and how to use them to reach our full potential. In fact, developing our gifts is an essential step toward being ready to assume leadership. As disciples we grow in our knowledge of the faith given to us by the Spirit and begin to recognize the different gifts we have received for the glory of God and the sake of our neighbor.

Reflection Questions

1. Where do our gifts come from?
2. Who activates our gifts?
3. What are our gifts used for?
4. Can you have more than one gift?

Activity

If meeting in person, print out each of the six sheets of spiritual gifts inventory questions and tape them up around the room. If meeting online, send the questions by email, share them onscreen or have participants download them from the website.

Each question corresponds to a planet shown on the answer sheet, and each answer corresponds to the moons circling that planet. Filling in four moons means "always true," three means "frequently true," two means "occasionally true," one means "infrequently true" and zero means "never true."

For example, fill in four moons around the planet Nargus if the answer to question 1 is "Always true," but fill in zero moons around the planet Nargus if the answer to question 1 is "never true." Repeat this process for all 36 questions.

Once participants have completed all 36 questions, review the six options listed on the planet summary sheet (if meeting in person, you can have this posted for participants to review on their own) to find out which planet's training best corresponds with each participant's spiritual gifts. Once the planet for each participant has been identified, pass out (or email/share) the corresponding planet description sheet with the participant. Give the participant time to read through the planet description sheet.

Called to Lead

Closing Discussion

- Share with the group the planet to which you are being sent.
- As you think about the planet to which you are traveling, which gift or gifts are your strongest?
- Are you surprised by any of your gifts? Confused?
- Which of these gifts are you already using? How?
- In the next week, how will you use one of your gifts to serve your neighbor?

End in prayer.

Other Scripture: Romans 12:3-6, Galatians 5:22-26

Called to Lead

Called to Lead — Session 4 | Connecting With the Way: Using Your Gifts

In the last session you learned what your spiritual gifts are. In this session we will explore how to use them and how to lead others to identify and use theirs.

Supplies: Participants should bring their results from the spiritual gifts inventory completed in session 3.

Setting the Stage

Apprentices of the Way need training to hone their gifts. Based on the gifts each Apprentice of the Way naturally has, they are heading off to one of the six nearby planets so they can receive training that is relevant to them.

Opening Discussion

What is the hardest thing you have ever tried to do? What did you learn about yourself when you were doing it?

Teaching

An Apprentice of the Way does not do magic tricks with the Way but uses the Way to maintain peace and justice in the galaxy, to use their gifts for the good of all. This is true of Apprentices of the Way not only individually but also collectively. Following the path of the Way is difficult, and Apprentices are tempted to cross over to the other side and serve their own interests.

Our vocation as disciples of Jesus Christ, both as individuals and as the church, is to serve God and our neighbors. We are supposed to use our gifts for the sake of others. This path can be difficult for us because voices in our culture encourage us to use our gifts simply for ourselves.

Bible Story: Unity in the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16)

¹I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God ... of all, who is above all and through all and in all. ⁷But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. ... ¹¹The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ¹⁴We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. ¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Called to Lead

The word “vocation” comes from the Latin *vocatio*, which means “calling.” Lutherans use the word “vocation” to talk about how, at baptism, each person is called by God to work for the common good. Lutherans teach that in our baptism God calls each of us to use our gifts to make a difference in our families, churches, schools and world. It’s not unusual for us to doubt our own call or vocation, but our baptism is a promise of unconditional love by God and a call to trust in the guidance of the Spirit in all that we do.

Reflection Questions

1. In this passage, what characteristics are encouraged as we live out our calling?
2. What is the “work of ministry”?
3. Does our vocation as “children of God” ever have “time off”?
4. How do we “build up the body of Christ”?

Closing Discussion

Have each participant reveal their individual results as well as the overview of their spiritual gifts.

- As you think about the planet to which you are being sent, what excites you?
- Name one way that one of your gifts can be used to serve in the life of the church. In what ways could those gifts be used for leadership in the church? Have others share ideas about how that gift can be used.
- How might you continue to grow and develop your gifts?

Note to leader: This is an area in which leaders can continue to help participants develop, not just in this session but over a longer period of time.

End in prayer.

Other Scripture: John 15:12-17

Called to Lead

Called to Lead — Session 5 | One With the Way: Sent on a Mission

We have traveled the journey of discovery from baptism to discipleship to giftedness. The journey continues as we are sent by Christ into the world to use these gifts.

Supplies: No extra supplies needed.

Setting the Stage

Apprentices of the Way do not stay in training on their assigned training planets forever. Nor do they head home to hide their heads and do nothing. They are tasked with a mission. They are able to do good while training and then are sent to do even more good once they have the tools and confidence to continue defending the galaxy.

Opening Discussion

Share a time when you used a talent or skill to help others. Connect that story to a gift or gifts you identified in a previous session.

Teaching

An Apprentice of the Way is trained not only to be good at something but for a purpose. Their mission is to maintain peace across the galaxy, and they are sent throughout the galaxy to do that work.

You have been gifted with the Spirit, felt its call, identified your gifts and learned how to use those gifts. Now, just as the Teacher of the Way sends newly trained Apprentices of the Way out to do their work, so Christ sends you out to continue the work of Jesus. After all, this is not the end of the journey but rather a new beginning. You are called and gifted to do important work and to assume

Bible Story: I Am the True Vine (John 15:15-17)

¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from [God]. ¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that [God] will give you whatever you ask [God] in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Called to Lead

leadership in the church and in the world. You do not go alone. Just as an Apprentice of the Way is sent with a blessing, "The Way be with you," we are sent knowing that Christ is with us always. Take those first steps into the larger world, sent by your loving and gracious Savior.

Reflection Questions

1. Why does Jesus rename the disciples "friends" instead of "servants"? What has changed?
2. What does it mean to "bear fruit"?
3. How does it make you feel that God has chosen you and sends you to bear fruit?
4. As you think about being sent to bear fruit, what makes you nervous?
5. How does the call to bear fruit also include a call for you to be bold and assume leadership so others can bear fruit too?
6. You are being sent. What's next for you?

Closing Activity

Make a list of three ways you will encourage each other in the days and weeks ahead. End in prayer.

Other Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-8