

# Christ Calls Us to Wholeness

A Youth Bible Study Based on the Wholeness Wheel



**LEADER GUIDE**

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## About the Author:

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Portico plan members can find the Leader's Guide version of this study, plus more information and resources about the Wholeness Wheel at [portico.ws/WWResources](http://portico.ws/WWResources)

## LEADERS:

The call to wholeness is a life-long journey. At different times, we each will find some parts easy and others challenging. Helping young people understand different elements of well-being can help them establish practices that honor their individuality and strengthen their faith. This Bible study includes a variety of questions and texts to dive into. It can be done individually, in pairs, or in groups.

### The youth study includes five steps:

- Most of the reading sections include two texts: one a positive example, and one a negative example.
- The Recap section serves to set the texts in context and help with reading comprehension and analysis, although additional context should be provided when appropriate.
- Reflect questions ask the participants to connect the topic to their own lives.
- Plan questions suggest a specific action or writing action to take.
- The prayers are simple, following a repeating template, and can be used as a starting or ending prayer for longer group prayer time.

### This Leader's Guide includes the youth questions as well as these additional resources:

- Consider notes suggest additional guides for leading group discussion.
- Occasional Care notes highlight particular passages and topics that may specifically impact vulnerable participants.
- Connect invites you to reflect on your own wholeness as child of God and youth leader.
- The Challenge and Pray for sections are similar to the youth's "Plan" and "Pray."

# 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 a seven-week study designed to be used alone or with others. Each week you’ll be guided through a consistent format:

- **Read:** A brief passage or two from the Bible
- **Recap:** Conversation around the text and its context
- **Reflect:** Questions related to the session’s wellness topic
- **Plan:** 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 any 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 page to take notes or use for journaling.*

# Spiritual Well-Being

Living a centered life focused on God affects each aspect of our well-being. Jesus came that we might have abundant life (John 10:10), which flows from the promise we receive in baptism that Christ makes us a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Explore who you are and know whose you are as you nurture your spiritual well-being through prayer, devotions, worship, nature, art, and music.



**Read:** Matthew 28:16 – 20

**Recap:** “Baptism is not simply plain water. Instead, it is water used according to God’s command and connected with God’s word.” (ELW p.1164; Small Catechism.) What does baptizing people have to do with remembering Jesus is with us?

## LEADERS:

**Consider:** Most youth will not remember their baptisms, but they may have recently completed confirmation (Affirmation of Baptism). Do they see the two as connected? What water rituals might start or end your Bible study time together to help remind everyone of God’s love expressed in baptism?

**Connect:** Read Luther’s explanation of baptism in the Small Catechism. What parts speak grace to you? What parts are difficult?

**Challenge:** Read the baptismal promises your youth affirm at confirmation. How can you remind yourself of these in your own life as beloved child of God?

**Pray for...** reminders of how God claims you in baptism.

**Reflect:** This Bible study focuses on wholeness and health in the areas of social relationships, emotional well-being, our bodies, finances, vocation and calling, how we use our brains, and how we relate to God. All of these things matter, and are ways we live into who God made us to be. And the core promise of baptism is that we are fully loved by God, always. How does your faith show up in your everyday life? What does baptism mean to you?

**Plan:** As you look at the study ahead, how will you engage? Will you journal, draw, converse with a prayer partner, or something else? Name a trusted adult you will ask to walk with you if the topics become difficult: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pray:** *Holy God, you know me wholly. Thank you for claiming me in baptism. Be with me as I study how your Word speaks to my life in so many ways. Amen.*



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# Social Well-Being

We are created by God to be connected 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 coworkers.



**Read:** Job 2:11 – 13; Luke 22:24 – 27

**Recap:** At this point in the story, Job has lost everything: stuff, family, and health. Meanwhile, the disciples have been traveling with and learning from Jesus for a while. What do you see as the differences between how Job's friends and Jesus's disciples cared for each other?

## LEADERS:

**Consider:** How do your youth relate to each other? Are they friends outside of church? Do they attend the same schools or engage in the same social circles? How do they experience in-person relationships like youth group differently from internet-based relationships or social media?

**Connect:** Where do you find social and interpersonal connections? How do you tend to your boundaries as a leader while still finding places to connect?

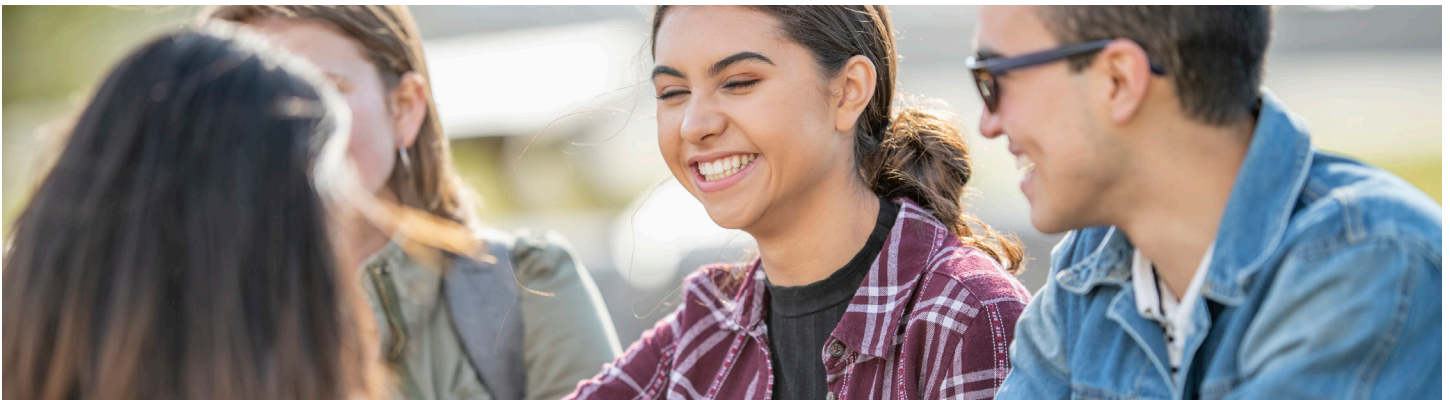
**Plan:** When is the next time you will get to have socialization outside of church leadership and work?

**Pray for...** your friends.

**Reflect:** Which of these sets of friends are like your friends? Which story of people interacting is the kind of friend you would like to be to others? Name some qualities you value in a friend.

**Plan:** Are you the kind of friend you want to have? How can you learn from these two stories to be healthier in how you connect with others?

**Pray:** *God of relationships, you call us friends. Thank you for the people you have put in my life, and help me to care for my relationships with them. Amen.*



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# 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 with resilience.



**Read:** John 11:32 – 35; John 18:7 – 10

**Recap:** In John 11, Jesus has just found out that his friend Lazarus has died. In John 18, Jesus and the disciples are in the garden and Jesus is about to be arrested. Why did Jesus cry when he knew he could (and would) raise Lazarus from the dead? Do you think Peter drew his sword out of anger or out of fear?

## LEADERS:

**Consider:** Christ's incarnation came with emotions. Weeping is not the only example of Jesus having deep feelings. What other examples can your youth name of Jesus being in emotional situations?

**Care:** Some youth are over-sharers and some are under-sharers when it comes to emotions. Help your youth find a healthy balance for themselves and the group.

**Connect:** How do you care for your emotional state when working with youth? What outlets do you have for strong emotions?

**Challenge:** As you prepare for your next big youth event or travel, plan as well for time to appropriately care for your emotional wholeness.

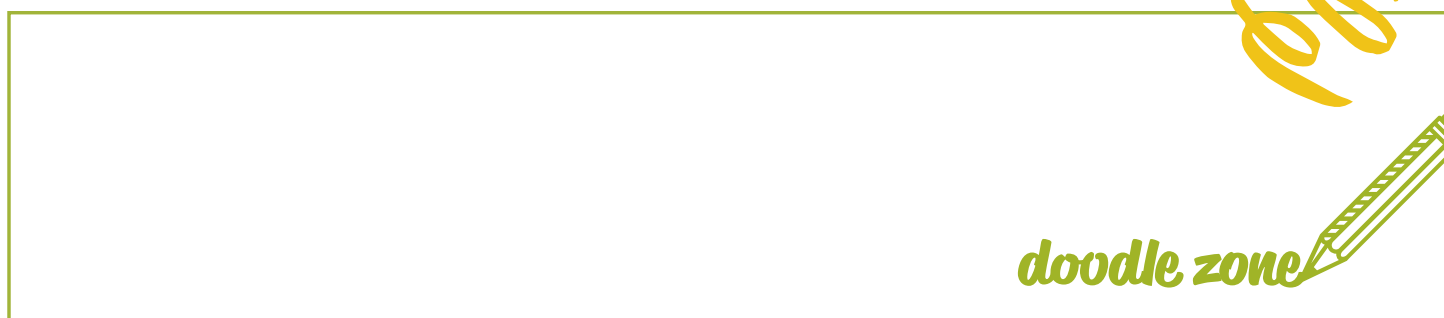
**Pray for...** space to tend to your needs even as you care for others.



**Reflect:** What emotions influence you the most? When you have strong emotions, how do you respond? Where in your body do you feel your strongest emotions?

**Plan:** Peter's emotions, while understandable in the moment, led him to violence. When strong emotions move you to action, what healthy responses can you plan to take, rather than ending up with damaging reactions?

**Pray:** *God who weeps when we weep, thank you for walking with me. Help me to find ways to express my emotions in healthy ways. Amen.*



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# Physical Well-Being

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



**Read:** 1 Kings 19:4 – 8; Mark 11:12 – 14

**Recap:** Here are two stories about how hunger can affect our whole being. How did Elijah respond differently than Jesus in his hunger? How did caring for his body's needs help Elijah's ministry?

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**Reflect:** When you have been hard at work, what is most important for your body? What kind of physical care comes easiest to you, and what do you need to ask for help with?

**Plan:** Name one, five-minute task that you could add to your week to take better care of your body: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pray:** *God who became human, thank you for my body. Help me to care for my physical wholeness as you care for me. Amen.*

## LEADERS:

**Consider:** There are many quick phrases and mantras that can help groups help each other stay physically healthy. Work together as a group to develop ways to check in on yourselves and each other and remind each other of the need for physical care.

**Care:** Everyone has unique ways of relating to their bodies, but youth and teens can have specific challenges related to eating, sleeping, and otherwise caring for this gift. Perhaps they don't recognize their body and health as a gift and will struggle with this language. Know your limits when walking with youth with these struggles, and pay attention to your own needs even as you pay attention to theirs. Be mindful of differing physical abilities as well as the pressure an image-driven culture puts on teenagers that might lead them to unhealthy dietary or exercise practices and self-harm.

**Connect:** What aspects of your body are you most likely to listen to, and which do you ignore? How does your body tell you when you are stressed, tired, or in need of care? What keeps you from listening?

**Challenge:** What is one small step you could take today to improve how you care for your body?

**Pray for...** patience, healing, and rest.

# 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 intentional, generous, and focused on sustainability.



**Read:** Luke 14:28 – 32

**Recap:** Jesus tells this parable in the middle of a longer conversation about the impact of being a follower. Besides towers and wars, what other kinds of plans do you think the people of Jesus' day needed to make?

## LEADERS:

**Consider:** Have your youth look at the congregation's budget or the youth group budget. What do they think of how finances are talked about in the congregation? What changes would they make?

**Connect:** In your own financial planning, do you feel more comfortable or anxious? What areas give you the most stress? What might this parable have to say to your financial wholeness, either in the short or long term?

**Challenge:** Take some time to check in with your own relationship with money. What concrete steps would help you feel more whole in this area?

**Pray for...** confidence in managing what you have been given.

**Reflect:** What kinds of plans and preparations do you make in your life? How has planning ahead helped you? What is one thing you wish you understood better about managing money? What finances are you responsible for now, and what will you be responsible for in the future?

**Plan:** Examine your current financial life: Make a comprehensive list of your income sources (no matter how small) and expenses. What are financial necessities and what are luxuries?

**Pray:** *God of all things, thank you for all that I have. Help me to plan well to care for what you have given me. Amen.*



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# 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:** Genesis 40:1 – 8; Jonah 1:1 – 3

**Recap:** Joseph ended up in jail because of a string of events after he shared interpretations of his dreams to his brothers. Even so, he didn’t stop doing what God had equipped him to do and interpreted the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker. Meanwhile, Jonah fled from what God asked him to do. Why do you think Joseph kept interpreting? Why do you think Jonah ran?

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**Reflect:** What are you good at? How might you use those gifts to serve God? Is it hard to share your gifts with God and others?

**Plan:** You will experience many vocations in your life. What are two or three specific roles you play right now? Name something about them that makes you feel good about yourself, and some ways you feel you are making God's world a better place.

**Pray:** *God who calls us to serve, thank you for the things I love doing. Help me to celebrate everyone's gifts and to use my gifts for you. Amen.*

#### LEADERS:

**Consider:** Have your youth name each other's gifts so that everyone is lifted up and has a celebrated role. Ask if anyone has something they think they could be good at but have never had the chance to try. Vocation doesn't have an end; it is constantly evolving. If appropriate, share your own vocational story: what you do and how God led you there. If you have a job or career outside of church, be sure to include that as well as sharing why you are involved with youth ministry.

**Care:** Jonah's story is often used to talk about running away from God, but its themes are also sometimes echoed by suicide attempt survivors. (See Jonah 1:6, "[Jonah] said to them, 'Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quieten down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.'") Be sensitive to youth who have a hard time imagining a future with them in it.

**Connect:** When we talk about vision, "where" can mean so much more than geography: it is also who, what, when, and why. Which question words speak to your vocational wholeness or gaps right now?

**Challenge:** Make a map of the "where" of your current vocational state. Sketch out key events, people, and Spirit-stirrings that have led you to this point. Then add in ideas of vocational imagination for what's next.

**Pray for...** clarity of call for yourself and those you care for.

# Intellectual Well-Being

Using our minds keeps us alert and active. Bolster your intellectual well-being as you 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:** Luke 2:41 – 47; Matthew 22:29 – 33

**Recap:** What were people curious about in each story?  
Who do they learn from and how?

## LEADERS:

**Consider:** Not all intellectual wholeness is about grades and school. How can both leaders and youth celebrate each other's curiosity when it may be rooted in very different spaces?

**Connect:** Outside of work and church, what makes you curious? What do you wish you had time to learn more about? What's holding you back?

**Challenge:** What is one thing you could do today to indulge your curiosity?

**Pray for...** curiosity and partners in investigation.









# 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). Portico plan members can find more resources about the Wholeness Wheel at [portico.ws/WWWResources](https://portico.ws/WWWResources)



Find a digital journaling version of this study here

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