

SPECIAL  
SUNDAY

UNITED METHODIST  
STUDENT DAY

ADULT DISCUSSION



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.  
The people of The United Methodist Church®

# UNITED METHODIST STUDENT DAY

## ADULT DISCUSSION

Though congregations may observe United Methodist Student Day at any time, you are encouraged to celebrate with a special offering on the fourth Sunday of November. These discussion questions can be used in a small group or Bible study before or after the special Sunday is observed. Feel free to adapt it to fit the context of your congregation.

This study guide offers several ways to explore United Methodist Student Day through The United Methodist Church. Adjust the activities and questions to fit your context and integrate highlights of your church's specific ministries or those of the small group.

### 1. Gathering

Invite people to share the joys and struggles of the week.

### 2. Opening prayer

(Inspired by Psalm 25:1-10 and 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13)

To you, O God, we lift our souls!  
We gather today asking you to make known  
your ways  
To teach us your paths,

To lead us in your truth.  
Celebrating United Methodist students today,  
Increase and enrich our love for them  
in ways that support and nurture their  
studies and dreams.

Amen.

### 3. United Methodist Student Day

One of six denomination-wide Special Sundays, the United Methodist Student Day offering funds a channel of hope for young scholars.



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church®

# ADULT DISCUSSION

The burden of taking on prohibitive amounts of debt can feel overwhelming. It limits bright, qualified students from bringing their full selves into the professions they feel called.

Supporting United Methodist students gives them a financial boost. It also helps them realize their dreams while giving them a spiritual boost. Your contribution is an acknowledgment that the church has confidence in them and in their abilities.

#### **4. Read stories about how the United Methodist Student Day offering has strengthened students to follow their dreams.**

Katrina Lewis (link to bulletin insert that tells the story)

Gaylon Wynn Moore

(<https://www.umc.org/en/content/student-day-gift-of-hope-scholarship-encourages-students-to-achieve-career-goals-umsd>)

Haven King-Nobles

(<https://www.umc.org/en/content/united-methodist-student-day-offering-supports-world-changers-umsd>)

As you consider these testimonies:

*Where do you see good news of God's love?*

*Where do you see our connection at work?*

Spend a few minutes discussing how you have experienced the church nurturing your own dreams. *Are there young people in your congregation whom the church can reach out to and journey alongside?*

#### **5. Scripture Reading**

Ask someone to read Luke 10:38-42 and invite participants to write down words and phrases that resonate with them.

Go around and allow each person to say a word or phrase until all have had an opportunity to speak.

#### **6. Scripture Discussion**

A. Mary sat at Jesus' feet, taking the posture of a student, even though at that time students were traditionally male.

- *What do you imagine it was like for a woman who was limited in so many ways at that time to be fully included and treated as an intellectual and theological equal?*



# ADULT DISCUSSION

- *How much time do you set aside and what resources help you “sit at the feet” of Jesus each day or week?*

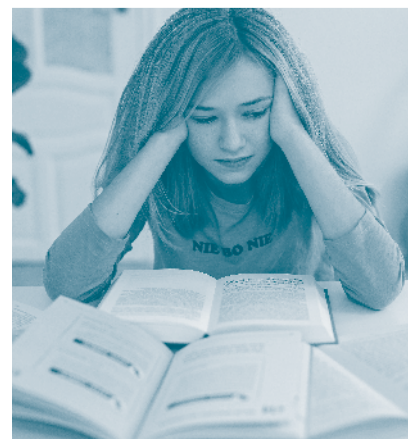
B. Martha, on the other hand, is “distracted” by her tasks. The word task is translated from the Greek word *diakonia* which is the root word for the ecclesiastical office of deacon. In The United Methodist Church, the order of deacon is reserved for ordained clergy who are called to Word and Service. So while some translations suggest that Martha was preparing the meal, another interpretation from the Greek is that **she was engaged in ministerial tasks**. She expresses frustration that Mary is not helping her.

- *Have you ever felt that work in the church is unfairly distributed and that you are carrying the burden for others?*
- *Do your tasks in the church or at work or as parents become idols in a culture that values busy-ness and multitasking?*

C. Martha welcomes Jesus into her home. As we celebrate United Methodist Student Day, how do we show hospitality for the students in the congregation?

D. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, wrote about engaging in means of grace, acts of piety and mercy that we do individually or in community that open us to God’s grace. In “How to Pray,” he wrote about the importance of staying in love with God:

*“Beware you do not get stuck in the work itself; if you do, it is all lost labor. Nothing short of God can satisfy your soul. Therefore, fix on God in all, through all, and above all...”*



Students have a lot on their plate and are often at risk of being distracted from engaging in means of grace that keep them connected to God. Jesus says that “Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.” Similarly, an education is something that can never be taken away. With that in mind:

*What are some ways that we can encourage and nurture students while they are in school?*



# ADULT DISCUSSION

## 7. Closing Prayer

As we close in a circle, facing one another, be aware of the larger circle of connection with students who are part of this congregation.

Name the students who come to mind, lifting our prayers for them in this space.

As we enter into our time of prayer, I invite you to first breathe deeply the experience of God's loving spirit. Close your eyes and visualize a place of conflict or feeling overworked in your life.

SILENCE

In your mind's eye, invite Christ into that situation. Ask for guidance to move forward with disciplined discernment. SILENCE

In this moment of silence, listen for Divine teaching and commit yourself to be centered in Holy Wisdom throughout your week.

SILENCE

### Let us pray:

Welcoming God, give us a spirit of balance in our day-to-day responsibilities. Listening to the account of Mary and Martha, we know what it's like to forget who we are and whose we are when we lose ourselves in the tasks that distract us. Give us insight to liberate students from anxieties and worries to get it all done. Help your people to focus on Jesus and his good news of love and justice. It's in his name we pray.

Amen.

