

**Workshop Module**

This module was written by Disciples Women's Ministries and contains the following:

- Overview
- Notes for Leader
- Handouts
- PowerPoint presentation on CD
- Paper copy of PowerPoint presentation

Additional copies are available from:

Online at [www.discipleswomen.org](http://www.discipleswomen.org)

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## Overview

**Purpose:** To allow participants to experience another circle model for spiritual growth and development.

**Time:** 1 ¼ -1 ½ hours

***Items Needed:***

- Computer
- Projector
- Screen
- Power Point Presentation
- Tea light/candles, matches
- Handouts
- Talking stick(s)

<b><i>Resources</i></b>	<b><i>Used For:</i></b>
<b>Power Point</b>	Visual Projected Presentation
<b>Notes for the Leader</b>	Leader Preparation and Guide
<b>Handouts</b>	
1. Retreat Module Leadership Circle	Actual model to use
2. Wisdom Circle Model	Tells what each part of the wisdom circle does

## Notes for the Leader

### **OPENING REMARKS**

- Wisdom Circles come to us from a Native American tradition, and allow groups to come together and create a deeper level of trust and community in a short period of time than is typical in our daily living
- It works no matter whether the group is all women, all men, young or old
- A simple process that doesn't require one person to consistently lead the group – leadership is shared
- The longer a group stays together, the deeper they go in their sharing and building of community

### **SHOW THE POWERPOINT (Is a handout for participants to take home)**

- Review each bullet point as it comes up
- Reinforce the use of talking sticks. The talking stick can be any object the group chooses. This is the most difficult part of Wisdom Circles – our learning to not offer advice or interrupt or try to put in our personal perspectives while someone else is talking. Reiterate that it takes practice, and they will get that opportunity to share when it is their turn.



### **BREAK INTO GROUPS OF 6**

- Distribute Wisdom Circle hand-outs to be used for the event.

- Make sure every place/person has a candle or tea light and each table has matches
- Allow 45 minutes for this first Wisdom Circle
- Tell them to read the Centering Prayer, Meditation and Closing Prayer in unison.
- If they finish before other groups, ask them to be respectful of those still completing the process.

### **CLOSING**

- Have the group process their experience using the following questions:
  - What did you enjoy about the Wisdom Circle? (You should hear that they felt they were heard. Reinforce this as a real benefit as it is infrequent we actually have people totally present with us, listening and caring without offering advice, etc.)
  - What was the most difficult part of this experience? (You should hear that using the talking stick and not interjecting personal comments was the most difficult. Reiterate how important it is to respect others while they are sharing, as it is what leads to our feeling heard.)
  - What wisdom did you gain in your circle?

### **HANDOUTS**

- Wisdom Circle model
- Wisdom Circle sample
- Wisdom Circle Retreat Leadership Model

## Wisdom Circle Model

Adapted from: Wisdom Circles: A Guide to Self-Discovery and Community Building in Small Groups

By Charles Garfield, Cindy Spring, Sedonia Cahill  
(New York: Hyperion, 1998)

Basic guidelines:

- A group can range from 3 – 12 women and be effective.
- Only one person may speak at a time – use a “talking stick” (e.g, any implement that can be passed around from woman to woman) to signify whose turn it is to speak. While the person with the talking stick speaks, the others practice active listening.
- This is not the place for feedback, problem solving, etc.
- The leadership moves each time the group meets and the leader chooses the topic for reflection.
- Allow approximately 1 ½ - 2 hours per group meeting.

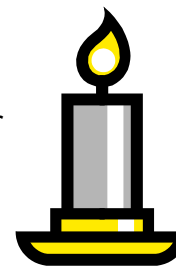
### **PERSONAL SHARING – CLEARING**

This is an opportunity for participants to share with one another those things in their life which they have brought into the circle that might prevent them from being fully present (e.g., concerns, worries, family situations, etc.). Allow approximately 3 minutes per person.

### **LIGHTING OUR CANDLES – GIVING THANKS OR VALUE SHARING**

After everyone has had a chance to clear their thoughts, each person in turn lights a candle and either offers up a thanksgiving in her life or shares a value she would either

like to bring to the group over the course of the meeting or receive from the group. The leader for the circle decides whether this is a time of thanksgiving or value sharing.



## MEDITATIONS

The leader chooses a meditation or reading which relates to the topic for the circle. The meditation can be read as a litany, by the leader, silently or as a group.

## REFLECTION

The leader for the circle chooses the topic for reflection. It can be something which is present in her life in that moment (fear, love, health) something from the news (war, unemployment, housing crises, etc.) or anything of her choosing. Passing the talking stick, each person shares (or may choose to just listen) on the topic chosen.

## INSIGHTS – *CANDLE EXTINGUISHING*

After everyone has shared, each in turn extinguishes their candle and shares either a gift or an insight they have received from being present and hearing the reflections of the group.

## CLOSING THOUGHTS

These can be writings or sayings which are printed for everyone to read, personal thoughts by the circle leader or a prayer for the group to pray together.

## Wisdom Circles

The wisdom circle serves many purposes. It is a place to practice heart-to-heart communication skills, to heal the wounds of loss, illness and abuse, to find the courage to act upon that “still small voice within.” It is a place to share a vision, discover a mission. It is a place within which to create a feeling of community, that is, to support each other in being fully ourselves, while simultaneously being an integral part of the group.

When a wisdom circle meets regularly over an extended period of time, amazing things happen. People learn to trust the process; the circle itself becomes the teacher. Participants both receive and contribute to the group’s collective wisdom. Individual visions emerge and coalesce into a shared vision.

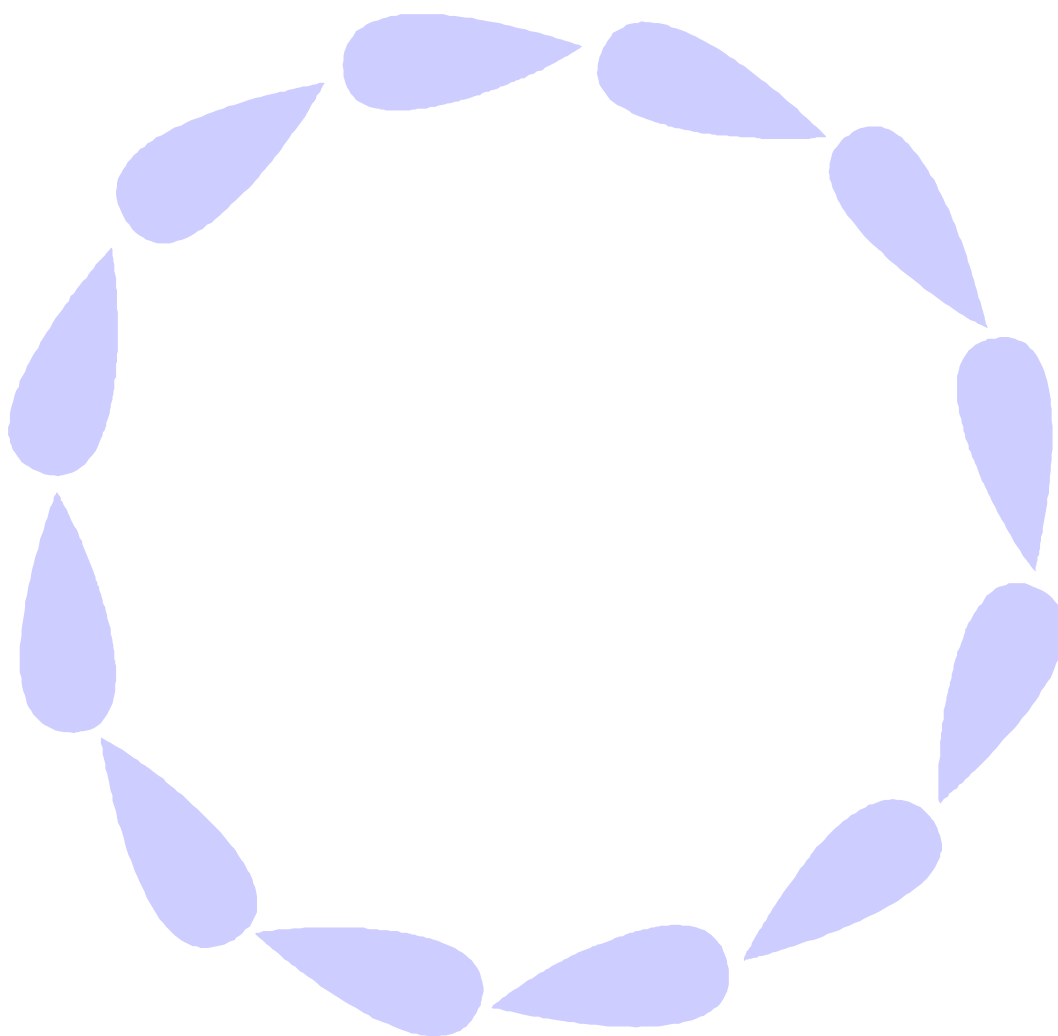
Those initially reticent to speak find their voice. Those who have difficulty finding words discover a deeper, more authentic source to speak from. You learn how to listen non-judgmentally. Tears come as you recognize yourself in another person’s story. Healing occurs when you laugh at yourself. Your body deeply relaxes when you dare to speak your heart and you feel truly heard. There is relief in knowing that you are not alone in crisis or in making a rite of passage. And it is profoundly satisfying to



see your conscious behavior within the circle  
translating into a healthier way of being in the world.

*That strength which sustains and renews each one of us also sustains  
and renews our communities, our society, our environment, the earth.*

*Gathering in wisdom circles enables us to move more deeply into  
ourselves, into that core which continues to survive, hope, dream and  
carry on.*



## Wisdom Circle

### **CENTERING PRAYER**

Nurturing God, we come before you in these moments with anticipation and wonder. We pray for the courage to extend ourselves to one another, to share from our hearts in this circle. Open our minds and spirits to venture into that which is known only by you, and to hear the wisdom you have for us to hear. AMEN.

### **PERSONAL CLEARING**

Share with one another those distractions which might be keeping you from being fully present with the group. Take the talking stick when you wish to speak and clear your thoughts.

### **LIGHTING OUR CANDLES**

While lighting your candle, repeat Psalm 49:3, “My mouth shall speak wisdom; the meditation of my heart shall be understanding.”

### **MEDITATION**

An ophthalmologist said that there were more nearsighted people in New York City than in any other city. His reasoning was that people were down among the sky scrapers, hemmed in by the walls of high buildings, which in turn limited their field of vision. For many, the only opportunity for distant vision was to look up at the sky, which very few did. Thus, he said, the constant use of the eyes for short distances tends for nearsightedness and dissatisfaction. Our eyes can be so focused on the immediate that we lose sight of the ultimate.

*We each contain an enduring spark of that Wisdom which is at the heart of all creation. Isolated and unsupported, it is but a small spark. United with others, those sparks grow into a flame of illumination and strength for every participant.*

### **REFLECTION**

Picture yourself in a moment or place where you were faced with the choice to take an important risk. Where was God in that experience? What surprises were there for you? How did that experience help shape who you are today? Share with one another using the talking stick when you are ready.

### **INSIGHTS**

After everyone has shared, each one extinguishes her candle while sharing a gift or an insight they have received from being present and hearing the reflections of the group.

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Loving Creator, help me develop distant vision and to remain focused on the ultimate vision - your kingdom right here, right now. Use the gifts you have given me to be your light in my region, in my community and in my church. Thank you for the wisdom and vision of these sisters, and for the opportunities to learn and share with one another. In the name of your precious son and our Lord, Jesus Christ. AMEN



Wisdom  
Circles