Interacting with God’s Story and Vision
A. Discerning genuine leadership
Review the characteristics of false prophets listed on newsprint. Beside this list, name the characteristics of a genuine God-loving Christian leader (see ABS, pp. 54–55, #2 and 3).

» When we think of true and false prophets who have lived in our times, what were the fruits of their ministry?
» If you are wary of a leader’s authenticity, what process of discernment might be used?

B. Discernment as a spiritual discipline
Invite a spiritual director or your minister to guide a discussion or lead an exercise on spiritual discernment.

» What are some issues you are facing now that require corporate discernment?
» What are the best practices for finding your way?

C. Illustrate the text
This passage is filled with creative images. Choose one image and illustrate it with the art supplies. Or create a new image that speaks to a contemporary crowd.

D. Personal confession
Obedience is a necessary factor in our heartfelt covenant with Christ (ABS, p. 54, #1). Reflect on a time you have been unduly harsh or hypocritical in your treatment of a fellow church member.

» What motivated you to behave the way you did (fear, jealousy)?
» What was the outcome for you?
» Imagine a conversation with Jesus as you describe this situation. How does he respond to you (i.e., remember his covenant)?
» How do you respond to him?
» What does God’s forgiveness look like to you?

Offer a prayer of gratitude for second (and third) chances. Option: Using Darling’s question (ABS, p. 54, #1), celebrate and affirm the positive traits of your circle of relationships.

E. Guidelines for moral discipleship
Jesus set high moral standards for his followers. Review the texts used in the last several weeks. Note the context for Jesus’ teachings: a small fledgling minority community trying to live counterculturally within a hostile societal environment. The group needed to support each other and hold each other accountable to Jesus’ new way. It would be easy to slip back into old habits. Jesus provided counsel to help them stay the course of righteous living. This required compassion, charity, humility, and tolerance, with a good dose of wariness. God judges by these standards.

Over the centuries, Anabaptists have taken the Sermon on the Mount seriously as guidelines for being faithful disciples. How do we live the Sermon on the Mount today? Develop a set of moral guidelines for your group or congregation. In groups of two or three, develop key “rules” for righteous living, based on what you learned over the past weeks. State your rules in positive terms. Share and compare your rules with the larger group. Invite discussion and debate.