

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLESHIP
LESSON 1: THE CALL TO FOLLOW

What we want students to learn: That the Holy Spirit both empowers and enables our discipleship.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: That the saving relationship Jesus offers us is wrapped up in the concept of following Him.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 4:18-22

Supporting Scripture: Matthew 9:9-13

Overview: The purpose of this lesson is to help students begin to understand discipleship as following after Jesus. This is an introductory lesson that will help set the stage for what you will be studying for the next 51 weeks.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each **LIFE** lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your **LIFE** lesson 1 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 1, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The *Bible Background* is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What's the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his Gospel.
- **Time frame:** Most people hold to Matthew's Gospel being written in the late A.D. 50s or 60s, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.
- **Purpose:** Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the

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long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his Gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

THE SETTING

This passage picks up as Jesus began His public ministry, preaching the need for repentance. John the Baptist previously declared Jesus' significance and publicly baptized Him according to Jesus' instruction. Jesus recently completed the period of fasting and praying in the wilderness and endured the temptation from Satan. Many people had heard about the reputation of Jesus, but it had not yet developed into a formal following.

THE MAIN POINT

Jesus declared His purpose to His followers from their very first encounter – "Follow me." This is critical in understanding that the call to discipleship is an invitation to enter a lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ.

LESSON PLAN

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To help students experience the struggle of following instructions second hand.
- **Set-Up:** You will need enough plain paper plates (or thick paper) and pens for half of your students. You'll also need to display an image of your choosing that you have printed or arranged to otherwise digitally display. The best images for this type of activity are objects that are fairly complex, but not too complicated (a child's tricycle, a prom dress, a piece of heavy machinery, a house, etc.).

FIRST, you will need to tell students that you are dividing them into two groups for an activity. Either have students choose a partner or count off into two groups. Instruct partners to face each other and stand or sit so that one of them, the "drawer," has his/her back toward you and the other is facing you. Only one person in each pair, the "describer," should be able to see what you are about to display.

NEXT, tell the pairs of students that you are about to display an image that one of them is going to describe and the other is going to attempt to draw. Pass out a plate and pen to each pair.

Tell the "drawers" that these are their rules:

1. No peeking.
2. Your plate is to lay flat on YOUR HEAD so that you cannot see what you are drawing.
3. You cannot ask any questions.

Tell the "describers" that these are their rules:

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1. You cannot touch the person drawing or their supplies.
2. You can only give verbal instructions as to what your partner is drawing.
3. You have one minute to describe the image and instruct your partner as they draw what you say.

THEN, display the image and start a one-minute timer (any smartphone will do). When the minute is up, call time and have each pair hold up their drawing. Allow everyone to turn around and see what they were trying to draw.

NEXT, gather students back together and lead a brief discussion using the following questions:

- How close was your drawing to the original design?
- What was difficult about this task?
- Was it more frustrating to give instructions or to follow them?
- What would have made drawing the picture easier?

FINALLY, say something like:

- Most of us would agree that it would be easier to replicate the design if we could have seen for ourselves what was expected rather than just hearing about it. In today's lesson, we will see that Jesus understood this and extended a call to not just know about Him, but to follow Him closely and learn His ways. This is the first lesson in a yearlong study of what it means to truly follow Jesus. What you'll see in this lesson, and in the weeks to come, is that the faith that Jesus calls us to is an active one, a faith that demands a lifetime of relational discipleship. Let's dig in and see where we see this in Scripture.

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of your lesson.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help students see that the saving relationship Jesus offers us is wrapped up in the concept of following Him.
- **Set Up:** Make sure each student will have access to a copy of God's Word

FIRST, ask students these questions to get the conversation started:

- What is the first thing that pops into your head when someone comes up to you and says, "Follow me"?
 - o Answers will vary.
- Are you the kind of person who just says, "OK!" and takes off? Or are you a question asker?
 - o Answers will vary.
- What kind of questions might you ask of someone who wants you to follow them?
 - o Answers: Why? Where are we going? What do you want? Who else is coming?

THEN, have students turn in their Bibles to Matthew 4:18-22 and tell them that we are going to look at how a few people responded to a call to follow. Use The Details and The Setting sections from your study to give students a brief idea of where we are in history as we pick up this story.

NEXT, read or have a student read Matthew 4:18-20 and ask something like:

- What, specifically, does Jesus call these men to do?
 - o Answer: Follow me.

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- **What promise does He make to them in that same statement?**
 - Answer: That He will make them fishers of men.
- **Why do you think it is significant that the men were fishing when Jesus approached them?**
 - Answers will vary. Students will probably guess that it served as a clear illustration, but may not realize the significance of the fact that these men were working, not playing. Fishing in Jesus' day was a job, not a sport. He was showing them that they were in for a life change that would be costly.
- **What response do these men give to Jesus' invitation?**
 - Answer: They immediately followed Him.

THEN, explain to students that Jesus wasn't just asking these men to follow Him for a few minutes. He was asking them to leave life as they knew it and take up a new cause. He would help them see beyond the daily struggles of making a living and embrace a lifestyle of reaching lost souls with the truth of His message. These men had met Jesus before but had gone back home and continued with their routine. Jesus was about to change all of that!

NEXT, continue by having a student read Matthew 4:21-22 and ask something like:

- **What similarities and differences do you see between the calling of these men from the two before?**
 - Answer: Both accounts show the call to follow and an immediate response. The difference is that these brothers are in the presence of their father. He would have been an authority in their life, as well as someone who clearly depended on them in the family fishing business.
- **How do you think the presence of the father might have made the response more difficult?**
 - Answer: Let students think about this. Understand that their relationship with their parents will influence their answer. Lead them to consider that it might have been a temptation to consider what the father thought before responding to Jesus.

THEN, explain to students that verse 22 is significant in noting that the men left their father, as well as their livelihood. We all have excuses that make us feel unavailable when it comes to following God. Scripture shows here that these men were no exception. God's Word is clear that we are expected to honor our parents (Exodus 20:12, Ephesians 6:2), but our commitment to follow God must be upheld even before our own family. This can be a difficult issue for students, especially if they have parents who are not believers. Make sure to emphasize that Jesus was not calling the men to disrespect their father, only to submit to Him as the ultimate authority in their life.

NEXT, say something like:

- **Jesus wasn't just asking these men to give up what was important to them; He was inviting them to experience something even greater. Jesus was inviting them to pursue a daily relationship with Him so that they could learn His ways. This is discipleship. That's why these men became known as the first disciples. It wasn't a job. It was a new life.**

THEN, turn over to Matthew 9:9 and have a student read the verse aloud. Ask something like:

- **What is different about Matthew from the previous men who were called? Why is this significant?**
 - Answer: Matthew is called alone, and he is a tax collector, not a fisherman. This is significant because of the reputation that tax collectors had for being dishonest and cruel.

NEXT, read or have a student read Matthew 9:10-13 and draw attention to Jesus' words. Point out the following key

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concepts from this passage by saying something like:

- **Pharisees were the authorities on religious law. They were more than skeptical of Jesus and His teachings and dedicated themselves to finding fault in everything He did. They were attempting to discredit His character by pointing out that He associated with the undesirable. In your own words, how would you explain Jesus' response to the Pharisees?**
 - Answers will vary. Allow students to respond in their own words and then point out the emphasis on mercy. Jesus did not come to start a "good guy's club," but rather to show mercy on the broken and the needy. He didn't call these men because of what they had to offer, but for their willingness to follow Him.

FINALLY, say something like:

- **The same is true for Christ's call on your life. It is not what you have to offer, but how willing you are to follow!**

Ask if there are any questions, then transition into *The Last Word*.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** For students to begin to see their faith as a lifelong, relational journey with Jesus.
- **Set-Up:** You will need a note card or paper and a pen for each student.

PASS out a note card or piece of paper and a pen to each student and instruct them to copy down Jesus' words from Matthew 9:12-13:

- **"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, and not sacrifice. For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners".**

THEN, ask the students something like:

- **Does anyone here feel like they have learned what this means? Can you explain it?**
 - Answers will vary. Allow students time to answer in their own words. Point out that Jesus calls only sinners because that is what we all are! He knows our need for Him, and that is why He calls us to Himself.
- **How does Jesus' invitation to follow Him display His mercy?**
 - Answer: None of us are worthy to follow Him, but He invites us anyway.
- **When you follow Jesus and become a fisher of men, how do you get to display that same mercy?**
 - Answer: When we share the love of Christ with a hurting world we are displaying God's mercy to them.

NEXT, challenge students to memorize Jesus' words in Matthew 9:12-13 this week by placing this card somewhere they will see it often. Encourage them to pray daily, thanking God for the privilege to follow Him and asking Him to give them a tender heart toward others.

FINALLY, allow time for any closing thoughts or questions from students. Close in prayer, asking God to help each of His followers have a heart like His, seeing others and having mercy as we invite them to a relationship with Him.

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- Use the **Social Media Guide** to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

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- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

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LESSON 2: SALVATION EMPOWERS DISCIPLESHIP

What we want students to learn: That through a saving faith in Jesus, we are no longer separated from God by our sins, but are instead reconciled to be in relationship with Him.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To evaluate where they are in their faith relationship with God.

Scripture Focus: Romans 10:9-13; Romans 5:6-11

Supporting Scripture: Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23

Overview: The purpose of this lesson is to reinforce the notion that discipleship is a moot point unless you have a saving relationship with Jesus. For students who have trusted Christ for salvation through faith, this lesson will be a chance for them to evaluate where they are with Christ. For other students, this is a chance to enter into a saving relationship with Jesus, thus beginning their discipleship journey.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

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BIBLE BACKGROUND

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THE DETAILS

- **Author:** Paul is the author of Romans.
- **Time frame:** Romans was probably written from Corinth in the winter of A.D. 56-57.
- **Purpose:** Since the church in Rome had not received comprehensive theological teaching on salvation and

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other implications of following Christ, Paul wrote Romans to ensure a good understanding of such things. In addition, since many Jewish Christians were rejecting some of the new Gentile converts, it was essential that a level playing field be given to all believers. This is what Paul was advocating for in Romans.

THE SETTING

Paul's letter to the Romans provides one of the most in-depth explorations in the New Testament of how God saves us from sin. Paul details the problem of sin and describes how God both judges sin and lavishes His grace and mercy on us through Jesus. In Romans 10, Paul contrasts the impossibility of being justified by following God's law with the simplicity of being justified by our faith in Jesus. Romans 10:9-10 is one of the classic passages of Scripture that succinctly proclaims that salvation is obtained not by works, but by trusting in what God has accomplished for us through Jesus and surrendering our lives to Him.

THE MAIN POINT

The main point is that we are saved through faith in Jesus and by surrendering our lives to Him. The Gospel is multifaceted and can be viewed through many different angles, such as God rescuing us from death, God forgiving a debt we could never repay, or Jesus taking on God's wrath for us and giving us His righteousness in exchange. At the beginning of the study, you will help students understand from Romans 10 that saving faith is about trusting God that Jesus' death and resurrection is enough to save them. Then in Romans 5, you'll unpack the concept of salvation through the lens of how we, who were enemies of God through our sin, were reconciled to God through Jesus.

LESSON PLAN

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To get students thinking about what it looks like when two enemies are reconciled.
- **Set-Up:** None needed

FIRST, start the conversation by asking something like:

- **Have you ever had an enemy? Someone who you were always at odds with and, no matter what, it seemed like you would never get along?**
 - Answers will vary. Allow students time to answer.

THEN, explain that you are going to read a story of two people who were enemies. One of them did things to the other that most of us would think would be impossible to forgive. Read the following account of Eva Mozes Kor:

- **Kor and her sister, Miriam, were 10-year-old twins when they arrived at Auschwitz, one of history's most notorious concentration camps. She and Miriam became one of 1,500 sets of twins enrolled in**

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the Nazi's horrific "human experimentation program." In addition to living in sparse rat- and lice-infested quarters on a near-starvation diet, the girls were routinely subjected to humiliating and often harmful studies. Their body parts were measured so the Nazis could compare them to each other and to the other twins. Their blood was drawn and tested. They were injected with what Kor can only speculate were germs or viruses.

Kor survived the concentration camp and was liberated in 1945. In the 1990s, Kor was given a chance to meet one of the doctors at her concentration camp, Hans Munch. Kor took an incredible next step: she decided to forgive Dr. Munch. This is what she said about forgiving him:

"And immediately I felt that I was no longer a victim of Auschwitz. I was no longer a prisoner of my tragic past. I was free of Auschwitz, and I was free of [the Nazis]. I realized that I, the victim of 50 years, had the power even over the Angel of Death. So if I could forgive [the Nazis], I decided I could forgive everyone," she said. (SOURCE: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/daily-southtown/news/ct-sta-holocaust-survivor-st-0925-20160926-story.html>)

NEXT, lead students in a brief discussion. Ask:

- **What sticks out to you about this story?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Do you think that you could have forgiven that man if you were in Eva Mozes Kor's place? Why, or why not?**
 - Answers will vary. Give your group space to answer, encouraging students with different views to elaborate.

FINALLY, let students know that you'll be talking about how God repaired His relationship with us. Say something like:

- **I think all of us have experienced what it's like to have a broken relationship with another person. Today we're going to talk about our relationship with God and what God did to reconcile us to Him. In the process, we'll encounter an example of forgiveness that's truly remarkable.**

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of your lesson.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help students understand that through saving faith in Jesus, we are no longer separated from God by our sins, but are instead reconciled to be in relationship with Him.
- **Set Up:** Students will need a Bible or a Bible app, and you will need a whiteboard or flip chart to write on during the discussion.

FIRST, set up the discussion by helping the group wrap their minds around the weight of our sin. Say something like:

- **"Sin" is one of those church words that we don't use a lot in our day-to-day lives. I mean, when you get in trouble with a teacher, they don't write you up for "sinning," do they?**

THEN, ask something like:

- **Let's start here: when was the last time you were hurt by a friend or maybe even a family member?**

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o Answers will vary. Give them some time to answer. The point is to get the conversation started, so don't feel like you have to prod too much.

- **What did that hurt do to your relationship with that person?**
 - o Answers will vary. Again, allow some time for answers.
- **Have you ever been in a situation where you were the one that hurt someone and it changed your friendship or relationship?**
 - o Answers will vary. Since this is a vulnerable question, model vulnerability for your group by answering first.

NEXT, transition the discussion into exploring what sin does to our relationship with God. Say something like:

- **What you just described is how relationships are broken when we are "me-centered." That is a picture, in a small way, of how our relationship with God is broken by sin.**

THEN, ask something like:

- **Agree or disagree: most people would much rather think of themselves as making mistakes rather than committing sins.**
 - o Answers will vary. Make sure you follow up one-word answers with "Why do you think that?"

NEXT, have a student read Romans 3:23 and another read Romans 6:23. Ask something like:

- **What does Paul specifically say about "sin" in these two verses?**
 - o Answer: He says that everyone has sinned; that one way to think of "sin" is to fall short of God's glory; that the wages of sin is death.
- **Which one of those statements is the easiest to see in our everyday lives?**
 - o Answers will vary. Try to push students to think through this question. You might point out that we can see how sin does kill things, such as trust, relationships, etc.
- **Why do you think we usually think of our own sin as not as big of a deal as Paul makes of it here?**
 - o Answers will vary.

THEN, explain to the group that though we may not always understand the gravity of our rebellion against God, God planned for and provided a rescue before we ever knew we needed one. Have a student read Romans 10:9-13. Ask something like:

- **In verse 9, Paul makes an "if...then" statement. What is the "if" and what is the "then"?**
 - o Answer: The if is "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead." The then is "you will be saved."
- **So does this mean that if we just say the right things, like "Jesus is Lord," we'll be saved? What is Paul getting at here?**
 - o Answers will vary. Try to help students wrestle through this idea. Don't spell it out for them, but lead them in the direction that saying "Jesus is Lord" is about handing over our lives to Jesus and declaring that He is the leader of our lives, not our own selves.
- **Why do you think Paul says "believe in your heart" in verse 9 rather than just "believe"?**
 - o Answer: Believing in our heart indicates the kind of belief that changes our lives and compels us to act, rather than just saying, "Yeah, I guess that's true."

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NEXT, unpack this idea that the beginning and the foundation of following Jesus is trusting in what He has done for us. Ask something like:

- **"Believe," "faith," and "saved" are also churchy words that we don't usually take the time to understand. Let's look at what Paul says about believing, having faith, and being saved. In these five verses, what statements does he make about these things?**
 - As the group responds, write their statements on your whiteboard. At the end, you should have a list that says:
 - If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
 - ...it is with the heart that one believes and is justified.
 - ...it is with the mouth one confesses and is saved.
 - Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.
 - Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

THEN, give students a quick challenge by saying something like:

- **Here's our challenge for the next few minutes: let's reword these five statements into one simple sentence without using some of normal "church" language.**

The goal is to help the group internalize and understand what it means to begin to have a saving relationship with Jesus. Write their new version on the board. An example might be: "When we trust that Jesus rescued us by dying and rising again from the dead, He gives us new life."

NEXT, begin a discussion around understanding what it means that trusting in Jesus is the beginning of a relationship with God. Have a student read Romans 5:6-11. Ask something like:

- **Remember when we talked earlier about how relationships can be broken? What does this passage say about how our relationship with God was broken?**
 - Answer: We were ungodly (verse 6) and sinners (verse 8), rebelling against God; we were God's enemies (verse 10).
- **According to this passage, what did God do to repair our relationship with Him?**
 - Answer: Christ died for us (verses 6-8); God saved us from His wrath (verse 9); God reconciled us to Himself (verse 10).
- **According to this passage, what did we do to repair our relationship with God?**
 - Answer: Absolutely nothing. Verse 8 stresses that Christ died for us "while we were still sinners."

THEN, help students understand that discipleship (following Jesus) includes a personal relationship with God. Ask something like:

- **What does it mean to be "reconciled" to someone?**
 - Answer: Two people who were at odds with one another are reconciled when their friendship is restored.
- **Paul says that because we are reconciled to God through Jesus' death, we can "boast" (some translations say "rejoice") in God, which is another way to say we can rejoice in a relationship with God. What are some things we should celebrate about being in a relationship with God?**
 - Answers will vary. Try to coax answers from the group beyond just "We get to go to heaven," such as the fact that God is for us, that He cares for us, He listens to us, He guides us, etc.

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Ask if there are any questions, then transition into *The Last Word*.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students evaluate where they are in their faith relationship with God.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need to either write on the dry erase board or arrange to print or otherwise display the following phrases so the group can see them: "Not really interested;" "Ready to ask some questions;" "Ready to say 'yes' to Jesus;" and "Imperfectly following Jesus."

FIRST, explain to the group that God desires to have a relationship with each person in the group. Have someone read Romans 5:7-8 again. Say something like:

- **No matter what you think of yourself, there is no doubt that God wants to be in a relationship with you. When you were at your lowest point and had your back turned to God, He loved you enough to die for you. In front of you, you see four statements: "Not really interested," "Ready to ask some questions," "Ready to say 'yes' to Jesus," and "Imperfectly following Jesus." We are going to have about two minutes of silence to give us some space to consider which of these four statements best describes where you are with God. At the end of two minutes, I'm going to ask you to choose one statement that best describes you. Whether you share that statement or not will be up to you. If you want, you can keep it between you and God.**

NEXT, give students who are willing to share time to share their response. Ask follow-up questions as you see fit. Then, ask something like:

- **No matter where you are in the journey, it's good to just be honest with God and yourself about it. Does anyone want to share which card they chose, and why?**
 - Answers will vary. Have a leader model if needed. Make sure you thank students who are willing to share.
- **Has your response to this exercise changed recently? If we did this just a few weeks or months ago, would your answer have been different?**
 - Answers will vary. Allow space to share.
- **Does anyone want to share that they chose "Ready to say 'yes' to Jesus"?**
 - Answers will vary. If anyone does, celebrate! Make sure you help that student with their next step, such as talking with a pastor or their parents.

THEN, open the floor one more time for anyone to ask questions about a relationship with God. Say something like:

- **No matter where you are in a relationship with God, know that He is crazy about you! The reason we can be in a relationship with Him is simple: He wants to be in a relationship with us. Does anyone have anything else to share about their relationship with God or questions about what it means to begin a relationship with God?**
 - Answers will vary. Allow space for students to speak up if they want.

FINALLY, allow time for any closing thoughts or questions from students.

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LESSON 3: DISCIPLESHIP WAS ALWAYS GOD'S PLAN

What we want students to learn: That even in the Old Testament we see God calling people to be in a relationship with Him.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To begin to view other Christ-followers with a sense of unity, no matter the differences that may exist between them.

Scripture Focus: Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 7:6-8; Ephesians 2:13-16

Supporting Scripture: Colossians 3:11

Overview: The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand that discipleship isn't just a New Testament concept. It's easy to think about discipleship and only think about Jesus calling followers to Himself. And while, from a theological perspective, Jesus did enable more direct access to the Father, God has always been in the business of calling people to Himself to follow after His ways. This lesson will make this point for students.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each **LIFE** lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your **LIFE** lesson 3 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 3, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The *Bible Background* is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What's the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** While there's no specific author named within the text, Moses is the accepted author for Deuteronomy, with some editing and additions done after his death (such as the account of his death!).

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- **Time frame:** The dating of Deuteronomy is a point of debate. The issue is that no one knows for sure when the exodus occurred, whether it was in the mid-1400s B.C. or a later date around the mid-1200s B.C. The writing would have occurred around those general dates.
- **Purpose:** *Deuteronomy* means "second law." It was a reminder of the law of God for the second generation of Israelites in the desert before they entered the promised land. It reminded the people that the Lord is God. He is faithful to keep His promises to His people.

THE SETTING

The main passage for this lesson is Deuteronomy 7:6-8. Moses is speaking to God's people about the covenant (special relationship) they will have with God. As Moses goes through the terms of this relationship, he tells the people why God has chosen them. As God calls His people into a special relationship based on love, we can begin to see how God will eventually call all people to Himself through Jesus.

THE MAIN POINT

In these verses, God is speaking to His people through Moses about their value. In verse 6, God calls the people of Israel "holy." It's important to realize that God is not calling them righteous, but He is setting them apart (the literal definition of "holy" is set apart). In fact, he even goes as far as to say that they have not been chosen to be God's people because they were necessarily anything special (v. 7), but because "the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers." God is calling the people of Israel into a special relationship with Him because He loves them. He does the same for us.

LESSON PLAN

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: An introductory activity called *The Lead In*; the Bible study section called *The Main Event*; an application-focused segment called *The Last Word*.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To help students begin to realize that God did not stumble into the plan of discipleship through Jesus, but "called His shot" long before.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need the ability to show this YouTube clip to students at the beginning of this lesson: [youtube.com/embed/HkEX0eb2eBo?start=0&end=177](https://www.youtube.com/embed/HkEX0eb2eBo?start=0&end=177).

FIRST, set up the video by giving a little baseball history lesson. Say something like:

- **One of the craziest moments in baseball history was when Babe Ruth famously "called his shot."** It was the Yankees vs. the Cubs in the 1932 World Series. According to legend, Babe stepped up to the plate, pointed toward the flagpole in the outfield, and proceeded to hit a home run.

NEXT, show the clip from this YouTube video:

- <https://www.youtube.com/embed/HkEX0eb2eBo?start=0&end=177>

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- Make sure to cut off the video before the 2:55 mark.

THEN, talk with students about the controversy of Babe Ruth's called home run. Ask something like:

- **Do you think he really called the home run? Or was he just motioning to the bench?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Why do you think it is so controversial?**
 - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, transition into *The Main Event* by saying something like:

- **The called home run is so controversial because it's so unbelievable. No one really knows they're going to hit a homer before they swing. The idea that Babe would be able to call his shot and follow through on the prediction is crazy! It's crazy to think about someone calling their shot like Babe Ruth. It's hard to believe. As outlandish as that moment seems, it happens all throughout Scripture with God. God calls His shots left and right. The Bible is full of prophecies that come true. Scripture talks about Jesus long before He showed up in the flesh. Today we're going to talk about a shot that God called with you.**

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of your lesson.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help students see that God has always been calling people into a special relationship with Him, and they are no different. God wants them to follow Him in a personal way.
- **Set Up:** You may benefit from a dry erase board, but it's not critical. Make sure students have a Bible or that they are able to look along with a friend.

BEGIN by reminding students that they're going to see how God has "called His shot" throughout Scripture. Prepare them to be ready to look up several passages with you. Say something like:

- **We're going to start by looking at a passage that comes early in Scripture. Let's look at what God is doing in Genesis 12:1-3.**

NEXT, read or have a student read Genesis 12:1-3. When students have finished, lead them in a short discussion. Ask:

- **Who is God speaking to in this passage?**
 - Answer: God is talking to Abram (who later goes by Abraham). God is calling Abraham to follow Him in a special way.
- **Let's look for the called shot. What is God going to do through Abraham?**
 - Answer: Help students if they need it by looking back at the end of verse 2 and verse 3. God says that He is going to bless the world through Abraham. He is calling Abraham into a special relationship!
- **Is there anything that Abraham is supposed to do?**
 - Answer: Help students if they need it by looking back at verse 1. Basically, Abraham is supposed to follow God. God is asking Abraham to follow Him. Sound familiar?

NEXT, have students turn to Deuteronomy 7:6-8. As they are locating this Scripture, talk to them about the time that has

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passed in between these passages. You can say something like:

- **Abraham did follow God, and over time his family did grow – just like God said! They grew into a big nation of people, but they were enslaved by Egypt. God brought them out of slavery and gave them a land of their own. But God repeated to this big nation of people the same calling that He gave to Abraham.**

NEXT, read or have a student read Deuteronomy 7:6-8. Talk through this passage with students. Ask something like:

- **What do you think it means to be “holy” (v. 6)?**
 - o Answers will vary. Students will probably say something about being right, making right choices, or being righteous. Redefine this word for them and help them see that holy also means being “different” or “set apart.” The reason we say God is holy is because He is completely different than us. He is perfect! Help students see that what God is really saying here is that the Israelites will be set apart. They will have a special relationship with God.
- **Why did God set Israel apart to have a special relationship with Him?**
 - o Answer: Look at verse 7 and the beginning of verse 8. Israel had done nothing to earn God’s love or catch His eye. The only reason God called them to be set apart with Him was because of His great love for them. This is the most important point in the lesson. Let students answer and talk through their ideas, but make sure they understand that God called them out because He loved them.
- **God was also keeping His promise to Israel. Where did we first learn about this promise?**
 - o Answer: Abraham! God called Abraham in Genesis 12 and told him that he would become a great people – now it has happened.

THEN, help students connect the Deuteronomy passage with the Genesis passage. Ask something like:

- **In this passage, God is talking to a large group of people, right? Who were they? Where did they come from?**
 - o Answer: They were Abraham’s family! His children had more children, and they grew into the nation of Israel.
- **Do you remember what God said was going to happen through this family?**
 - o Answer: In the Genesis passage, we read about how God was going to bless the world through this family. God is calling His people into a special relationship so He can bless the world through them.
- **Do you think there was anything the Israelites needed to do in this special relationship?**
 - o Answers will vary. Let students talk through their answers, but help them see that Israel was supposed to show the world what it looked like to follow God. They were going to show the world what it was like to have a relationship with God. It was never just about Israel – it was always about God’s love for the whole world!

NEXT, transition to the cross by asking something like:

- **What was the blessing that the whole world would experience because of God’s people (Abraham’s family)?**
 - o Answer: Salvation through Jesus. Jesus was born as an Israelite, too – He was part of this family! Through Abraham’s descendants, all the way to Jesus, God would make a way for everyone to have their sins forgiven!

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NEXT, drive home the point by saying something like:

- **God called His shot! When Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world, God was not surprised. We shouldn't have been either. Jesus was always God's plan for blessing the world through Abraham's descendants.**

THEN, explain that all throughout history there have been two groups of people in the world: God's people (the Israelites) and everyone else (the Gentiles). Say something like:

- **God's people were always special. God was sticking to His promise of leading them in a special relationship. But it wasn't just about them. Listen to what God says in Ephesians 2.**

NEXT, read or have a student read Ephesians 2:13-16. Ask something like:

- **What does this passage say happened to those two groups of people?**
 - Answer: Through the sacrifice of Jesus, God brings them together. This is the incredible part: we are called into a special relationship with God, too! It's not just for people who were related to Abraham, but anyone who believes in Jesus!
- **God brings these two groups of people together in Himself. How did He do this?**
 - Answer: Through the cross. Everyone – whether you are an Israelite or a Gentile – is reconciled to God through the cross. We have sin (disobeying God) in common. God meets all of our needs through Jesus, bringing us to Himself!

THEN, explain to students that this isn't just a sentiment expressed by Jesus. Peter backs up this concept as well, writing something like 20 years after Jesus' death and resurrection. Read or have a student read 1 Peter 2:12. Explain that Peter is echoing the words of Jesus, further affirming that this is a real part of our identities as Christ-followers. Remind students that when Peter used the word "Gentiles" he is simply talking about those who do not believe in Christ. Read Matthew 5:16, then ask something like:

- **How is what Peter says here similar to what Jesus says in Matthew 5:16?**
 - Answer: Both of them see the way we live our lives as having potential to draw people to a relationship with God.
- **In both Jesus' and Peter's statements, what is the ultimate goal in people acknowledging the source behind our remarkable lives?**
 - Answer: Help students see that the goal is for people to come to a saving relationship with Jesus. The idea is a powerful one: our lives can be one of the ways Jesus calls people to Himself to experience His salvation. Help students see what an amazing truth this is.

FINALLY, transition to *The Last Word* by explaining to students that just like Abraham was called to live differently and the Israelites were supposed to show the world how to have a relationship with God, God is calling us to live for Him as well! Say something like:

- **Just like God called Abraham to have a special relationship with Him, God called the entire people of Israel to follow Him. Abraham followed God wherever He led him. Israel followed God in order to show the world what it was like to have a relationship with Him. God has called us to follow Him in a special relationship because of Jesus. Let's take a look at what He's asking us to do.**

Ask if there are any questions, then transition into *The Last Word*.

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THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students see what God is calling us to do as a part of our relationship with Him.
- **Set-Up:** You'll want to use a dry erase board or some other means to help students visualize the three Scripture passages you read together.

FIRST, write these three headings on the board: ABRAHAM, ISRAEL, US.

NEXT, ask students to help you write under each heading what God was/is calling those people to do as a part of the relationship He called them to. Ask something like:

- **God called Abraham into a special relationship with Him. What was Abraham supposed to do?**
 - Answer: Follow God wherever He called him. (Be sure to write that on the board.)
- **God reminded Israel of the relationship He had with them because of Abraham. What was Israel supposed to do?**
 - Answer: Help the world see how to have a relationship with God. (Be sure to write that on the board.)

THEN, read or have a student read Colossians 3:11 to help you fill in the calling for us. Ask something like:

- **What is this passage saying?**
 - Answer: God is no longer singling out one people group to have a special relationship with Him. Because of Jesus, anyone who believes in Christ is called to follow God. We're all following God together. This means that God is even calling people who are different than you to follow Him. Even though we may be very different from some other believers, we are all part of the Body of Christ!
- **What is God calling us to do?**
 - Answer: Follow God together in unity. (Write this on the board.)

NEXT, help students see that God is calling us to fulfill His calling to Abraham and the Israelites. Point to the board as you say something like:

- **Just like Abraham, God is calling us to follow Him wherever He calls us to go. Just like Israel, God is calling us to help the world see how to have a relationship with Him. But He is calling us to do it together.**

Encourage them to see the full picture of what God has done for them because He loves them. It started with one family, but through that family, God blessed the world. Now He is doing the same thing through us!

FINALLY, allow time for any closing thoughts or questions from students.

- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're posting them on Instagram or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the Social Media Guide to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.

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What we want students to learn: That the Gospel, the “good news” of God’s rescue plan through Jesus Christ, is not basic or elementary; it’s the power that fuels the everyday life of a Christian.

What we want students to do with what they’ve learned: To prepare themselves to encounter the Gospel and its impact on their lives in a way that they might never have before.

Scripture Focus: Luke 9:23-25

Supporting Scripture: Matthew 10:38-39

Overview: Many students, and many Christians in general, mistakenly think that discipleship is for the “super Christians.” Discipleship is often seen as “next level” religion for the ultra mature or devout. Discipleship is seen as something we arrive at when we know enough or are good enough at being Christians to get serious about it. This lesson will challenge students to see that nothing could be further from the truth. Discipleship is the expected standard for all believers. It’s not an option. It’s commanded.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

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BIBLE BACKGROUND

The *Bible Background* is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you’ll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what’s happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by “context”?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you’ll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By “context” we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What’s the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don’t get a “big picture” understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God’s plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** Luke was a doctor, a Gentile Christian, and a companion of Paul.
- **Time frame:** The Gospel of Luke was written around A.D. 60.

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- **Purpose:** Luke is the only Gentile author of the Bible. His entire purpose was to write an accurate account of the life of Jesus so as to present Jesus as Savior, fully God and fully man. It is one of the synoptic Gospels, having much in common with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

THE SETTING

In Luke's Gospel, this passage directly follows Jesus foretelling His death. Jesus' command in Luke 9:23, "'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me,'" holds even greater significance for those of us on this side of the cross. "Follow me" is a common command repeated throughout the Gospels. It was the invitation Jesus extended to His earliest disciples and the invitation He continues to extend.

THE MAIN POINT

The main point that we want to make is that in Luke 9:23-25, Jesus calls all of His followers to make sacrifices and surrender to God's will in their lives. There should not be a distinction between a Christian and a disciple. This lesson will help students see that all believers should strive to follow Jesus. In a world that screams for people to do what makes them happy, Jesus asks His followers to surrender their wants and trust His plan for their lives. This lesson presents a hard challenge, but we know that Jesus is worthy.

LESSON PLAN

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To discuss the trade-offs of putting in the bare minimum or giving your all to something.
- **Set-Up:** Print a copy of the two situations for each group or display the information for all to see.

FIRST, introduce the concept of discipline. Ask something like:

- **What comes to your mind when you hear the word "discipline"? What does that word mean?**
 - Answers will vary. One definition that Merriam Webster offers is "orderly or prescribed conduct or pattern of behavior." Another is "a rule or system of rules governing conduct or activity."
- **What is the typical result of being disciplined in a certain event or circumstance?**
 - Answers will vary. Typically, we see better results and outcomes in the areas of life where we exercise a certain level of discipline.

NEXT, divide students into groups of three or four. Explain that each group is going to read through a list of requirements necessary to achieve specific results for a given scenario: one is a chemistry test and the other is a job. Instruct the groups to discuss the trade-offs and gains for each option. Then, ask each group to choose the one option that they feel offers the best result for the required action.

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Chemistry Test

	Requirement	Result
Option 1	Do not go to class and do not study	Fail
Option 2	Go to class and study 1 hour	Make a D
Option 3	Go to class, pay attention, and study for 1 hour	Make a C
Option 4	Go to class, pay attention, take notes, and study for 2 hours	Make a B
Option 5	Go to class, pay attention, take notes, study 4 hours	Make an A
Option 6	Go to class, pay attention, take notes, ask questions in class, study 4+ hours individually, and meet with group to study	Make a Perfect Score

Part Time Job

(Federal minimum wage \$7.25)

Option 1	Work 0 hour	\$0
Option 2	Work 5 hours	\$36.25
Option 3	Work 10 hours	\$72.50
Option 4	Work 15 hours	\$108.75
Option 5	Work 20 hours	\$145
Option 6	Work 20+ hours	\$145+

THEN, when the groups are done with their discussions, bring all students back together and briefly discuss. Ask something like:

- **How disciplined did your group decide to be with the upcoming chemistry test? Why did you pick that option? What trade-offs did you consider?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What about the second option with the part-time job? How disciplined did you decide to be? Why did you pick that option? What trade-offs did you consider?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **When you think back to the definitions we discussed of the word "discipline," what connection do you think it has to the word disciple? In what way do you think that a disciple is disciplined in his or her walk with Christ?**
 - Answers will vary. There is definitely a "prescribed conduct or pattern of behavior" for disciples.

FINALLY, explain that sometimes we can approach our Christian walk in a similar way. If we are only concerned with "getting by" or what we deem as "good enough," we may choose not to put in much time or effort into our relationship with God. Ask something like:

- **Do you think you ever approach your relationship with the Lord like this? Do you think about certain**

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trade-offs when it comes to how devoted you are to following Jesus? What are the trade-offs you think about? Is this the mindset of a disciple of Jesus?

o Answers will vary. Leave these questions hanging out there as you transition into *The Main Event*.

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of the lesson.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** For students to learn that discipleship isn't just an option for the "super religious." It is God's expectation of every believer.
- **Set-Up:** Make sure each student has access to a copy of the Bible or can look along with a friend.

FIRST, begin this part of the lesson by asking something like:

- **Do you think that you have intentionally or unintentionally done the minimum to get to heaven while missing out on a deep connection with God?**
 - o Answers will vary. You may choose for this question to be rhetorical or ask students to honestly answer.

THEN, ask students to turn to Luke 9:23-25. While they are turning, take a moment to provide the context for this passage using information from the Bible Background. Then, read or have a student read the passage. Ask something like:

- **What does it take to be a Christian?**
 - o Answers could vary. Students will hopefully respond with an explanation of the Gospel. Confession of sin and proclamation of faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation are necessary. Be sure to fill in any gaps that students leave out.
- **What does it take to be a disciple?**
 - o Answers will vary. Students may likely respond indicating that a disciple somehow or in some way goes "beyond" what a Christian does.
- **So let's make sure we're clear. Do you think there's a difference between being a Christian and being a disciple? Explain.**
 - o Answers will vary. Discuss with students that a disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ. A Christian is also a follower of Jesus Christ. The beliefs and actions of both should be the same. Being a disciple does not make one a "super Christian." Likewise, God expects the same from all believers. Explain that Jesus always referred to those that followed Him as disciples. Believers were first called Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26). This was after Christ had risen from the dead and ascended back to Heaven, so Jesus never made any distinction between the two. The Romans started calling believers Christians to mock them as being "little Christs." So we can see in this passage that "anyone" listed in Luke 9:23 refers to any believer. Discipleship is something God expects from each of us.
- **What do you think it means to "deny yourself"? Why does Christ call us to do it?**
 - o Answers will vary. It means that we are not in control of our lives. When we declare Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we submit our life to Him. We must practice denying ourselves whenever our desires go against the will of God.
- **What are some examples of ways we have to deny ourselves on a consistent basis?**
 - o Answers will vary. Some examples include: obedience to parents even when we disagree, remaining pure in relationships even when feelings and hormones get stirred, responding with forgiveness and

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kindness even when we have been mistreated, etc.

- **How do you “take up your cross”? What does that mean?**
 - Answers will vary. Discuss with students that denying ourselves is often about giving something up, while taking up our cross is usually about doing something in obedience to God, even when it leads to rejection. Once again, this has to start with the mindset that we are not in charge. God knows best. We must submit daily to the things God calls us to do and say.

THEN, point out that Jesus paid the penalty for our sin when He died on a cross, but the Bible also has a lot to say about believers and their own crosses. Read or have students read the following verses: Matthew 10:38-39, Galatians 2:20, and Galatians 5:24. Ask something like:

- **What do these passages all have in common with each other and the ones we’ve already looked at today?**
 - Answers will vary. They all discuss that those who follow Jesus are to give up their rights to their own life and submit to what God had called them to.
- **Let’s circle back to a question we’ve already discussed. Do you think being a disciple, denying yourself and taking up your cross, is something just for a certain committed group of Christians or is it for everyone who says they are a Christian? Explain.**
 - Answers will vary. Hopefully students have seen that this is a consistent theme throughout Scripture and realize that being a committed disciple of Jesus is expected of all Christians. It’s not optional.

FINALLY, ask if there are any questions, and if there are none, transition to *The Last Word* portion of the lesson.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** For students to examine their personal walk with God.
- **Set-Up:** You’ll need to print a copy of the “Spiritual Disciplines Evaluation” handout for each student and provide something for them to write with.

FIRST, remind students that Luke 9:23 talks about taking up your cross “daily.” We do not become like Christ overnight; rather, it is a lifelong process known as sanctification. Explain that each day we are to strive to be more like Christ than we were the day before. And the cool thing is that the Holy Spirit works to help us accomplish the same thing.

NEXT, explain that spiritual disciplines are behaviors and practices that can assist us in our sanctification process. As we strive to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus, it may be helpful to evaluate which disciplines we currently do well and those that we may greatly benefit from improving.

THEN, pass out the Spiritual Disciplines Evaluation handout. Give students time to complete the evaluation. Then, have a brief discussion with students about their responses. Ask something like:

- **In which area or areas do you feel like you do the best?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **With which area or areas do you struggle?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **If you could improve in the area or areas you struggle, how do you think it would help you in your**

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walk with Christ? How would it help you become a more committed disciple?

o Answers will vary.

FINALLY, challenge students to pick one discipline they are currently not practicing to implement this coming week. Then, ask if there are any questions and close in prayer thanking God for being worthy of our lives' allegiance.

- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're posting them on Instagram or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the *Social Media Guide* to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLESHIP
LESSON 5: THE ALL-ENCOMPASSING
DISCIPLESHIP JESUS DESIRES

What we want students to learn: That Jesus expects nothing less than all of us. Nothing but our everything will do.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To identify any area of their lives they have withheld from God and to consider what it would take to completely surrender this area.

Scripture Focus: Luke 14:25-33

Overview: The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand the brand of discipleship to which Jesus calls us. Jesus doesn't look for a dispassionate, semi-committed follower. Jesus expects our complete devotion. This lesson will help students understand that nothing should come between Jesus and them.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

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To access your **LIFE** lesson 5 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 5, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The *Bible Background* is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What's the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** Luke was a doctor, a Gentile Christian, and a companion of Paul.
- **Time frame:** The Gospel of Luke was written around A.D. 60.
- **Purpose:** Luke is the only Gentile author of the Bible. His entire purpose was to write an accurate account of the life of Jesus so as to present Jesus as Savior, fully God and fully man. It is one of the synoptic Gospels, having much in common with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

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THE SETTING

Jesus' earthly ministry was coming to a close, and He was on His way to Jerusalem for the final time. While on the way, He continued to heal and teach about the Kingdom of God. Great crowds were following Jesus, and He used the opportunity to teach about true discipleship.

THE MAIN POINT

Jesus desires all-encompassing discipleship. A true follower of Jesus will put Him above every other person or thing in their life. He must come before our family members, our comfort, everything we own, and even our very lives.

LESSON PLAN

The *Lesson Plan* contains three elements: An introductory activity called ***The Lead In***; the Bible study section called ***The Main Event***; an application-focused segment called ***The Last Word***.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To get students thinking about the importance of preparation and counting the cost.
- **Set-Up:** Gather two pieces of blank paper and two pens to use in the following activity. Optional: a small piece of candy to award each member of the winning team.

FIRST, divide students into two teams. Explain that you will be giving each team the same scenario. They will have three minutes to come up with a list of everything they will need for the scenario (Examples: plane tickets, clothing, sunscreen, and so on). At the end of the two minutes you will compare the lists, and the team with the best preparation will win.

THEN, say something like:

- **Here is your scenario:** You will be taking a week-long trip to Hawaii with a friend. You will spend time visiting beaches, looking at the beautiful scenery, and hiking through nature. As a team, come up with everything you will need for this trip. Assume that you will not be able to buy anything there other than food. Go!

After you have given the teams two minutes to come up with their lists, have each team read their list to the whole group. If time permits, discuss as a group some of the items one team included but the other might have left off and why it might be important. Select a winner based on which team you think was the most prepared for the one-week trip to Hawaii.

NEXT, ask something like:

- **Why is preparation so important when you are about to do something like go on a big trip, take a final exam, or run a marathon?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **How does knowing exactly what to expect help you prepare for something?**

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- o Answer: If you know exactly what's coming, you can make the necessary preparations ahead of time. Nothing will catch you off guard.

THEN, transition to *The Main Event* by saying something like:

- **In our lesson today we are going to talk about what it means to truly follow Jesus. We're going to learn that He requires an all-in commitment and that we have to be prepared for exactly what He expects from us. The great thing is that He tells us what to expect.**

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of the lesson.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help students understand that Jesus expects nothing less than all of us. Nothing but our everything will do.
- **Set-Up:** Make sure each student will have access to a copy of the Bible or can look along with a friend.

FIRST, ask students to turn to Luke 14. As students find Luke, take a moment to provide the context for this passage using information from the Bible Background.

NEXT, read or have a student read Luke 14:25. Ask something like:

- **Before we dive into this passage, we need to know whom Jesus was talking with when He said these things. Looking at the Scripture, to whom was Jesus talking?**
 - o Answer: The great crowds that were following Him.

THEN, say something like:

- **Jesus was really popular at this time in His ministry. He had huge crowds of people following Him. Just when He could have made Himself even more popular, He chose to say some pretty tough stuff.**

NEXT, read or have a student read Luke 14:25-33. Ask something like:

- **Jesus gave three different descriptions of the one He said could not be His disciple. What characteristics does Jesus give of the one who cannot be His disciple?**
 - o Answer: 1) The one who does not hate his own family and his own life. 2) The one who does not bear his own cross and come after Jesus. 3) The one who does not renounce all that he has.
- **In your own words, what is Jesus telling the crowd? What type of disciple is he NOT looking for?**
 - o Answers will vary. Jesus is letting the crowd know that He isn't looking for half-hearted disciples.

THEN, say something like:

- **Wow. That sounds like some pretty harsh stuff. Jesus had great crowds following Him as He journeyed to Jerusalem for the final time. Instead of making them feel good about following Him around, He basically told them that He wasn't looking for half-hearted followers; He was looking for true disciples. He wanted His followers to be all in.**

NEXT, explain that throughout this lesson you will be exploring each of these characteristics of the one who cannot be

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a disciple of Jesus. Tell students that as you move through the lesson you would like for them to consider the connection between the characteristics Jesus mentioned in this passage and how they relate to areas where people tend to withhold their complete devotion to Christ. Ask something like:

- **The first characteristic of a disciple of Jesus is one who hates his family. We know that Jesus also talks about loving others and obeying our parents, so what did He mean here? What does hating your family have to do with being a disciple of Jesus?**
 - Answer: Jesus was talking about allegiance. “Hating” was a term that Jews sometimes used to speak of loving less. In a similar teaching recorded in Matthew 10:37, Jesus said that His disciples must love Him more than their family. In short, our love and devotion to Jesus has to be far greater than our love and devotion to anyone else.
- **Why do you think we struggle so much to put Jesus above our relationships with other people?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What do you think it looks like to put Jesus above your other relationships (family, friends, boyfriend/girlfriend, etc.)? How you think putting Jesus above those relationships would impact the relationship?**
 - Answers will vary.

THEN, remind students that Jesus must be more important to us than family members, best friends, or a boyfriend or girlfriend. Obedience to Him is not optional for the true disciple. He wants our complete devotion. Jesus promises that those who have put Him before their family will be blessed and will inherit eternal life (Matt. 19:29). Ask something like:

- **In verse 26 of our passage, Jesus said if you do not hate your own life you cannot be His disciple. What did He mean by that? What does it look like to hate your own life?**
 - Answers will vary. Remind students of the discussion you had in the last lesson about denying yourself.

NEXT, say something like:

- **Hating your own life is saying that you want nothing to do with your life apart from Jesus. There is nothing in all of your life that is more important to you than Jesus. This means letting go of the control over your own life and giving that control to God—to completely give up your own plans and desires to follow God’s plans and desires for you. This is realizing that it really isn’t “your” life at all, but that you actually belong to God, and it is His story being played out in you. Jesus made it clear that if you want to truly follow Him, you have to stop thinking of yourself first.**

THEN, ask something like:

- **As if all of this wasn’t shocking enough, Jesus then said that whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Him cannot be His disciple. Remember, Jesus had not died on the cross yet, so what did He mean by that? How do we take up our cross?**
 - Answer: No one takes up a cross to go to a party. You take up your cross to go and die. Taking up one’s cross is a metaphor for dying to self and following Jesus.

Explain to students that Jesus calls His disciples to a deep relationship that includes suffering and death. We must die to ourselves if we are going to be the type of disciple that Jesus expects. Say something like:

- **This means that we no longer live to please ourselves or let sin rule over us. We live to please Christ and let His Word rule over our thoughts and actions. Complete surrender to Jesus means surrendering our pleasures and comfort.**

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THEN, ask something like:

- **As Jesus was describing a true disciple, He gave two examples when someone would sit down and think ahead before doing something. What are some things that you would never try to do without first having a plan in place or thinking about what it was going to cost you?**
 - Answers will vary. Examples may include: picking out a brand-new vehicle without thinking about what it would cost you, getting into a plane to go skydiving without any instructions or even a parachute, or trying out for a team without thinking about how much time and effort is required.

Explain that Jesus used these examples to point out that there is a cost for following Him. He was saying that just as you seriously think through all of the major decisions of your life and weigh whether or not they are worth it, you must count the cost of following Him. Each person should consider what it is going to cost to follow Jesus and be prepared to pay that cost. Ask something like:

- **What might it cost you to be an all-in follower of Jesus?**
 - Answers will vary. Some examples could include popularity and certain relationships. It will cost sin that we enjoy. It can cost us where we put our focus, time, and energy.
- **Do you think it would be worth the cost? Why or why not?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **After giving examples of counting the cost, Jesus tells the crowds exactly what it will cost them to be His disciple. What will it cost them to follow Jesus? What must someone do if he or she wants to be His disciple?**
 - Answer: Renounce all that he or she has.
- **In your own words, describe what you think this means. Do we have to totally give away everything we own or does Jesus mean something else here?**
 - Answers will vary. The word "renounce" in this verse means to separate from. If we want to be Christ's disciples, we must be willing to separate ourselves from everything we have in order to follow Him. Nothing should come between Jesus and us.

NEXT, ask something like:

- **What are the dangers of a half-hearted commitment to Christ? From what you studied today, is there such a thing as a half-hearted commitment to Jesus?**
 - Answers will vary. It looks like Jesus is saying that half-hearted commitment is really no commitment at all. Those who are not willing to be fully committed to Christ are not His disciples. This is dangerous because only those who surrender their lives to Jesus will be saved from sin and death.

FINALLY, say something like:

- **God's grace is a free gift. You cannot earn your salvation. Salvation comes by following Jesus in faith. Yes, it is free, but as we have seen today, truly following Jesus will cost you everything. If you are not willing to put Jesus above everything that is important to you, you cannot be His disciple. He demands all of us. It's all or nothing.**

NEXT, ask if there are any questions, and if there are none, transition to *The Last Word* portion of the lesson.

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THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To have students identify any area of their lives they have withheld from God and to consider what it would take to completely surrender this area.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need to print a copy of the "What Are You Withholding?" handout for each student and provide something for them to write with.

FIRST, distribute materials to each student as described in the set-up. Direct students to read through the list of areas where they might be withholding from God. Next to each area, students should jot down a specific way they are withholding from God, if it applies. Some students may need to identify an entire area in which they are not giving God their all.

NEXT, encourage students to consider what it would take to completely surrender this area to God.

THEN, ask students to flip their page over and write a short prayer or promise to God detailing how they will surrender this area to Him. Encourage students to keep this sheet in their Bible and look at it this week as a reminder.

FINALLY, remind students that Jesus expects nothing less than all of us. Nothing but our everything will do when it comes to truly following Jesus.

Close in prayer.

- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're posting them on Instagram or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the **Social Media Guide** to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLESHIP
LESSON 6: THE HOLY SPIRIT AND DISCIPLESHIP

What we want students to learn: That the Holy Spirit both empowers and enables our discipleship.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To begin to lean on the Holy Spirit more for guidance as they follow Jesus.

Scripture Focus: Romans 8:5-11

Supporting Scripture: John 14:15-17

Overview: The purpose of this lesson is to help students see that, if they have entered into a saving relationship with God, the Holy Spirit not only dwells within them, but also that He empowers them to follow after God. Students will understand that as followers of Jesus, they are no longer slaves to sinful flesh. Instead, they have total access to the Holy Spirit who is able to bring life, growth, and transformation. By depending on the Holy Spirit we grow as disciples.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

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BIBLE BACKGROUND

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THE DETAILS

- **Author:** Paul is the author of Romans.
- **Time frame:** Romans was probably written from Corinth in the winter of 56-57 AD.
- **Purpose:** Since the church in Rome had not received comprehensive theological teaching on salvation and

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other implications of following Christ, Paul wrote Romans to ensure a good understanding of such things. In addition, since many Jewish Christians were rejecting some of the new Gentile converts, it was essential that a level playing field be given to all Believers. This is what Paul was advocating for in Romans.

THE SETTING

Rome was the center of government, life, and culture at the time Paul wrote this letter to the Romans. Though he had never been to the church in Rome before, he felt compelled to write them as he hoped to visit them in the future.¹ Paul wanted the Romans to clearly understand the Gospel message and how it could change a person's life. In Romans 8, Paul is talking about how Christians can be assured that once Jesus has saved them there is no more fear of condemnation. God is at work in the life of everyone who has received Him as Lord and Savior through the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE MAIN POINT

Becoming a passionate disciple of Jesus Christ is not based on your willpower. It comes from the power of God within you, the Holy Spirit. Through studying Romans 8:5-11, we will see how the Holy Spirit works in our lives to transform us into continuously growing disciples. First, we will examine our everyday choice to follow our flesh or follow the Spirit. Then, we will take some time to better understand who the Holy Spirit is and how He works. We will look at Jesus' teaching about the Holy Spirit in John 14:15-17. Finally, we will see how the same Spirit that helped Jesus conquer the grave can give us power to live as devoted followers of Jesus every day. Every day, the Holy Spirit desires to help us practically grow as disciples.

LESSON PLAN

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: An introductory activity called ***The Lead In***; the Bible study section called ***The Main Event***; an application-focused segment called ***The Last Word***.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To help students begin thinking about the power of the Holy Spirit in their journey as a disciple.
- **Set-Up:** Two or more flashlights, batteries, and the seven verses of Romans 8:5-11 printed on separate strips of paper, tape.

FIRST, before students enter the room, discreetly tape the seven verses from Romans 8:5-11 around the room. These verses should be placed in areas where they are not immediately noticeable when students enter. Once students have entered, explain to them that in order to know what passage of Scripture you are going to study this morning they have to find it around the room. There is just one catch: The lights are about to be clicked off. However, they will have access to at least two flashlights to find the each verse from the passage of Scripture.

NEXT, click off the lights in the room and pass out the flashlights. Depending on the number of flashlights you have, you can divide up your group to search. **At least one flashlight should not have batteries in it.** Have your students search the room until they find all the verses and can tell you the complete passage of Scripture that they will study.

¹ NIV Life Application Bible, p.1879.

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THEN, ask this question:

- Was it difficult for the person/team whose flashlight didn't work? Why? What did your flashlight need?

FINALLY, explain to your students that today you are talking about the power to live the Christian life as a disciple. Without this power source, trying to live as a Christian is frustrating and ultimately impossible. Use the batteries as a visual as you make your illustration. Say something like this:

- When we think about being a disciple of Jesus, often we only think about our efforts. We think about giving our best effort not to sin, to pursue God, and to do good deeds. However, God never intended for our journey as a disciple to just be about our best efforts alone. He has given us an incredible gift that empowers us to live as a disciple: the Holy Spirit.

Think about it like this. Just as batteries give power to a flashlight to function as intended, the Holy Spirit gives power to us to function as a disciple. If we are not seeking the power of the Holy Spirit, it is no wonder that we struggle to be a growing follower of Jesus. We need power beyond our efforts to grow to our God given potential. God has freely given that power in our lives through the Holy Spirit. Today we will look at how the Holy Spirit makes all the difference in our discipleship journey.

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of your lesson.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help students understand who the Holy Spirit is and how He works grow them into a mature disciple.
- **Set Up:** Pictures of popular items to demonstrate choices (such as Coke vs. Pepsi, Chick-fil-A vs. McDonald's, etc.) At least one or two of these pairs need to be ones with obvious "better" choices (i.e., a new smart phone or an old shoe). Make sure each student will have access to a copy of the Bible.

FIRST, explain that in order to understand the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives we have to talk about choices. Begin showing pictures and asking the class to choose which one they would prefer. For example, you could show a picture of a Coke and a Pepsi, and then ask, "**Which do you prefer?**" As you continue to show pictures, make sure that it becomes gradually more and more obvious what the better choice is. For example, you could show a picture of Disney and a Prison making the choice obvious.

NEXT, read or have a student read Romans 8:5-6. Explain that Paul gives us a clear choice in these verses: the flesh or the Spirit. In this passage, "to live according to the flesh is to live and act sinfully."² The ESV Study Bible puts it this way, "to think just the way the unbelieving world thinks."³ By contrast, the Spirit means Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God. If we know Jesus as Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit dwells within us. Say something like:

- **Each day you have a choice. Option 1, you can set your mind and focus upon the flesh. This means thinking and living like God is not really there. It means disobeying God and allowing the world to tell you how to satisfy your desires. There is just one problem. Nothing about the flesh is ultimately satisfying. You can live for the flesh, but it will let you down and disappoint you every time. As verse 6 puts it, "to set the mind on the flesh is death."**

Option 2, you can set your mind and focus upon the Spirit. This means pursuing God and allowing Him

² Easton's Bible Dictionary, accessed via blueletterbible.org.

³ ESV Study Bible, p.2170

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to work in and through your life. It means yielding control of your life to God and following the Holy Spirit's lead. Verse 6 makes a promise that when we do this we will find "life and peace." This is where God moves in a powerful way to bring meaning and purpose to our lives as disciples. We'll talk more about how to follow the Holy Spirit as we continue to look at this passage.

THEN, read or have a student read Romans 8:7-10. Explain that this passage is talking about two different kinds of people: "those who are dominated by their sinful nature, and those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit. All of us would be in the first category if Jesus hadn't offered us a way out."⁴ Explain that before meeting Jesus, people may try to live up to God's standard, but this is impossible to do in our own strength. Say something like:

- **We are all tragically chained to "the flesh" until we are set free by accepting Jesus, which allows us to follow "the Spirit." Let's take a closer look at who the Spirit is and what role He plays.**

NEXT, read or have a student read John 14:15-17. Explain that we are enabled to keep the commandments of God because of the power of the Holy Spirit within us. While the world does not have access to the Holy Spirit, every Christian has full access. Remind students that the Holy Spirit actually lives within any of them who have come to saving faith in Jesus. One commentator put it this way: "Paul places all believers into the category of those who are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, since every believer is indwelt by the Spirit (Romans 8:9). The believer is freed from the absolute power and penalty of sin."⁵ Say something like:

- **Jesus makes a tough statement in verse 15, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." We all know that keeping the commandments of God is extremely difficult no matter how committed we are to God. We cannot do it in our own strength! Jesus knew this as well, which is why He promised to send us help on our journey to be a disciple. Jesus says in verse 16, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper." This word for Helper means advocate or counselor.⁶ If you are a believer, this means that the very presence of God is within you to support you with power and guide you toward God's best in your life. With prayer and seeking God through His Word, the Spirit works to grow you into a mature disciple of Jesus.**

Explain that earlier in the lesson you talked about choices. You came to understand that following the flesh or the Spirit was a choice. Explain that you want students to look back over their walk with God to see how the Spirit has worked to help them make choices that lead them to grow as a disciple. Ask your students:

- **What is something that you used to struggle with before knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior?**
 - o Answers may vary. The point is to get students thinking back to a time that they struggled with sin, but did not have the power to overcome it through the Holy Spirit.
- **After you met Jesus as Lord and Savior, how did God work in your life to help you in that struggle?**
 - o Again, answers may vary. Explain to students that God moves in their lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. Only through the strength and power of the Spirit can God give us victory over struggles and sins.

⁴ NIV Life Application Bible, p. 1894

⁵ Moody Bible Commentary, p. 1756.

⁶ ESV Study Bible, p. 2053.

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THEN, explain that trying to live the Christian life without the Spirit of God is ultimately frustrating. This is why people who don't know Jesus and don't have the Holy Spirit's power in their life find that trying to live up to God's standard is an impossible burden. Say something like:

- **This is the essence of religion: trying to live up to an impossible standard in order to be acceptable to God by our efforts. God did not call us to a religion. He called us to a relationship with Him that is empowered by the Holy Spirit's work within us. Henry and Richard Blackaby put it this way, "Jesus said that it is not our activity that produces fruit, it is our *relationship* with Him."⁷ Sometimes we forget that it is not so much about trying harder as it is about leaning into our relationship with God and yielding to the Spirit's work in our lives.**

NEXT, read or have a student read Romans 8:11. This is one of the most crucial verses in this passage of Scripture to understand the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Ask your students:

- **What has the Spirit done in the past that proves His power?**
 - Answer: Raised Jesus from the dead.
- **What does this verse promise that the Holy Spirit can do in our lives?**
 - Answer: The Spirit will dwell in you, give life to your mortal bodies.

FINALLY, say something like this:

- **The same power that raised Jesus from the grave is completely accessible to you. If you know Jesus as Lord and Savior, that power is already within you, working and moving you toward the disciple that God wants you to be. You have every bit of power you need to be a remarkable disciple of Jesus in the Holy Spirit. Like we talked about earlier in this lesson, the choice is yours. Will you choose the flesh that has no power over you and walk down a pathway that is hostile to God? Or will you choose to yield to the working of the Holy Spirit as He moves within you and teaches you from God's Word? The promise of the Holy Spirit is *LIFE*. Choose to follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit and watch as He grows you into a strong disciple.**

Ask if there are any questions, then transition into the Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students see how the Holy Spirit works practically to help them grow as a disciple and commit to following the Holy Spirit's leadership.
- **Set-Up:** A Bible and a flashlight.

FIRST, have a student volunteer to come to the front of the room and re-read Romans 8:11. Once they reach the front of the room, turn out the lights in the room and ask them to read the passage. It may be difficult if not impossible to do. Just like "Lead In" at the beginning of the lesson, it can be very difficult to see the Scripture without light. Then offer them the flashlight to read the Scripture again using the flashlight. Ask them which way was easier. Explain that one of the things the Holy Spirit does is "illuminate" the Bible for us to understand it. This just means that Holy Spirit gives us understanding as we read, study, and apply God's Word to our lives. Ask your students:

- **Have you ever read the Bible and had a particular verse really stick out to you? Have you ever**

⁷ Experiencing God Day By Day, p.116.

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read a verse of Scripture that really impacted your life? What was the verse and why did it mean something to you?

- o Explain that the reason that the verse made an impact in their life is because the Holy Spirit illuminated that verse in the hearts and minds, helping them apply it to their lives.

THEN, take the flashlight from the student and shine it on yourself. Explain the Holy Spirit not only illuminates God's Word, but it also shines light on our own hearts. One of the functions of the Holy Spirit is "conviction." This is the reason why when Christians sin, they feel a sense of intense discomfort and an urgency to change. Remind students that this is different than feeling guilty that they were caught doing something wrong. It is different that having a conscious. Explain that this is God moving within them prompting them to understand that He didn't design them for sin; they were made for so much more. Ask your students:

- **Have you ever experienced that feeling of conviction? How did it feel? Did it make you want to change?**
 - o Answers may vary. The point is not to get students confessing sin, but to talk about how the Holy Spirit has convicted them and will continue to do so in the future.

NEXT, shine the flashlight onto another adult or student in the room. Explain that the Holy Spirit also prompts us to minister to the lives of others. One example of this is when Paul said that he was constrained by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem (Acts 20:22). For disciples, the Holy Spirit will often prompt us to reach out to another person or to follow a call to live on mission to a group of people. Ask your students:

- **Have you ever felt the Holy Spirit leading you to do something or minister to someone? What was that like? What did you do?**
 - o Answers may vary. Help students understand that they do not need to feel a special feeling in order to obey what God clearly defines in Scripture, like honoring their parents or sharing their faith. However, there are unique times when the Holy Spirit will move us to some specific action that God desires for us to do, like ministering to a particular group of people on your school campus.

FINALLY, turn the lights back on. Explain that the Holy Spirit is like a light in our life showing us things as they really are and guiding our path. Not only that, but the Holy Spirit empowers us to be able to carry out the things that He shows us. These are just three ways the Holy Spirit works in our lives: helping us understand God's Word, convicting us of changes we need to make, and prompting us to minister to others. There are many more ways, but practically these are three ways you can begin looking for the Holy Spirit to move in your life this week!

FINALLY, allow time for any closing thoughts or questions from your students.

- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're posting them on Instagram, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the **Social Media** guide to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

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WEEK 6: LESSON PLAN
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THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLESHIP
LESSON 7: IMITATING GOD

What we want students to learn: That much of what it means to be a disciple is wrapped up in this two-word command: “Imitate God.”

What we want students to do with what they’ve learned: To consider practical ways they can imitate God in their daily interactions with others.

Scripture Focus: Ephesians 5:1-2

Supporting Scripture: Galatians 4:4-7; John 13:34-35

Overview: We can make discipleship hard to grasp. We can complicate it, albeit unwittingly. But in its simplest form, discipleship can be boiled down to Paul’s command in Ephesians 5:1: “Imitate God.” Discipleship at its core is nothing more than living as Jesus would live. This lesson will challenge your students to grasp this simple definition and help them apply it to their lives.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

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BIBLE BACKGROUND

The *Bible Background* is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you’ll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what’s happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by “context”?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you’ll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By “context” we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What’s the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don’t get a “big picture” understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God’s plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** The Apostle Paul wrote the letters to the Ephesians. Of course we know Paul as the one-time chief enemy of the Church. After his miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul would go on to have a position of great importance in the early Church and beyond. He wrote 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament.

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- **Time frame:** Ephesians was probably written by Paul from prison in the latter years of his life, sometime around 60 or 61 AD.
- **Purpose:** Paul had a very close relationship with the church in Ephesus. It seems as if the motivation for the letter was simply that the church would know how he was faring in his imprisonment. But, true to form, Paul couldn't help but teach. The letter covers general teaching on the work of Christ to redeem believers, unity among believers, and how believers are supposed to conduct themselves.

THE SETTING

Paul had spent years with the Ephesians, helping them understand the word of God, Jesus, and the Gospel (Acts 19; 20:31). Years later, he wrote this letter to remind them of the grace they received in Jesus and how it should impact their lives. In Ephesians 4, Paul tells the Ephesian church about two ways of "walking" in life: He references walking worthy of God or walking like the world (Eph. 4:1, 17). In Ephesians 5:1-2, Paul sums it all up in a challenge to imitate God, which requires walking in love.

THE MAIN POINT

After we experience the life changing grace of Jesus, we should begin to reflect God. Literally, we should be "imitators of God" (Ephesians 5:1). Through this lesson, we will see that our motivation for imitating God comes from being His beloved children. We'll briefly look at Galatians 4:4-7 to help us understand what it means to be a child of God. Then we will see that imitating God requires that we "walk in love" like Jesus did (Ephesians 5:2). John 13:34-35 will help us dive deeper into Jesus' teachings about love as the distinguishing marker of His followers. This lesson will help your students know how to practically answer the call to imitate God with their lives.

LESSON PLAN

The *Lesson Plan* contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; and an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To help students begin contemplating who or what they imitate in life.
- **Set-Up:** Have a bowl, slips of paper, and pens for your students to use.

FIRST, as your students enter have them write the name of a famous person and place it in a bowl. Tell them that the names they write should be instantly recognizable to most people. They should avoid obscure names and names that are just known to your class or church. If you have a smaller group, you may consider having each student submit two or three names.

NEXT, have two students volunteer to compete in an impression competition. The competition is simple: Each student will draw a random slip of paper from the bowl and do an impression of the person written there. They cannot mention the name of the person they are impersonating. Each student doing impressions will have one minute to do as many as possible. Each impression that is correctly guessed by the crowd is worth one point. If the student gets

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stuck on a particular name, they can call out “pass” and move to the next name in the bowl. The goal is to get the crowd to correctly guess the names on the slips of paper. Have another student track the number of points on a white board or sheet of paper. Also, recruit another student to be the one-minute timekeeper. After both students compete, the student who has the most points is the winner.

FINALLY, explain to students that today is all about learning to imitate. The students who did impressions represented somebody else. They took certain characteristics from that individual and acted them out. In real life, we often imitate others. Our imitations reveal what we value. Say something like:

- **As you may have caught on, we are talking about imitating today. These imitations were prearranged based on your suggestions, but we all have a tendency to imitate others in life whether we mean to or not. You may have thought about it before, but a large part of being a disciple is learning to imitate. This is the first lesson in a three-week study on discipleship and imitation. To start this series of lessons, we are going to look at imitating God. You may think that being a disciple is really complicated or complex, but the goal of being a disciple is becoming like the one that you are following. As disciples of Jesus, our aim is to be like Jesus. We are to imitate Him. As we will see, who or what we imitate shows the world around us what we value.**

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of your lesson.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help students understand what it means to imitate God as a disciple.
- **Set Up:** Make sure each student will have access to a copy of the Bible. You will need a dry-erase board and dry erase markers.

FIRST, make three columns on the dry-erase board. At the top of the first, write STUDENT. At the top of the second column, write INFLUENCER. At the top of the third column, write CHARACTERISTIC. Have your students call out the name of a person in their life that has the greatest influence on how they live. Students should choose people who they respect and aspire to be like one day. Try to get three or four students to respond. As students respond, write the student’s name and the influencer’s name in the columns. Once you have your list, go back to each student and ask something like:

- **What is one way that you want to be like this person?**
 - Answers will vary. Write down the things that students say in the CHARACTERISTIC column.

THEN, explain that we often imitate those that have influence in our lives. (We’ll talk more about this in the second lesson of this series.) If Jesus is supposed to have the greatest influence in our lives, we should imitate Him. Read or have a student read Ephesians 5:1. Then, say something similar to the following:

- **Ephesians 5:1 says, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.” God should have incredible influence in our lives for many reasons: His power, His forgiveness, His grace, etc. If we imitate those that influence us, then we look more and more like them. If God is our primary influence, then we grow to look more and more like Him.**

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NEXT, ask something like:

- **Do you allow God that kind of influence in your life? Explain.**
 - Answers will vary.
- **If not, then what steps do you need to take to change that?**
 - Answers will vary.

THEN, look at Ephesians 5:1 again and point out that the second half of the verse suggests that we imitate God because we are “beloved children.” Ask something like:

- **Why do you think Paul puts that on the end of the command to be an imitator of God?**
 - Answers will vary. While students may understand that God is their heavenly Father and that they are His children, they may not grasp the power of that reality in their lives. Explain that being a beloved child of God describes the kind of relationship that we have with God. It is a major part of our motivation to imitate God. We imitate him because we KNOW all of His actions towards us are loving.

NEXT, read or have a student read Galatians 4:4-7. Notice that in verse 6, Paul writes that we can approach God crying “Abba, Father!” Ask something like:

- **Do you know the significance of the word “Abba” in this verse? What does it mean?**
 - Answers will vary. This would be the equivalent of calling God the Father, “Daddy.”
- **Why does Paul use this term?**
 - Answers will vary. Tim Keller writes, “Because Jesus Christ used it in talking to His Father (Mark 14:36). It was a daringly familiar term to use to address the Lord Almighty.” Jesus shared a close personal relationship with His heavenly Father while He was on earth. Through Jesus, we have the same access to God the Father that Jesus had in His time on earth.
- **What does being a child of God mean for you according to this passage of Scripture?**
 - Answer: Adopted; no longer slaves; heirs of God

THEN, say something like:

- **We have been given the full rights and privileges that come with being a child of a loving God, including complete access to the Father no matter what happens. We are fully heirs of God, meaning that His promises in Scripture immediately apply to our lives. God graciously gives us all these things and more because He is a good Father to those He has adopted into His family. Just as a good Father has incredible influence in his child’s life, God wants to influence our lives. Just as a child imitates a good father, so God wants us to imitate Him.**

NEXT, go back to the white board and write “You” under STUDENTS and “God” under INFLUENCER. Ask something like:

- **Name some of the characteristics of God that we should imitate in our lives.**
 - Answers will vary. List those characteristics. After you have a good list, point out how many of these characteristics are similar to the characteristics of a disciple as outlined in Scripture. By simply imitating God, we make great strides toward growing as disciples.

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THEN, read or have a student read Ephesians 5:2. Point out that there is a specific characteristic that we are called to imitate within the character of God: love. Specifically, this is “agape” love, which is the kind of love that God displays for us. It is not the same as love for tacos or love for a boyfriend or girlfriend. This is the kind of unstoppable, committed, and faithful love that God consistently demonstrates to His followers throughout Scripture and still today. Whenever we think about Jesus, there are many characteristics that we see, but the one that Paul points out here is love. Ask something like:

- **How does Ephesians 5:2 prove that Jesus loved us?**
 - Answer: He gave himself up for us. He sacrificed Himself for us.
- **Can you truly love someone if you never demonstrate it?**
 - Answers may vary. Allow students to wrestle with this idea for a moment. The point is to show students that love is a powerful feeling, but it must be expressed in action in order for another person to experience it.

NEXT, read or have a student read John 13:34-35. Here we see Jesus placing a huge emphasis on love. In the context of this passage of Scripture, Jesus had just finished demonstrating His love to His disciples by washing their feet. He challenged His disciples to imitate the love that He modeled for them. Ask something like:

- **Clearly, Jesus wanted His disciples to be identified by their love. When people think about Christians in our culture and time, what kinds of characteristics do you think come to mind?**
 - Answers may vary. The point is to get students thinking about some of the positive and negative characteristics that Christians have inherited in our culture.

THEN, go back to the three columns that you wrote down earlier. If Jesus is the greatest influencer in our life, then love should be the greatest characteristic that we exhibit in life. Elsewhere in Scripture, the apostle John wrote in 1 John 4:16, “So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” To imitate God we must demonstrate love! Say something like this:

- **Jesus says clearly in John 13:34-35 that if we imitate Him, love will be at the top of the list of characteristics that we should exhibit. This was Paul’s point as well in Ephesians 5:2. If we imitate God, we will walk in love just like Jesus walked in love. As we imitate God, we should grow in love and others should be able to see this demonstrated in our lives. Remember, love can be an emotion or feeling, but in order for other people to see it in our lives we must demonstrate it. In Ephesians 5:2, we read about Jesus demonstrating His love through His sacrifice on the cross. In John 13, we read about Jesus commanding His disciples to love immediately after he demonstrated love by washing their feet. Just as Jesus demonstrated love, so should we!**

Challenge your students to contemplate how their life is demonstrating love to those around them. Have them ponder the following thought: If people were to look at my life, would they see Jesus imitated through me? Would they experience tangible demonstrations of love? If we imitate God in life, love will flow from us.

FINALLY, ask your students to flesh out what it means to “walk in love” in tangible, real world ways. Ask something like:

- **So, this week how can we demonstrate love to those around us? How can we imitate God through loving others the way that God loves us?**
 - Answers will vary. The point is to get your students thinking out loud about practical steps they can take to demonstrate love to others as they imitate God.

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Ask if there are any questions, then transition into *The Last Word*.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students evaluate if they are imitating God in life and to take practical steps to begin imitating Him.
- **Set-Up:** Sheets of paper and writing utensils.

FIRST, have your students draw a line down the center of their piece of paper. On the left side of the line have them write out the top 10 traits that characterize their lives. Encourage them to be honest with themselves. If there are characteristics that are unflattering, they should still write them out. They will not be asked to share what they write out on this side of the line. Give students just two minutes or less to complete this portion of the activity. Tell them not to overthink it, but just write it out.

THEN, have your students move to the right side of the line they drew. Have them write out the top 10 characteristics that they want to be known for. Since we have been talking about imitating God, these characteristics should reflect Him. Since we know that “love” is a major characteristic of God’s, it should probably make the list. Give students just two minutes or less to complete this portion of the activity.

NEXT, explain to your students that if there is anything on the left hand side of the line that does not reflect God or actually does come from sin in our lives, Jesus gives us grace and forgiveness for these things. Jesus also wants to work in and through our lives to create new characteristics in us that better reflect Him. Say something like:

- **All of us have characteristics in our lives that we wish did not describe us. Liar, cheater, lustful, unfaithful, etc. However, Jesus knows and understands that these are our struggles. He does not excuse our sin, but He did die to pay the penalty for it. If we know Jesus as Lord and Savior, we have been shown incredible grace for the characteristics that are sinful our lives. At the same time, we have been given strength from the Spirit of God and wisdom from the Word of God to move away from sinful characteristics toward characteristics that reflect God. In the power of God, we can become imitators of God that look more and more like Him each day.**

THEN, have your students place their lists in their Bibles or in another place where they can revisit it. This list will be used later this week in one of their devotional times.

FINALLY, have your students break into smaller groups for a time of prayer. Have them share two of the characteristics from the right side of their paper. What are the characteristics that imitate God that they want to be known for? Have these students pray for one another, each person praying for the person on the right. Have students ask God to help the person they are praying for to grow in exhibiting godly characteristics in life. If you have a larger group and some additional adults available, you might encourage your adults to be a part of each group to keep the prayer time focused. This prayer time should last 2-3 minutes.

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Afterward, close the group in prayer and encourage your students to continually imitate God with their lives.

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LESSON 8: DISCIPLESHIP AND IMITATION:
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What we want students to learn: That one of the main ways we grow in discipleship is to imitate the lives of other Christ-followers, especially those who are older and more spiritually mature.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To identify specific Christ-followers in their lives worth imitating, and to commit to imitating aspects of their faith.

Scripture Focus: Hebrews 13:6-8

Supporting Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 3:17

Overview: The Apostle Paul knew that one of the most powerful learning tools is a great example. This is true in life. And it is especially true when it comes to faith. This lesson will help your students see that one of the ways we grow as disciples is by looking to those more mature, more developed Christ-followers around us and imitating the way they live out their faith.

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BIBLE BACKGROUND

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- **What's the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** Originally this letter to the Hebrews was entitled "The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews." However, since the Reformation, it's been widely recognized that Paul was probably not the writer. There's simply not enough textual or historical evidence to prove his authorship. Early historians suggested the author is perhaps Barnabas or Apollos, though there is no way to know for sure.

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- **Time frame:** Hebrews was almost certainly written before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD, since the author does not mention or give any hint to this catastrophic happening.
- **Purpose:** Hebrews was written to address Jewish converts to Christianity and challenge them to hold fast to their newfound faith. Many of them were resorting back to old traditions, and some were even considering merging with certain Jewish sects. Because of increased persecution of Jewish converts to Christianity, many of them were tempted to resort back to old rites and rituals purely to avoid the pain. The challenge from this Hebrew Christian writer to Hebrew converts was to hold fast to their Christian faith and not to slip back to the legalistic patterns of their Hebrew roots.

THE SETTING

This passage directly follows two fundamental chapters in the book of Hebrews. In challenging his Jewish audience to hold fast to their faith in Jesus Christ as Messiah, the author of Hebrews recounts the many faithful followers of God from the Old Testament (Hebrews 11) and lays the foundation for continued perseverance in the faith (Hebrews 12). Beginning in chapter 13, the author of Hebrews gives practical wisdom regarding habits and practices which will strengthen the faith of his readers. Among these practical instructions, the importance of imitating leaders who “spoke to you the word of God” is given. The practice of imitation was common to Jews of this time, who were required to imitate rabbis in their community from a very young age. The idea of imitation and discipleship set forth in this passage is a central aspect of living in lifelong relationship with God and growing in spiritual maturity.

THE MAIN POINT

The main point we want to make is that being a Christ-follower means listening, watching and imitating those who are spiritually mature so that we can know how to grow in our own faith. God didn’t leave us alone in this world to figure out how to grow; He gave us spiritually mature people all around us to imitate in our lives. This lesson will help your students to identify people in their lives who are spiritually mature and challenge them to commit to imitating those people in their own spiritual walk.

LESSON PLAN

The *Lesson Plan* contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To help students begin to understand their need for a spiritual mentor.
- **Set-Up:** You will want to make sure you have a laptop or tablet that is connected to internet to look up the following video. You will also need two writing utensils and two pieces of paper. Watch the first 1:52 of this video before beginning the discussion. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=776niN4-A58>

FIRST, split your students into two groups and tell them that you are going to watch a video of someone imitating people around them. Based on what they see in the video, tell each group to come up with a definition for the word “imitation.” Give the groups two or so minutes to work out their definition.

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NEXT, ask each group to share their definition of the word "imitation." Once both groups have shared, ask them questions like these to begin a discussion:

- **Why did your group define imitation the way that you did? Explain.**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Does this video show imitation as a good thing or a bad thing?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What kinds of people in today's culture do you see being imitated? Why do you think this is the case?**
 - Answers will vary.

THEN, explain that in the lesson today you are going to be talking about imitation in the Christian faith. Say something like:

- **Whether we know it or not, each one of us is an imitator. Some of us imitate our parents, others imitate what we see and hear on television and the Internet, and some of us imitate the people we most look up to. But not everyone is worth imitating, and if we aren't careful, we could end up imitating someone who leads us further from God. So, the question for today is: "What kinds of people should we be imitating?"**

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of your lesson.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help your students identify why they need to imitate the practices and faith of a mature believer, why that imitation is important, and how to take steps towards imitating people in their faith.
- **Set Up:** You'll benefit from a dry erase board. Make sure students have a Bible or that they are able to look along with a friend.

FIRST, have the students re-read their definitions of imitation aloud. Then, write the following definition on the board and compare: "Imitation: The action of using someone or something as a model."

NEXT, explain to your students that imitation is something that takes place in their lives, whether they are intentional about it or not. As Christ-followers, they are commanded to be intentional about who and what they model their lives after. Say something like:

- **As followers of Jesus, we need to be sure that we are being intentional about who we model our lives after. To be intentional means to take specific action. Many times, Christians assume that once they make a decision to follow Christ, they will immediately develop good habits and will naturally grow in their faith. The opposite is true! In his letter, James writes about the difference between those Christ-followers who are intentional in their faith and those who are not. James says that believers who are not intentional about their faith are "like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind." How can we avoid a faith like this in our lives? One of the ways is by being intentional about imitating mature Christ-followers.**

THEN, explain that in the lesson today you're going to be looking at the book of Hebrews to help guide their understanding of what they should look for when searching for someone to imitate in their lives. Ask students to turn in their

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Bibles to Hebrews 13. Be sure to use the Bible Background to help them understand the situation in which the author of Hebrews wrote.

NEXT, read or have a student read Hebrews 13:6-8. When students have finished reading, lead them in a short discussion. Refer back to verse 6. Ask something like:

- **What is the first encouragement the author of Hebrews gives to these struggling believers?**
 - Answer: To have confidence in the Lord. Write this on the board
- **What do you think it means to be confident in the Lord?**
 - Answer: To trust that God is sovereign and in control, even when we doubt or face trials in our lives.
- **How does a follower of Christ develop this kind of confidence in the Lord?**
 - Answer: Experience walking with the Lord through life cultivates confidence in the believer. Mature believers have more confidence in the Lord because they have seen God's faithfulness in their own lives.

THEN, say something like:

- **The writer of Hebrews was himself a mature believer in Jesus. He knew that because he had seen God's faithfulness throughout the Old Testament and in his own life, he could be confident that "the Lord is my helper." Similarly, when looking for someone in our own lives to imitate, we should look for someone who is older and more experienced in their faith.**

NEXT, tell students to keep this thought in mind as they continue studying this passage. Direct your students' attention to verse 7. Ask something like the following questions:

- **What is the next encouragement given by the author of Hebrews in verse 7?**
 - Answer: Remember your leaders and imitate them. Write this on the board.
- **What does the author of Hebrews tell us about the leaders who are to be remembered and imitated?**
 - Answer: They spoke the word of God and they enjoyed fruitful lives. The outcome of their lives was to be imitated.
- **Why is it important that the leaders spoke the Word of God?**
 - Answer: The Word of God teaches about God's character, will, and ways. If leaders do not use the Word of God as their foundation, they are not worth imitating.

THEN, say something like:

- **In these verses the author of Hebrews gives us two more clues to consider when looking for someone to imitate in our lives. If the person we are imitating is not rooted in the Word of God and producing good fruit that is glorifying to God in life, then we should not imitate them. Likewise, we should seek Christ-followers who are rooted in God's Word and exhibit the fruits of the Spirit.**

NEXT, ask something like:

- **How can we know that someone's life is producing fruit?**
 - Answer: If someone's life is producing fruit, it is obvious. Fruitfulness is not hidden or masked. It's evident to people. Take a moment and discuss the results of a fruitful life. Refer to Hebrews 11 and Galatians 5:22-24 for scriptural support.

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLESHIP
LESSON 8: DISCIPLESHIP AND IMITATION:
IMITATING OTHERS

THEN, direct your student's attention to verse 8. Remind them that you are helping them to identify characteristics that they want to look for when finding someone to imitate. Ask something like:

- **What does this verse tell us about Jesus?**
 - Answer: Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. In other words, He never changes.

NEXT, say something like:

- **Not only does the author of Hebrews encourage his readers to imitate mature believers around them, but he also encourages them to imitate Jesus. In the end, every believer's goal is to imitate Jesus Christ in their faith. The author of Hebrews wants these believers to understand that by imitating mature believers who have confidence in faith, trust in the Word of God, and fruit in their lives, young believers will grow in their faith. But if the goal is to imitate Jesus, why have a spiritual mentor?**

THEN, explain to the students that the Bible has several passages that instruct Christ-followers to be imitators. Refer to 1 Corinthians 11:1 as an example. Say something like:

- **When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the church at Corinth, he instructed them to imitate him as he imitated Christ. The apostle Paul knew that in order to help the Corinthians grow in faith, they needed to imitate him in their lives and actions.**

NEXT, explain that Paul instructed the church at Philippi to also imitate he and the other leaders present in the church for their spiritual growth. Then, ask them something like the following questions:

- **How are Paul's statements in Philipians and 1 Corinthians similar to what we read in Hebrews 13?**
 - Answer: All three of these passages encourage younger believers to imitate those who are spiritually mature in order to grow in faith.
- **According to both of Paul's letters as well as Hebrews 13:6-8, why do we need to imitate spiritually mature followers of Christ?**
 - Answer: Help students to see that imitating mature believers is a biblical model that we should follow and is the design that God has given us to grow in our faith.
- **What are some of the qualities seen in Hebrews 13 that we should look for when searching for a spiritually mature believer to imitate?**
 - Answer: The goal is to get the students to review some of those answers which are given in the lesson. Examples include lives full of fruit, full of God's word, and confidence in faith.

FINALLY, explain to students that as Christ-followers, we must be intentional in our lives in finding and pursuing relationships with mature Christ-followers. Tell students that it is their responsibility to imitate mature believers' lifestyles and habits so that they can grow in their own faith. Say something like:

- **Sometimes as teenagers it can be difficult to live for Christ in our daily lives. Frequently, we try our best to grow but don't know how. Yet as the author of Hebrews shows us, we can grow in our faith when we identify spiritual leaders in our lives and imitate their habits and lifestyle. When we do this intentionally, we can learn from others how to grow deeper in our walk with Christ and take action based on their example.**

Ask if there are any questions, then transition into *The Last Word*.

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THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** Have students identify specific Christ-followers in their lives worth imitating, and to commit to imitating aspects of their faith.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need pencils and notecards.

FIRST, set the stage for the example by saying something like:

- **Imitating those who are further along than ourselves is not a new thing.** In fact, in most professional sports environments, mentors are key in helping professional athletes like LeBron James take their game to an entirely new level. One of these mentors is the great basketball player, Hakeem Olajuwon. Listen to this short blurb from an article about Olajuwon's interaction with other great NBA players: "Hakeem Olajuwon is without a doubt one of the best mentors around today, and players know that. Guys like LeBron James and Amar'e Stoudemire are willing to spend time and money in the summer working out with Hakeem "The Dream" to improve their post games. The best part of Olajuwon's mentoring abilities is that he's such a soft-spoken individual. He teaches players with the way he approaches the game, the way he plays it and the way he understands it. Olajuwon is one of the most intelligent players to play the game, and that's exactly why he's such a great mentor for players trying to take their game to the next level."

Source: <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/1344432-10-best-current-player-mentors-in-the-nba>

NEXT, explain that just as LeBron James must practice and imitate a legendary basketball player like Olajuwon in order to improve his game, your students also need to imitate those believers who are mature in their faith so that they can grow into deeper relationship with Jesus. Say something like:

- **If someone as great at basketball as LeBron James uses imitation to make his game better, we too should take advantage of imitating mature believers so that we can learn what it means to follow and love God on a deeper level.**

THEN, explain that you will be leading your students through an activity so that they can identify possible people in their lives who they could imitate. Give each student a notecard. Then, say something like this:

- **Using the list of important qualities that we wrote on the board from Hebrews 13:6-8, think of three individuals who you have seen practice at least one of these things. Write their names on the card in front of you. Once you have written three names on your card, write down some specific action steps that you can accomplish to imitate those people. (Give some examples for each of the qualities that were given in the Main Event).**

FINALLY, ask students if they understand the importance of finding Christ-followers who are worth imitating in their daily lives. Allow some time to share action steps that they have laid out for themselves as they seek to imitate their specific people. Be sure to invite students who cannot think of three people to speak with you after the lesson, so that you can help them identify people in their lives worth imitating.

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Challenge your students to follow through on their action steps and let them know that they will have a chance to share these before the lesson next week.

- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're posting them on Instagram, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the **Social Media** guide to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

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THE RESULTS OF IMITATION

What we want students to learn: That imitation is cyclical and impactful; when they live the life of a disciple, other people will look to imitate them and draw closer to the Lord as a result.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To identify people they might intentionally reach out to as people they can influence in their faith.

Scripture Focus: 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8

Supporting Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

Overview: When we live our lives as disciples following after Jesus, the world notices. And while there will definitely always be people who turn away from us and from God, there will also be people who are drawn to God because of our lives. When we imitate God and imitate other Christ-followers, our lives are impacted. And in turn, they can impact others. It's a beautiful cycle of discipleship.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

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To access your **LIFE** lesson 9 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 9, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The *Bible Background* is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What's the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** Since the early church period, the Apostle Paul has been the acknowledged author of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, though there have been recent (and failed) attempts to challenge this authorship.
- **Time frame:** 2 Thessalonians was probably penned from Corinth in AD 49–51, shortly after 1 Thessalonians.
- **Purpose:** The Thessalonians were under the false belief that the "day of the Lord" had arrived. They were greatly

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confused about the second coming, resurrection, and so on. They were scared and confused. Paul wrote the letter to help calm their fears and straighten them out, doctrinally speaking.

THE SETTING

The church in Thessalonica, who was the recipient of these letters from Paul, appears to be a congregation of mostly newly converted Christians. These men and women had grown up in the Greek culture and lifestyle and converted to Christianity after encountering Paul, Silas, and Timothy preaching around Thessalonica. One of Paul's main challenges with this church, which he encountered in several other churches as well, was pushing them to understand the very different, counter-cultural social and ethical expectations of Christianity. Paul writes this letter shortly after his abrupt expulsion from the city, along with Silas and Timothy. The trio of missionaries fled after coming down on the wrong side of the ruling authorities (you can read more about this event in Acts 17). From this letter, it is clear that Paul worries about the young, budding church in its hostile Thessalonian environment and wants to encourage it in the midst of turmoil.

THE MAIN POINT

Living like Jesus isn't easy, and in this broken world full of sin, authentic Christianity doesn't fly under the radar. Like a lighthouse on a dark night, the Jesus-follower stands out as a beacon drawing weary travelers to shelter. Those seeking fulfillment or satisfaction, those who have suffered and grown sick of sin, those who need to be made whole, will come to the authentic Christian to find the source of their confidence, joy, and love— Jesus. This lesson is a call to live differently, not just because it's how Jesus lived, but because it points others to Him.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To help students begin to think about the challenge of living a life imitating Jesus.
- **Set-Up:** Each participant will need a square piece of paper (about 4"x4") and a way to show the following YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6ciLmiEfg0>

FIRST, explain to your students that Origami is the Japanese art of folding paper into beautiful designs and shapes. For those of us with clumsy fingers and an aversion to crafts, origami can be incredibly difficult. It's not something that just happens; it requires diligent adherence to specific steps in order to create the desired product.

THEN, tell them that you're going to show a brief video on how to fold a piece of origami. Show the following video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6ciLmiEfg0>

NEXT, pass out the pieces of paper to each student and tell them that you want them to try and replicate the creative process by folding their piece of paper into the origami art they just saw on video. Give them a few minutes to work on their paper. After a few minutes, have them show off their artwork. Then use the following discussion questions to help guide a brief discussion:

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- **First of all, who here made the best origami imitation?**
 - Answers will vary. If time permits, take a vote on who had the best origami.
- **Why was it so difficult to imitate the origami video after watching the video?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Do you think that if you studied this video and practiced several times you could imitate the process?**
 - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, use this object lesson to teach your students that following Christ isn't something that just happens. It requires diligent study, discipline, and practice. Just like folding this piece of origami would get easier the more we study the video and practice following the steps, imitating Jesus is a daily decision to follow after Him, to love others, and to bring His hope to hopeless places.

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of your lesson.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To show students that the actions of their lives can have a real and positive impact on those around them.
- **Set-Up:** Make sure each student will have access to a copy of the Bible.

FIRST, ask your students if they remember your discussion from last week about defining "imitation." Ask something like:

- **Do you remember how we defined imitation from last week?**
 - Answer: Imitation: The action of using someone or something as a model."

THEN, explain to them that in the passage we're reading today, Paul is writing to the Thessalonian church congratulating them on their excellent imitations. The church is full of converts who were led to Christianity by Paul and his fellow missionaries. After Paul left Thessalonica and the church behind, these new Christians carried on the good work that Paul began. Without a New Testament Bible like we have, they followed after Jesus the only way they had available, imitating the lifestyle and actions of the most dedicated Christ-follower they knew—Paul.

NEXT, have your students turn to 1 Thessalonians on their devices or in their Bibles. As they get to the passage, give them some context for the church and their relationship with Paul. You can find more information about this in the Bible Background section. Next, read or have a student read 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8. Lead the students in a discussion by asking something like the following questions:

- **Who did the Thessalonians imitate?**
 - Answer: Paul says "us," but this would have meant Paul, Silas, Timothy, and, through them, the Lord.
- **What kind of effect did the lifestyles of the Thessalonian Christians have throughout the region?**
 - Answer: They became an example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia, and the word of the Lord sounded forth throughout the area. It might be helpful to show a map of the region so students can understand how far-reaching the impact of the Thessalonian church was. Paul said it affected "all believers in Macedonia and Achaia." You can Google Image search a quality regional map.
- **What was it about the Thessalonians that was so effective?**

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- o Answer: Their imitation of the missionaries and the Lord led them to preach the word of the Lord throughout the surrounding area. Most importantly, their faith in God preceded them and spoke to their commitment to Christ.

Explain that Paul is saying that the faith of the Thessalonian Christians had a very real impact on the people around them. Ask something like:

- **Why was it so important for the Thessalonians to imitate Paul and the others?**
 - o Answer: They were new believers and were dealing with great affliction.
- **Do you think it was arrogant of Paul to believe that others should imitate him? Why or why not?**
 - o Answers will vary.
- **Why would Paul be a good example for them to imitate?**
 - o Answer: He had been following Jesus for a while and had dealt with much affliction himself.

THEN, say something like:

- **The Christian lifestyle is a cyclical pattern of discipleship. The disciples of Jesus learned firsthand lessons from Christ himself. They, in turn, lived as examples of Jesus to others. As they discipled and converted new Christians, people learned from their example and sought to imitate their actions. This is what happened in Thessalonica. The Christians converted by Paul sought to imitate his lifestyle because it reflected the life of Jesus. When we imitate the lives of other Christians, we are not praising or worshipping the individual. Instead, we are pointing back to the origin of our faith: Jesus.**

NEXT, have a discussion with your students about the environment in which the Thessalonian Christians lived. Thessalonica was dominated by hostile cult worshippers and an unfriendly ruling authority. This city had recently forced Paul and his friends to flee because of the messages they preached (Acts 17). For the Thessalonian Christians to imitate Paul's actions would have been a very dangerous instruction. Still, the Thessalonians had faith. Ask something like:

- **Would it have been possible for the Thessalonian Christians to imitate Paul without getting into danger?**
 - o Answer: Not really. Paul was endangered because of his lifestyle and commitment to spreading the gospel. For the Thessalonian church to imitate Paul, they would need to have similar zeal for the Kingdom of God. This zeal was what got Paul in trouble with the authorities in Thessalonica, so for the local church, imitating Paul was no simple task.
- **Do you think the Christian lifestyle would have stood out in a place like Thessalonica? Which aspects of Christianity would have been out of place?**
 - o Answer: As with much of the ancient world, a lot of Christianity was out of place in the cultures of the time. Love and equality weren't common characteristics of the standard Thessalonian. A religion built on grace, love, selflessness, and mercy would have been very out of place.

THEN, read or have a student read 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. Point out that in this second letter, we see that the Thessalonian church is still suffering persecutions. But even as they continue through these afflictions, their love grows and their steadfast faith is an example and testimony to other suffering churches.

FINALLY, explain to students that imitating the life of Paul, or ultimately of Jesus, was dangerous for these ancient Christians. Say something like:

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- Christians were regularly persecuted for their beliefs during these times. However, we see that even though their lives were hard, their mission was effective. In spite of the danger, the Thessalonians were able to spread the gospel and bring more people to know Jesus. We are blessed to avoid the same persecutions ancient Christians endured, but the world still isn't very receptive to our message. Imitating Jesus can lead to rejection, but it can also lead some to Jesus.

Ask if there are any questions, then transition into *The Last Word*.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To encourage students to live like Jesus in order to draw others closer to Him
- **Set-Up:** A whiteboard, or paper, where you can write down answers.

FIRST, as you finish your lesson, explain to students that just like the Thessalonian Christians, our imitations of Christ will have an impact on those around us. When we authentically live like Jesus, our love for others will pull them towards the source of all life and love.

NEXT, lead your students in a practical discussion about what imitating Jesus in this world looks like. Use a white board or a piece of paper to write down the answers where everyone can see. Make two columns. On one side, list "Characteristics of Jesus we want to Imitate." On the other side, list "Characteristics of the World we want to reject." For example, you might write "Speaking kind words" under Jesus' side, and "Getting angry for stupid reasons" under the world's side. Ask the students to add to each list. Write down their answers as they give them.

When you finish, take a minute to survey your lists. Then, ask some of the following questions:

- **Can anybody here say that they only do the things in the Jesus column, and completely avoid all of the things in the world column?**
 - Answer: Of course not!
- **Does anybody know someone who really lives out the stuff under Jesus? What is different about them? Is their difference noticeable? Why?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **We'll fail now and then, and our actions will belong on the world side of this column rather than the Jesus side, but how can we begin to move more towards Jesus and away from the world?**
 - Answers will vary. Some examples include spending time with more mature believers, Bible study, prayer, worship, etc.

THEN, explain to the students that when we live like Jesus, people can begin to know Jesus through our actions. There are so many people in this world who don't know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. They don't have to share specific names, but ask your students to think of someone in their life who needs to come to know Jesus. This might be a classmate, a relative, a friend, a co-worker, or a neighbor. When they have someone in mind, ask them to think about how their actions towards that person have shown Jesus. Have they participated in sinful activities with that person? Have they been rude or mean to them? Have they ignored their needs, focusing instead on more selfish matters? If so, how, then, will that person come to know Jesus when Christians act just like they do?

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Lead your group in a discussion about how we can take those things under the Jesus side of our lists and live in a way that impacts others. Students identified a specific person in each of their lives that they need to reach, now how can they be intentional about sharing their faith through action and word?

FINALLY, end your lesson by stressing to your group that the way they live their lives matters. When they live imitating Jesus, they will draw others to Him. Say something like:

- **It is very clear throughout the Bible that God cares how we act. He wants us to strive after Him. This isn't just for our own good, but for the good of the world. Living and loving like Jesus is the remedy for our world in need of a Savior. We can't be Jesus; we're not enough. But when we try to imitate Him and live our life like He did, others will see. They will see the Jesus we all need to know.**
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PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLESHIP
LESSON 10: THE PURPOSE OF DISCIPLESHIP,
PART 1: DISCIPLES INFLUENCE CULTURE

What we want students to learn: That Jesus expects His followers to dramatically impact the world around them in His name.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To be intentional about how they can be "salt and light" in their immediate, day-to-day contexts.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 5:13-16

Supporting Scripture: 1 Peter 2:12

Overview: When we ask what the purpose of discipleship is, there are quite a few answers. Not the least of which is the concept of us impacting culture for the sake of Christ. As disciples, we are called to influence the world around us, all for the cause of Christ. We do this when we live as disciples in a world in dire need of Christ.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

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BIBLE BACKGROUND

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- **What's the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his gospel.
- **Time frame:** Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50's or 60's AD, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.
- **Purpose:** Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the

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long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

THE SETTING

Our passage comes from one of the most famous sermons in history, The Sermon on the Mount. Jesus has just finished talking about the idea of “the beatitudes,” and He has challenged what were the social norms of the time with this portion of the sermon. Jesus told the audience that there is blessing that awaits those who are in need, and this is vital for what Christ is about to teach in our passage. Jesus delivers the message of comfort to His audience before He brings this challenge in our passage today.

THE MAIN POINT

Today we are going to look at Matthew 5:13-16 to understand the challenge that comes from being salt in a world lacking godly flavor, or light in a dark place. Students will see the dramatic impact that Christ should have on our own lives so that we may influence the world for Him. They are called to live in a manner that is noticeable, but to highlight Jesus instead of themselves. This lesson will help them understand the need for intentional Christian living, as well as some practical ways in which they can begin to live intentionally.

LESSON PLAN

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: An introductory activity called ***The Lead In***; the Bible study section called ***The Main Event***; an application-focused segment called ***The Last Word***.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To help students see how easy it can be to spot a difference in something, as well as how difficult it can be to spot differences at times.
- **Set-Up:** If you are using presentation software, then go online and Google search “Spot the Difference Pictures”. Head to images and select five to six images that range in difficulty. Insert these images into the beginning of your presentation. If you are not using presentation software, then print off your images and divide your class into smaller groups to look over each image.

FIRST, divide your students into two teams (guys vs. girls, left side vs. right side of the room, etc.) and tell them that you are going to begin with a little competition this morning. If you have printed the pictures, then make sure that they are timing themselves to spot differences for the sake of the competition. Explain to them that there will be two images placed on the screen that look similar, but that they have one or two differences. Once a team identifies the difference they can raise their hand and tell the class what difference they noticed.

Tell the group that this is going to get more difficult as the round goes on, but that there are differences in every picture. It would also be a helpful idea to go ahead and know the differences yourself before you begin this activity as the teacher.

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NEXT, put the pictures up one by one until the difference is spotted. Once you have cycled through the images, declare the team that got the most right in the fastest time the winner.

FINALLY, ask the students how difficult it was to spot the differences on each of the pictures. Ask them if it got more difficult over time as the pictures got harder. Explain to them that today's lesson is about being different from the world around us and that according to Scripture, we should look different than those right next to us. Say something like:

- **It is amazing how difficult it is sometimes to spot the differences between two pictures like the ones we looked at today. Today's lesson talks about how Scripture challenges us as Christians to be different from the world around us. This difference is not meant to highlight how good you are; it's to highlight Jesus in your life. Today we are looking at what it means to be salt and light for the Kingdom of God.**

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of your lesson.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To show students that Christ calls us to be dramatically different from the world so that we may highlight the impact of Christ in our lives.
- **Set Up:** You'll benefit from a dry-erase board, but it's not critical. Make sure students have a Bible or that they can look along with a friend.

FIRST, have students begin by brainstorming what the word influence means. If this is too difficult or they are struggling, then have them think of people that are influential in the world. Once they have compiled a list of people, ask something like:

- **What makes these people influential?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **So, if that's the case, what does the word "influence" mean?**
 - Answers will vary. The definition of influence is: "the action or process of producing effects on the actions, behavior, opinions of others."¹

Explain that every person has influence in life, whether it is on family, friends, or even strangers. The actions and decisions that we make have an impact on our surroundings whether we realize it or not. As Christ-followers our influence is not to be for our own gain, but for the kingdom of God. Say something like:

- **The question is not whether you have influence or not, but rather who or what are you using your influence for. People can often use their influence for personal gain, but we find in Scripture that Jesus challenges us to use our influence for something much greater than ourselves.**

THEN, tell your students that you are going to be looking in the book of Matthew where Jesus laid out this challenge for influence. Ask your students to turn to Matthew 5:13-16. While students are finding the passage, be sure to give them some background on the passage they are about to read using the Bible Background portion of the lesson. Be sure to include that Jesus understood the difficulty of this challenge, but that He offers comfort before the challenge.

NEXT, read or have a student read Matthew 5:13-16. After the passage has been read, have a short discussion with

¹ Definition from merriam-webster.com.

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLESHIP
LESSON 10: THE PURPOSE OF DISCIPLESHIP,
PART 1: DISCIPLES INFLUENCE CULTURE

students using questions like the ones below:

- **When looking at verse 13, what do you think of when you think salt?**
 - o Answer: Something that adds flavor to something else.
- **Have you ever had an experience biting into something that didn't have enough salt? What was it like?**
 - o Answer: It can be very bland and can sometimes leave a bad taste in our mouth. It often leaves us wanting something more.
- **What does Jesus mean when He says that un-seasoned salt is good for nothing and it should be thrown out?**
 - o Answer: When salt it loses its flavor, it loses one of its main purposes.

Tell the students that salt was essential for the people Jesus was speaking to because it was used to preserve meat as well as add flavor. Have them re-read verses 14-15 and then follow up with some questions like:

- **Why do lighthouses keep their light at the top of the house?**
 - o Answer: The range and impact of the light is strengthened the higher up the light is placed.
- **What good is there for a light that is hidden under a basket?**
 - o Answer: A hidden light is pointless because the light is contained and kept away from its surroundings.
- **What effect does light have in dark places? What happens to darkness when light is present?**
 - o Answer: The light removes the darkness. It stands in drastic opposition to darkness. As darkness conceals a place, light reveals the place.

NEXT, instruct students to think about how these two images of light and salt stand together. Ask something like:

- **What do salt and light have in common?**
 - o Answer: They are both difference makers on the places in which they are found.
- **Why did Jesus use these images as examples?**
 - o Answer: Jesus used real examples that were relevant to the people so that they would understand the message He was trying to teach.
- **Why does Jesus want us to be salt and light in the world?**
 - o Answer: Because we are to be difference makers for the world in which we live as Christ-followers.

Explain to students that both images Jesus used stand in dramatic opposition to their surroundings. Re-read verse 16 in the passage. Tell them that Jesus wants us to stand as a dramatic difference to the world around us, but not for our sake. Jesus is granting us influence so that we may have an impact for His Kingdom and His glory. Ask the students something like the following questions:

- **What are some ways that we are supposed to be different than the world around us?**
 - o Answers may vary. This can be showing kindness to people that don't normally receive kindness, forgiving friends when they have done something wrong, or even asking for forgiveness from someone when we have messed up.
- **What are some ways that we can have our light shine before others?**
 - o Answers may vary. We must seek out ways to show the difference in our lives that is Christ. We should look for opportunities to care for others through kind words, helping hands, or even by not partaking in things that others think are cool such as bullying, cursing, etc.
- **What are some ways that we can give glory to God through our good deeds so that we do not draw attention to ourselves?**

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- o Answers may vary. The key to this portion is that our actions and light do not come from ourselves. This difference in us is Christ, and that is the difference that we are to show to others. We need to help people understand that we are doing good things not because we are good, but because Christ is good in us.

THEN, tell students that the activity that we used at the beginning was not simply for fun. The differences between each picture became harder to spot over time because the pictures became more similar. Explain that the same thing can happen in our lives as Christ-followers if we are not careful. If we do not keep ourselves rooted in the word of God and prayer, then we also might lose our salty flavor for the Lord.

NEXT, tell students that you are going to look at another place in scripture that talks about living a different life than those around us in 1 Peter 2:12. Explain to students as they turn to the passage that Peter is doing ministry about 20 years after Christ's resurrection and the truth from Matthew 5 is repeated here.

THEN, read or have a student read 1 Peter 2:12. Ask the students something like the following questions:

- **What words do Peter use to describe the actions and conduct of Christ-followers?**
 - o Answer: Honorable, good, and bringing Glory to God.
- **Why would people be speaking against Christ-followers as evildoers?**
 - o Answer: Because the Christ-followers are living their lives in a way that is drastically different than culture. If the Christ-followers were living the same way as non-believers, then there would be no difference for them to call evil or different.

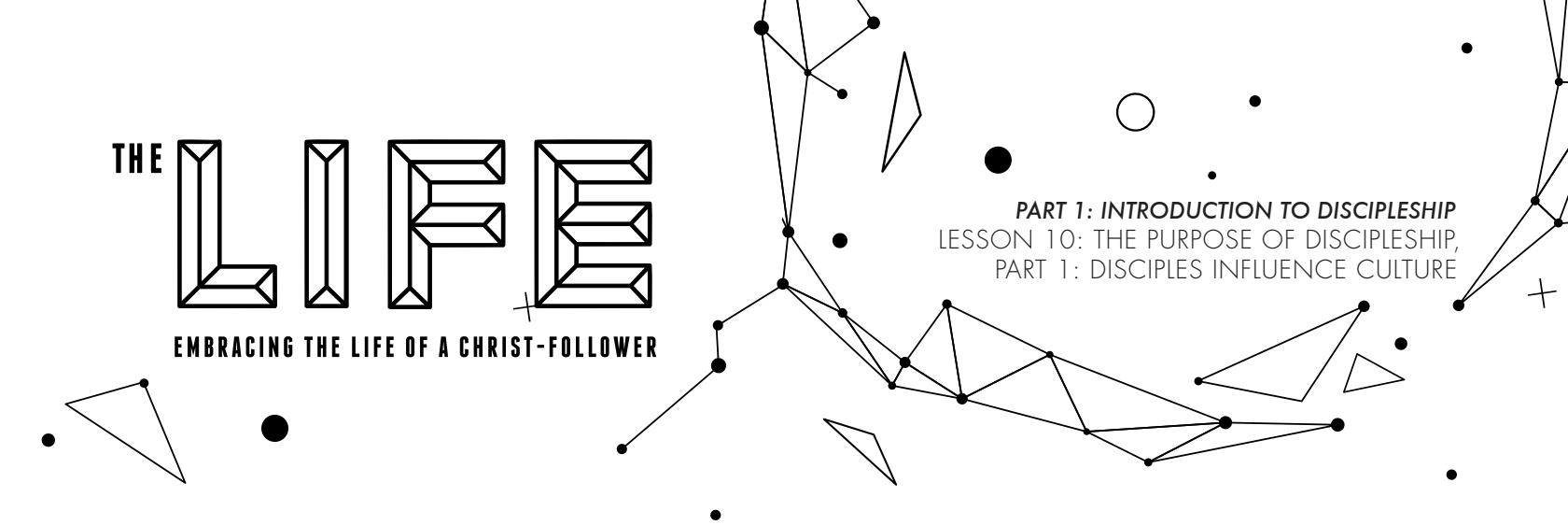
NEXT, explain to students that Christ and Scripture clearly call us to live differently than the world around us so that we may use our influence for Christ. This influence for Christ can be hidden when we choose to not be lights for Christ, but instead we highlight ourselves. We want to explore some practical ways that we can be "salt and light" in our day-to-day lives.

Ask if there are any questions, then transition into *The Last Word*.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students understand that their lives can look different and have an impact for Christ even in their normal activities.
- **Set-Up:** We are going to highlight three main activities that can be used to start having an influence for Christ today. Divide the board in half with two titles at the top of each half. The first half will say Salt and Light, and the other half will say Bushel.

FIRST, tell students that this activity is designed to show them that to be salt and light we must be intentional about how we live our lives every day. Explain to them that we are going to talk about three areas that they partake in every day that could be used as an influence for Christ.



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NEXT, tell them that as we talk about each area we are going to put examples of how we can be Salt and Light in those areas, and how we can just hide our influence under a bushel in those areas. Say something like this:

- **We have a choice as believers when we partake in any activity to just be ourselves, or we can use it as an opportunity to be an influence for Jesus. We are going to talk about a few different things that you do every day that could be used as an influencing opportunity for Christ. We are also going to show how the temptation exists to not be an influence for Christ in those areas as well so that we know how to not hide our light under a bushel.**

The first area that you are going to ask students about is conversations with friends. Ask the students:

- **What are some ways that we can just hide our light under a bushel with friends in our conversations?**
 - o Answers will vary. Some possible answers include gossip, course language, and even talk about how much we are upset with our parents.
- **What are some ways that we can make our conversations with friends an influence opportunity?**
 - o Answers will vary. Some possible answers include inviting our friends to church, telling them about something cool that you have read in your Bible lately, telling them let's not gossip because the Bible tells us not to, speaking kindly about others because Jesus loves them as well.

The second area that you can discuss is through humor. Ask the students:

- **What are some ways that we hide our light under a bushel when using humor?**
 - o Answers will vary. Possible answers include crude jokes, make fun of other people.
- **What are some ways that we can make our conversations with friends an influence opportunity?**
 - o Answers will vary. Some possible answers include defending others who are being attacked, finding jokes that don't involve inappropriate content or cursing, choosing to not be funny at the expense of anyone else.

The final area that you can discuss is through respect of adults. Ask the students:

- **What are some ways that we hide our light under a bushel when it comes to dealing with adults?**
 - o Answers will vary. Some possible answers include making fun of adults or talking poorly about them behind their back.
- **What are some ways that we can use opportunities to deal with adults as an influence point?**
 - o Answers will vary. Some possible answers include showing respect to adults even when we don't agree, defending adults when our friends try to disrespect or gossip about them, offering kind words to adults and elders when we talk to them.

THEN, explain to students that being an influence for Christ does not necessarily involve wearing Christian t-shirts every day or even talking only about Jesus in every conversation. Tell students that even Christians can enjoy sports and humor and art and music, but the call of Scripture is to live differently so that we may be an influence for Christ. Tell students that Christ has given them opportunities in their lives every day to be an influence for Him. We must use these opportunities so that we remain the "salt and light" for the kingdom of God.

FINALLY, allow time for any closing thoughts or questions from your students.

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- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're posting them on Instagram, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the **Social Media** guide to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

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PART 2: DISCIPLES INTRODUCE OTHERS TO CHRIST

What we want students to learn: That as followers of Christ, we are called by God to introduce others to Jesus, thus leading them to the same life-saving relationship with Christ that we enjoy.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To evaluate their commitment to leading others to know Jesus.

Scripture Focus: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Overview: When we enter into a relationship with Jesus, we are given a new task. Our task is to carry His offer of salvation and reconciliation to others. That is our calling. And as we consider the purpose of discipleship, bringing new members into the family of God is definitely a prominent one.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

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BIBLE BACKGROUND

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- **What's the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** The Apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to the Church in Corinth.
- **Time frame:** Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia around 55 or 56 AD, a year or so after writing 1 Corinthians and a year before he wrote his letter to the Romans from Corinth.
- **Purpose:** According to the ESV Study Bible, the main theme of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians was "the relationship between suffering and the power of the Spirit in Paul's apostolic life, ministry, and message."

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THE SETTING

Paul had a long and oftentimes rocky relationship with the church in Corinth. He talked about a very “painful” visit to them early on in 2 Corinthians, and many within the church had begun to reject Paul. However, Titus was eventually able to report to Paul and let him know that most of the church had repented. Throughout the letter Paul encourages the believers, and also extends an invitation for the ones still rejecting him and his message to repent.

THE MAIN POINT

Paul had one of the most dramatic conversion experiences we see in Scripture. He, of all people, understood what it meant for the old to pass away and to become a new creation in Christ. He also knew that he had done nothing to bring about his new self. He knew that it was all God’s doing. In the passage we’re about to study, he’s encouraging the church in Corinth to understand the reconciliation that had taken place between themselves and God through Christ. The main point of this lesson is that once we understand what has taken place in our lives through Christ, we must grasp our role of being ambassadors of that message to others.

LESSON PLAN

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To get students and leaders to think how they would introduce themselves to others using descriptive words.
- **Set-Up:** Strips of paper with different “types” of people written on them. By “types,” we mean descriptions like: High School Quarterback, Broadway Actor, President, etc. Each student will need one.

FIRST, divide students into groups of three or four people. If possible, for this introductory game it would probably be best to intermix middle school and high school students. Have older students talking with younger students and the other way around.

NEXT, inform students they all will be given a small sheet of paper with a description of a person on it. Also on the sheet of paper, they will be given four one-word descriptions that they can use to describe who they are to others. The object of the game is for the students to guess who the others students are. When the small group leader says “go,” students will walk around and introduce themselves to others and try and get the other person to guess who they are. Students can only use the descriptive words on the paper. If they are struggling with a particular one they can move on to another student. The goal is to see how many people they can successfully introduce themselves to in two minutes. Here are some samples you can use for the descriptions (feel free to add your own):

- **High School Quarterback** - Descriptions: Sports, Leader, 11 players at a time, oval shaped ball
- **Broadway Actor/Actress** - Descriptions: Sing, Stage, New York, Script.
- **Trumpet Player** - Descriptions: Horn, Music, Small, Bb Flat.
- **President of the United States** - Descriptions: Leader, Washington DC, Oval Office, Politics.

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- **Principal** - Descriptions: Leader, School, Office, Announcements.
- **Coach** - Descriptions: Whistle, Clipboard, Play-Calling, Leader.
- **Doctor** - Descriptions: White Coat, Prescriptions, Diagnose, Medicine.

THEN, when two minutes are up, have the students come back together as a large group and add up how many people they successfully introduced themselves to. Ask something like:

- **Was the game harder or easier than you thought it'd be?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **In real life, are you good at introducing yourself to others? Or do you struggle with it?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What about introducing two people that haven't met? Are you good in that situation? Why or why not?**
 - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, explain to students that this was a fun way to get them thinking about the idea of making introductions. Say something like:

- **As Christ-followers, we are called by God to introduce others to Jesus, thus potentially leading them to the same life-saving relationship with Christ that we enjoy. Whether we are great at building relationships with others or not, our faith must become public and known. We can't save people. But we can lead them to the One who can.**

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of your lesson.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help your students better understand the importance of a disciple of Jesus Christ introducing others to the same life-changing gospel they themselves have experienced.
- **Set Up:** You'll benefit from a dry-erase board, but it's not critical. Make sure students have a Bible or a Bible app that they are able to look along with a friend.

FIRST, write the words "flesh," "new creation," "reconciled," and "ambassadors" on a dry-erase board. Explain that these will be the main words we will be looking at in this section. Say something like this:

- **In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, he gives Christ followers a very healthy reminder of one of the local church's main missions and purposes, which is to bring others to Christ. He discussed the old self and the new self as the framework in doing this.**

THEN, explain that you're going to start out by reading 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. While students are looking, make sure you take a few moments to provide the context for the passage using the Bible Background. Also, pay close attention to the Setting.

NEXT, read or have a student read 2 Corinthians 5:16. When students have finished, lead them in a short discussion. Ask something like:

- **What do you think of when you think of the word flesh?**
 - Answers will vary. Here, Paul is talking about people living like their present life and physical bodies

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are the only things that matter.

- **Why do you believe Paul made such a strong statement as, “regard no one according to the flesh?”**
 - Answer: It is very easy to only see people only for their worldly standards, to only see their value in the here and now and completely miss the bigger picture of what God is doing in their heart and lives.
- **Why do you ultimately believe this is harmful, not only to others, but also to your testimony and what you stand for as a believer?**
 - Answer: When we only view people for what they are in the here and now, we tend to do a couple of things. First, we are not seeing others as Christ sees them. Christ sees us as image-bearers of Himself. This gives us incredible value. Second, it hurts our own testimony when we claim Jesus with our words but our actions do not back this up.

THEN, read or have a student read 2 Corinthians 5:17. When students have finished, lead them in a short discussion. Ask something like:

- **What do you think of when you think of the phrase “new creation”?**
 - Answers will vary. Write some of their answers on the board.
- **Why is it so important for the Christ-follower to understand, on a daily basis, that Christ has made us new?**
 - Answer: Christ-followers must consistently live in confidence in the new life we have been given in Christ. It’s critical for us to know that we are no longer in bondage to sin. Christ has set us free and we’re called to live like it!
- **With this in mind, how should this change the way we think, act, and relate to others?**
 - Answer: Since Christ has made us new, we will process decisions differently and we will think of others before our own selves. If you don’t see these changes, you may not be a Christ-follower or, at least, not be as strong in the faith as you may think you are.

NEXT, read or have a student read 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. Ask:

- **What does the word “reconciled” mean?**
 - Answers may vary. Write their answers on the board. It means to restore or to bring back together again. Explain to them that spiritually speaking, it means “God’s wrath against sin was satisfied in the death of His Son. Sinners—who formerly put self-interest above God’s glory (Rm 1:21; 3:23)—have been brought to cherish God as their highest treasure.” (HCSB Study Bible Notes)
- **Why is this a big deal for us to understand? Why is it important for others to understand?**
 - Answer: Because without reconciliation, it means that we are separated from God and that means an eternity apart from Him.
- **What does it tell you about the nature and character of God that He would desire to see this outcome?**
 - Answer: Sadly, many people do not see God as a loving, giving, caring God. They believe He stands ready to pour out His wrath. While the wrath of God does exist and is applied, these verses overwhelming show that God has a deep love for us. God thought enough of us to fix our sin problem through His Son, Jesus.

THEN, read or have a student read 2 Corinthians 5:20. These verses serve as a very theological, yet practical look at how, together as Christ-followers, we can embrace the mission of Christ to carry His offer of salvation and reconciliation to others. That is our calling. And as we consider the purpose of discipleship, bringing new members into the family of God is definitely a prominent one. Ask this question:

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- **What do you think of when you think of the word “ambassador?”**
 - o Answers will vary. Let students answer as they will, without correcting or redirecting. Have students write some of their answers down on their paper. Write them on the dry-erase board as well.

NEXT, offer the actual definition of ambassador to the students. Let them know that an ambassador is a person that acts as representation of something or someone. Ask something like:

- **What are some practical ways we can function as ambassadors of Christ in our day-to-day lives?**
 - o Answers will vary. Encourage students to be practical, and help them see that this goes beyond typical “church answers.” Push them to talk about their interactions with people at school, in the community, etc.

FINALLY, have a student read 2 Corinthians 5:21. Then, say something like:

- **In verse 21 Paul emphasizes the main thrust of what he has been communicating in these verses. That Christ did for us what we could never do for ourselves; He saved us. We must respond to this. For those who are not in Christ, we must pray that they are willing to surrender to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. For those in Christ, they must be bold ambassadors and urge others to come to know the Jesus that rescues and saves.**

Ask if there are any questions, then transition into *The Last Word*.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students step back and evaluate their commitment to leading others to know Jesus.
- **Set-Up:** You’ll want to use a dry-erase board, or some other means to help students visualize the people in their lives they have an opportunity to impact. Write the words, “Circle of Influence” on the board.

FIRST, explain to students that as you begin to wrap up your lesson, you want to give them an opportunity to evaluate their lives and how effectively they are using them to lead others to know Jesus. Have them think through and process this question:

- **When others see you, do they see Jesus in you?**
 - o Answers will vary. Don’t force them to answer out loud if they don’t want to. Just make sure they’re thinking on this question as you move forward.

NEXT, point out the words “Circle of Influence” on the board or screen. Say something like:

- **We all have a “circle of influence.” They are people that know us well, people that we rub shoulders with almost on daily basis. We’ll call these people our “circle of influence.” They impact your life and you impact their life.**

THEN, have students write the first names only of their “circle of influence” on a sheet of paper. Encourage them to come up with at least five names to write down. Then ask:

- **If I were to ask them what is most important in your life, how would they respond? Would they call you an ambassador for Christ? Could they point to evidence that would prove this?**

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o Answers will vary. Encourage students and challenge them to think about how they can continue to impact their circle of influence.

FINALLY, ask if students know how crucial Christ-followers are to others seeing and knowing the work and mission of Jesus. Jesus doesn't need us to accomplish His task but rather He chooses to use us, for His glory. Say something like:

- **Jesus commands Christ-followers to live in our new identity, the new creation, a life in Christ. Each and every Christ-follower needs to continually evaluate what he or she is putting on display. A great way to evaluate this is by wrestling with the following question: "If my friends were to tell others about me, what would be the top three things that would tell about me? Would being an ambassador for Christ even make the list? Can they tell I'm a disciple of Jesus trying to make more disciples of Jesus?"**

Encourage them that their lives are making a difference. Challenge them to keep reaching their circle of influence for Jesus. The circle of influence is a great starting point but should not be the ending point.

FINALLY, allow time for any closing thoughts or questions from your students.

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLESHIP
LESSON 12: THE PURPOSE OF DISCIPLESHIP, PART 3:
DISCIPLES HELP OTHERS KNOW CHRIST MORE

What we want students to learn: That God expects them to be leading others to know, but equally as important, to GROW in their knowledge of God.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To evaluate their disciple-making efforts and to commit to take steps to be more committed in this area of their lives.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 28:18-20

Supporting Scripture: Philippians 2:10-11; Acts 1:8

Overview: Your final look at some of the various purposes of discipleship is a challenging one. Not only are we supposed to lead people to a first-time saving relationship with Jesus, we are called to lead them DEEPER in their relationship with Christ. That's the awesome part of the Great Commission. It speaks to an investment in others, a journey to help teach and lead others to grow in their own discipleship.

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THE DETAILS

- **Author:** Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his Gospel.
- **Time frame:** Most people hold to Matthew's Gospel being written in the late 50's or 60's AD, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

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LESSON 12: THE PURPOSE OF DISCIPLESHIP, PART 3:
DISCIPLES HELP OTHERS KNOW CHRIST MORE

- **Purpose:** Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

THE SETTING

This passage is famously referred to as the Great Commission. It comes as the end of Christ's time on earth, and contains some of His final declarations to His followers. The lead up to this point is jam-packed. Jesus has been crucified and put into the tomb. On that Sunday, Mary Magdalene and her other friend Mary go to the tomb to check on Jesus, but to their amazement, it's empty! An angel of the Lord directs them to gather Jesus' followers and meet Him in Galilee because He has resurrected.

THE MAIN POINT

The main point we want to make is that in Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus calls each and every follower to not only share the Gospel, but to make disciples by teaching them how to live like Christ. Our responsibility does not end at sharing, but is accomplished when we invite people into our lives to get an inside look at what being a devout follower means. A major part of the disciple-making process is teaching others what the Bible says and how to follow it. The thought of this may be intimidating to a student. They may think, "How can I make disciples when I'm still trying to get my life together?" Our prayer is that students would begin to see that they have a lot to offer those who are not as mature in their knowledge of God, and that they would embrace the call to make disciples.

LESSON PLAN

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To open students' eyes that they are all teachers about what they are passionate about.
- **Set-Up:** None needed

FIRST, explain to students that they are going to have a chance to demonstrate their expertise on a topic of their choosing. Explain to your group that each person will have 60 seconds to create a "How To Be Successful" talk on any topic of their choice (with discretion of course). Topics may range anywhere from a particular sport, dance, band, gaming, driving, etc. Tell them to think of it as something like a YouTube tutorial video. It should be something that they are passionate about. You'll probably have a range of funny to informative talks, which is great. (If you want, consider going first and presenting a "how to" talk on a subject of your choosing.)

THEN, allow some of your students to share. The number of students you have may determine how you want to conduct the exercise. With fewer numbers, everyone can share. With a larger group, it may be better to allow students to raise hands or call on them. Spend about 5-10 minutes here.

NEXT, explain to students that this was a fun way to get them thinking about how we are all teachers of what we love

WEEK 12: LESSON PLAN

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THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLESHIP
LESSON 12: THE PURPOSE OF DISCIPLESHIP, PART 3:
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and are passionate about. Say something like:

- **You all just taught the group something that you are knowledgeable of and passionate about. When it comes to this particular subject, even though you may not see yourself this way, you are a teacher! We all naturally talk about what we love: sports, pop culture, and so on. In most cases, we are educating those who are less informed about our topic when we speak. In the Great Commission Jesus calls each and every one of His disciples to share the “good news” and to teach others about what it means to follow God. You may think, “But I’m not a Bible scholar,” or “I’ve never disciplined anyone before.” That’s okay! Jesus used a group of twelve uneducated, normal guys to turn the world upside down for His Kingdom. The cool thing is that He wants to use you to do the same. Let’s take a closer look at what the Bible says.**

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of your lesson.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help students see that God expects them to be leading others to know, but equally as important, to GROW in their knowledge of God.
- **Set Up:** You’ll benefit from a dry-erase board, but it’s not critical. Make sure students have a Bible or that they are able to look along with a friend.

FIRST, lead students to brainstorm a definition for the word “authority.” Write the word on a dry-erase board, and record their definitions. When they’ve slowed down supplying answers, or if they get stumped, write the following answer on the board:

- **Authority: the right to control, command, or determine.**

THEN, ask the following questions:

- **Can you name some people who have authority?**
 - Answers will vary, but may include parents, teachers, coaches, principles, policemen, judges, congressmen, military generals, CEOs, kings, the President, etc.
- **Think about the list of people we named. Is their respective authority limited or unlimited?**
 - Answer: They’re limited because they can’t apply to anyone not under their jurisdiction. For instance, the President of the U.S. cannot expect the people of Canada to obey an order from him—it’s only for citizens of that country.

Explain that you’re going to start by looking at what kind of kind of authority God has and what our response should be to it. Instruct students to turn to Matthew 28. While students are looking, make sure you take a few moments to provide the context for the passage using the Bible Background. Pay close attention to The Setting. Summarize it for your students so that they grasp exactly when this passage of Scripture occurs in Jesus’ ministry.

NEXT, read or have a student read Matthew 28:18-20. When students have finished, lead them in a short discussion. Instruct them to look back at verse 18. Ask something like:

- **Why does Jesus have all authority on heaven and earth?**

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- o Answer: As God, Jesus has authority over all creation. Passages like John 1 and Colossians 1 tell us that Jesus was present at and part of Creation, and that His presence and power hold all things together. Furthermore, and in context of this passage, Jesus' authority comes because He overcame sin and death when He died on the cross and was resurrected three days later.
- **How should we respond knowing that Jesus holds this kind of authority?**
 - o Answer: We should seek to humbly obey Him. Jesus says in John 8:31 that His true disciples are the ones that abide in His Word and seek to do His will.

THEN, take a moment and read Philippians 2:10-11 to drive home the idea that Jesus is the supreme ruler of all. When you're done, ask:

- **There is no limit to Jesus' authority and power. All people will be held accountable to how they respond to Jesus. How does this truth impact you? Does this comfort you or scare you? Why?**
 - o Answers will vary, but remind students that it should lead them to be comforted because they know that His character is righteous, He loves them, and He is for their good.

Remind students that although Jesus is King and lord of everything, He still invites us into an active, vibrant relationship with Him. He desires for us to come to Him and to find life in Him. The fact that a perfect, heavenly King would want fellowship with broken sinners is scandalous news! It is only from this place of relationship with Jesus that we can carry out the mission He laid out for us in the next two verses.

NEXT, direct their attention to verses 19-20. Ask:

- **Why does Matthew throw the "therefore" in between verses 18-19?**
 - o Answer: As a result of His complete power and authority, we are empowered to share the Gospel and teach others to follow Jesus. His power becomes active in our obedience. Matthew is connecting the idea that the only way to accomplish this task we have before us is if God is the One doing it in and through us.
- **Now, the big question: What does it mean to make a disciple?**
 - o Answer: It means to intentionally build a relationship with another person while purposefully teaching them the Word of God. Each person's knowledge of God will differ, so we should seek out those less mature in the faith in order to add to their knowledge of the Lord in the hopes that it will increase their devotion and admiration of Him.

THEN, have students see if they can name three countries on each continent. (This is a trick question considering Australia is a country and Antarctica does not contain a country! But see if they can be the ones to tell you this!) When they've finished, say something like:

- **You all just brilliantly gave us a world geography lesson. Do you want to know why I asked you to do that? It's because Jesus calls us in verse 19 to make disciples of ALL nations. He calls Christ-followers to grow the Church in all of the nations we just discussed, and all of them we didn't even mention. He is calling us to participate in the global movement of disciple-making that countless Christians all over the world are doing each day. It's not just for adults. It's for you too.**

NEXT, read Acts 1:8 that ties into what Jesus is asking of us:

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- **What do you notice about the order of locations that Jesus gave here?**

- o Answer: There is a centrifugal nature to the Gospel. This just means that it starts at the center and moves outward. Jerusalem was the hub of the disciples and home for much of their ministry activity. Jesus gives this location first, and then moves on to Judea and Samaria—the areas surrounding Jerusalem. Then, He calls them (and us) to witness to areas that are not close to home all over the globe.

Begin wrapping up the Bible study portion of your lesson by re-stating the idea that we are all called to “go.” But, lead students to wrestle with the idea of what their “going” should look like. Have them look back at verses 19-20 and ask:

- **What is baptism a symbol of?**

- o Answer: It is representative of new life! The picture of baptism the New Testament paints is us dying to ourselves, being washed clean from our sin because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross, and raising to live in a new life found in Him.

- **Why does Jesus tell us to baptize people in the name of all three members of the Trinity?**

- o Answer: There are two reasons. 1) All three members are involved in someone’s salvation, and 2) It is a testimony to the character and nature of who God is. He is three persons and One God.

- **In verse 20, we see Jesus instructing Christians to teach those they are discipling to follow God’s Word. Why is this important?**

- o Answer: Many Christians act as if they believe the extent of the Christian life is making a salvation decision and coming to church. Those are both great things, but they’re only the tip of the iceberg! There is an expectation found in Scripture to grow in the knowledge of God and spiritual maturity, but people need guidance getting there. In order to accomplish the mission set before us, we must seek to be discipled and to make disciples.

- **Who are the people in your life that have discipled you and what did you admire about them?**

- o Answers will vary.

- **How should Christ’s promise of His presence motivate us?**

- o Answer: It should serve to remind us that we are never alone in this process. Diving into the mess of others’ lives can be hard and in some cases drive us to want to quit. In those moments, He is more near than we can imagine and He promises that if we keep going, we will in due time receive our reward (Gal. 6:9).

FINALLY, explain to students that the Great Commission isn’t just a nice suggestion that some elite class of Christians are responsible for. It’s for the new believer all the way to the seasoned, senior adult believer. Say something like this:

- **I hope you have felt the gravity of the call to be a witness in your life. On the surface, this command can appear overwhelming, but when we look on it with the right perspective, it can totally change our lives. We find joy in walking with others and seeing God move in their life. And in that process, God brings us closer to Himself. Step out on faith and believe that God wants to use you to teach others how to live for Him.**

Ask if there are any questions, then transition into *The Last Word*.

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THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students step back and evaluate how intentionally they are using their time to make disciples.
- **Set-Up:** You'll want to use a dry-erase board, or some other means to help students visualize the struggles and the benefits of being a disciple. Draw a line down the middle of your board and label one side "Struggles" and the other "Benefits."

FIRST, explain to students that as you begin to wrap up your lesson, you want to give them an opportunity to talk openly and honestly about what holds them back from living out this call on their lives. Open up the floor to hear their hang-ups and hardships in the process of making disciples. For example, they might say they don't have any time in their schedule or they might express feelings of inadequacy. Not that this should keep them from making disciples, but aiding them to see that there are obstacles to overcome will be helpful.

NEXT, ask them to brainstorm what the benefits to making disciples are. Encourage your group to dream about what could happen if they whole-heartedly jumped into the mission. Answers will vary, but once your group has given the list, say something like this:

- **Just like anything worth accomplishing in life, fulfilling God's call on our life is hard work. Making disciples calls us to pursue people that may seem immature in their faith, or may not want anything to do with Jesus at all. It's kind of like the example of a sponge. We soak in so that we can take that knowledge to be squeezed out into others' lives. It will be hard, but it will be so worth it.**

If you want, consider using this example as a way for them to visualize the goal: In the popular movie, *Wreck-It Ralph*, he gets tired of being the villain of his own video game. Therefore, he travels to other games where he meets a girl named Vanellope. She loves to race, but inevitably "glitches" while she races, which causes the other competitors to keep her from racing. Once the two meet, Ralph helps her to build a race-cart and teaches her how to use her glitch to her advantage. Vanellope eventually wins the race because of Ralph's instruction and help. Ask:

- **What did Ralph discover about himself?**
 - He realized that he could really help others discover their potential.
- **Who can you come alongside of and help show the way?**
 - They don't have to answer out loud, but tell them to think of someone in their mind.
- **What are some practical ways you can disciple them?**
 - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, take some time to challenge your group to take that next step and intentionally disciple one person. Then, let them know that you will be a resource to them along the way if they need any guidance or wisdom in the discipleship process. Allow time for any closing thoughts or questions from your students.

- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're posting them on Instagram, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the **Social Media** guide to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.