

Live like a Disciple

MATTHEW 28:19–20

GOAL

Adults explore models of discipleship that emulate the life and teachings of Jesus described in the Gospels.

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



Visit our YouTube channel, bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR, for conversation starter videos.

PRAYER

Teach me Christ's ways,
O God, that I may follow
Jesus and lead others to
discipleship. Amen.

THIS SESSION

When Jesus commanded his own disciples to make more disciples, he laid out components that both strengthened his followers and expanded the constellation of those who would come to know and love God and God's children. The assumption is that those who hear and heed Jesus' Great Commission are transformed in their relationship with him. From this place, disciples bear witness to what Jesus taught, to the way Jesus lived, to the relationship Jesus has with God, and to the love Jesus has for all. Living as a disciple is a lifelong journey, full of mountaintop experiences, risk-taking, mistakes, and deep joy. As disciples, we live our faith in our own particular ways, yet we are united in following Jesus and embodying his character.

THE BIBLE STORY

The closing verses of Jesus' *Great Commission*, Matthew 28:19–20, homes in on the direct actions of Jesus' charge to his disciples. The command at the center of the charge, make disciples (v. 19), includes going forth, baptizing, and teaching. A *disciple* is someone who has a strong interest in or admiration for a particular person or thing. There is an urgency for proximity or connection with the person who is admired. Therefore, a disciple of Jesus strongly admires and connects with Jesus, emulating Jesus' teachings in daily living.

The biblical image of fruit is often used to illustrate the actions of a practicing disciple. The apostle Paul uses "fruit of the Spirit," Galatians 5:22–23, to present nine admirable characteristics that show themselves in daily living as a result of following Jesus: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." More than a checklist of perfect discipleship, these qualities are cultivated in seeking to walk with Jesus each day.

SESSION PREPARATION

- Depending on the options you choose:
 - "Fruit of the Spirit Grid" (p. 7): Prepare newsprint by copying the grid from page 12 in the *Adult Reflection Guide* (optional).

GETTING STARTED

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome participants and engage in gathering activities particular to your group (*introductions, offering, prayer concerns, and announcements*). Review the summary of the practice found in the Unit Overview on page 4 of the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Explain that a more detailed discussion of the practice can be found in the foundational essay that begins on page 65 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Encourage participants to read the essay during the course of the next six sessions.

HERE I AM

The leader says aloud: “Jesus said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Live like a disciple.’”

Show the YouTube video with a congregation singing “I, the Lord of Sea and Sky (Here I Am, Lord—3vv+Refrain) [with Lyrics for Congregations]” (bit.ly/FMHereIAmCongregation, 4:54). Invite participants to sing along with the chorus, beginning at 0:53 and stopping at 1:35. Pray together the prayer on page 7 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*.

INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

CONVERSATION STARTER VIDEOS

Show the “*Make Disciples Overview*” video and the “*Make Disciples Session 1*” video from the Growing Faith YouTube channel (bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR). Lead a brief conversation about participants’ thoughts and questions the videos prompt as you introduce the practice.

FOLLOW ME

Refer participants to the Unit Overview on page 4 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Read aloud the first paragraph and select from these questions for discussion.

- ➔ What first comes to mind when you hear Jesus’ invitation, “Follow me”?
- ➔ What words describe the way Jesus lived?
- ➔ What words describe the way the early disciples lived? Disciples now?
- ➔ How does one become a disciple of Jesus?
- ➔ How are you involved in making disciples?

Explain that, in this practice, they will explore both being a disciple and making disciples.

NAMING FIVE

Form groups of two or three participants. Give each group index cards and a pen. Explain that you will make a statement, and they will write five things in response to the statement. The first team to write five things and pass their index card to you will have their list read aloud.

Possible categories:

- Name five of the original twelve disciples
- Name five miracles Jesus performed
- Name five movies about Jesus
- Name five places Jesus visited

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- This and all sessions require that the leader and participants have their copy of the *Adult Reflection Guide* with them.

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- Index cards
 - Pens

- Name five characteristics of modern disciples of Jesus
- Name five people you know who follow Jesus
- Name five songs your church sings about Jesus

After the game, have participants remain in groups to write a definition of a *disciple*. Have groups share their definitions. Explain that this unit is about making disciples and how we live as disciples to make new ones.

FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

☐ Bibles

MOUNTAINTOP EXPERIENCES

Direct participants to “Finding the Practice in the Bible” on page 8 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Read aloud the opening paragraph. Form five groups and assign each group one of the mountaintop experiences highlighted in Matthew’s Gospel: 4:1–11; 5–7; 17:1–8; 24–25; 28:16–20. Have groups read or skim their assigned text to be ready to tell the others the following:

- ➔ What happened?
- ➔ Who was involved?
- ➔ What was learned?

Gather the groups to present their mountaintop experiences from Matthew. Invite participants to recall mountaintop experiences they have had. Discuss ways that these experiences changed the way they live as disciples.

MATTHEW 28:19–20

Direct participants to “Taking Risks” on page 8 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Invite volunteers to read aloud the two paragraphs and the printed Scripture on page 9. Encourage them to think about how the disciples may have felt as they made their way to the mountain, after all they had been through since Jesus’ crucifixion. Invite them to name feeling words to describe their feelings as they headed toward the mountaintop and after they received the Great Commission.

Read aloud each bulleted statement on page 9. Discuss how these statements about the experiences of the first disciples resonate with participants’ experiences of being a follower of Jesus.

Explain that the *Adult Reflection Guides* are designed for participants to read and work through individually. If they do not feel comfortable talking publicly about the personal challenges of being a disciple, they may complete the activity on their own at home.

FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

DO THIS, NOT THAT

Direct participants to “Finding the Practice in the Bible” on page 8 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Invite volunteers to take turns reading the opening paragraph for this section sentence by sentence. Use this prompt and questions for discussion:

- ➔ What lifestyle choices have you seen some communities of faith insist on for the members that other communities of faith do not?
- ➔ Which of these resonate with you as the way a disciple *should* live?
- ➔ Where do you think this instruction comes from?
- ➔ Are there other disciples of Jesus who might disagree with this instruction? Why?
- ➔ What do you think matters to Jesus?

If you have time, have participants read about the Puritan Movement of the seventeenth century included in “Do This, Not That” on page 10 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Discuss how some Puritan practices continue to influence laws and life today. Why might these practices continue? Why might these practices be rejected?

BIBLICAL KOINÓNIA

Refer participants to the text box on page 11, which defines the Greek word *koinónia*. Ask whether participants have heard this word before, and if they have, in what context. Read aloud the paragraph to establish a baseline understanding of *koinónia*. Have volunteers take turns reading each of the Scripture summaries one-by-one. Discuss how each passage deepens their understanding of living like a disciple. Identify actions or commitments they could engage in as disciples.

KOINONIA MISSION STATEMENT

Ask participants if they have heard of the Christian ministries of Koinonia Farm or Habitat for Humanity. If so, invite them to describe the ministries or discuss what they know about them.

Refer them to “Koinonia—A Fellowship of Disciples” on page 11 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Explain that, as the title indicates, the two ministries operate as intentional Christian communities living as disciples. Show the YouTube video “A Glimpse of Koinonia Today” (bit.ly/FMKoinoniaFarm, 3:00). Read the description of the ministries. Discuss how the description and video expand what they already know about the ministries.

Read the mission statement for Koinonia on page 11. Discuss what you learn about the groups’ commitment and life as disciples of Jesus. If they were to write a mission statement for an intentional community of disciples, what would they include?

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PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT GRID

Use a marker and record participants’ responses on the grid as they discuss the activity.

Explain that living as a disciple of Jesus is an ongoing, lifelong process, whether it begins early in life or in one’s adult years. With the first disciples, Jesus simply said, “Follow me.” Their understanding of discipleship grew and developed and was never perfect.

Read the paragraph in “Fruit of the Spirit” on page 12 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Have participants look over the fruit of the Spirit grid and write their initial thoughts about conditions for blossoming and cultivating

Prepared newsprint (optional)
 Marker

the different aspects of spiritual fruit. After working individually, invite participants to discuss their thoughts for nurturing spiritual fruit. How might this work guide their living as disciples?

Pens

MY LIFE AS A DISCIPLE

Read aloud the first paragraph in “Highlights in My Life as a Disciple” on page 13 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Use the instructions for option 1 and invite participants to use the blank space on the page to list memories from their life that stand out for them as being influential for their discipleship. From their initial list, have them circle one memory. In the remaining space, have them list new memories associated with that event as it influenced their life as a disciple.

Invite them to review their memories, seeking ways that their life has been influenced toward being a disciple. Encourage them to continue this activity at home, circling and focusing on other memories that have deepened their discipleship.

If time and interest allow, invite volunteers to talk about what they notice from their memories.

FOLLOWING JESUS

Choose one or more options.

REVIEWING THE SESSION

Read aloud the first paragraph in “Following Jesus” on page 14 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Invite each participant to name one piece of guidance they learned about being a disciple.

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CLOSING VIDEO

Explain that many of our great hymns of faith and our worship songs describe life as a disciple.

Show the YouTube video “Hymn—Today We All Are Called to Be Disciples” (bit.ly/FMCalled, 3:22). Invite participants to identify what they hear about life as a disciple from the hymn.

THE LORD’S PRAYER

Close the session by saying the Lord’s Prayer together.