



Contents

Engage Youth: Discipleship

Introduction.....3

Gathering 1: Discipleship—Continuing Christ’s Ministry.....5

Gathering 2: Discipleship Directions.....10

Gathering 3: Up (Cultivating Our Relationship with God)18

Gathering 4: In (Growing in the Body of Christ)26

Gathering 5: Out (Following Christ into Mission)32

Gathering 6: Continuing Christ’s Ministry Today39

Published by Witherspoon Press, a ministry of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, Kentucky.

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

presbyterianmission.org/ministries/curriculum/witherspoon-press/



Introduction

What does it mean for you to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? To describe a disciple, the Greek language uses the word *mathetes*, which talks about someone who learns and follows—someone who is an apprentice. You probably have heard the word *apprentice* on a TV show or associate it with someone who is doing an internship or shadowing someone else’s work to learn what it takes to do it.

Every Christian person should strive to be a “learner-follower” of Jesus. If you look at Jesus’ disciples in the Bible, you will see that they learn by following: they learn to follow Jesus and they learn by following Jesus. What is the difference between those two things? To follow Jesus is to trust that Jesus is guiding you on the right path and in the right steps, connecting to you through the Holy Spirit, to lead you in the will of God. To learn by following Jesus is to look intently to his example, listening attentively to his words and incorporating every teaching to your own life. While doing this, the disciples learned (and we learn even today) to live lives informed and empowered by the life of Christ so that they may be prepared to continue his ministry.

Discipleship, then, is all about living a life connected to God through Christ and to all of God’s children. It is the life Jesus lived, a life connected to the love of God. We want to live this same kind of life because Jesus’ deep love for us causes us to love him. The key to discipleship is remaining connected to the one who loves us and to one another.

The following question, or one similar to it, is asked of people who want to join the church as new disciples:

Will you be Christ’s faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love, to your life’s end?

I will, with God’s help.¹

You might have heard that question. Maybe you have answered it! Think about this: What does it mean to answer “I will, with God’s help”? What does it mean to you that God will help you to be Christ’s faithful disciple, to obey his Word, and to show his love? How can you obey Jesus and show his love in concrete ways? Throughout your meditations while using this notebook, also ask yourself: How can I inspire others—friends and family—to be Christ’s faithful disciples?

1. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 449.

Discipleship—Continuing Christ’s Ministry

God is the one who saved and called us with a holy calling. This wasn’t based on what we have done, but it was based on his own purpose and grace that he gave us in Christ Jesus before time began. Now his grace is revealed through the appearance of our savior, Christ Jesus. He destroyed death and brought life and immortality into clear focus through the good news. (2 Timothy 1:9–10, Common English Bible)

Do you wear a cross necklace? If so, why? Does it have a special significance for you? Why do you think people wear cross necklaces? What do you think people wonder about when they see someone wearing a cross necklace?



Encounter

The Greek word *mathetes* is the word used in Scripture for “disciple,” and it means “learner-follower.” A disciple learns to follow and learns by following; Jesus’ disciples learn to follow Jesus and learn by following Jesus.

And what do they learn? Disciples, or apprentices of Jesus, learn to live lives informed and empowered by the life of Christ so that they may be equipped to continue his ministry.

Look at the words below. Circle one or two and think about how you can, in your everyday life, live them out to witness to what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

worship
make disciples
serve
teach
learn
obey
love
baptize
witness
pray
bless
share

Explore

In departing from his disciples—the ones he had called, trained, equipped, and prayed for—Jesus leaves them with work to do. They are to continue his earthly ministry.

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18–20)

When they were together for the last time they asked, “Master, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now? Is this the time?”

He told them, “You don’t get to know the time. Timing is the Father’s business. What you’ll get is the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world.”

These were his last words. As they watched, he was taken up and disappeared in a cloud. They stood there, staring into the empty sky. Suddenly two men appeared—in white robes! They said, “You Galileans!—why do you just stand here looking up at an empty sky? This very Jesus who was taken up from among you to heaven will come as certainly—and mysteriously—as he left.” (Acts 1:6–11, *The Message*)



What had the disciples witnessed with Jesus that they were to share with others?



Why do you think it was important for the disciples to tell others about Jesus?

Engage

Lectio Divina Guidelines

Lectio divina (“divine reading”) is an intentional, contemplative way to connect with God’s Word. This ancient spiritual practice involves listening to multiple readings of the same Scripture passage interspersed with short periods of silence. You can try it by yourself or with a group of people.

Relax in God’s Presence

Dim the lights. Light a candle. Play contemplative music. Find a place where you are alone and can’t be interrupted. Take a few minutes to relax in God’s presence.

Listen for God’s Word

First Reading

Slowly read the Scripture passage, and listen for a word or phrase that jumps out at you. Have a piece of paper and a pencil or pen available so that you can take note of your thoughts. Allow a time of silence before the next reading.

Second Reading

During the second reading, keep in mind the words or phrases that jumped out at you, exploring the question “How does this word and this Scripture passage connect with my life?” Allow for a time of silence after the reading.

Third Reading

As you engage in the third reading, think about the questions “What is this passage calling me to do?” or “Who is this passage calling me to be?” Read the Scripture passage, expressing the emotion of the passage and the way it might be received by people listening to it for the first time. End with a time of silence. Write your thoughts about the questions, as well as this one: “What have you heard from God in this Scripture passage?”

Express

The following question, or one similar to it, is asked of new disciples when they become members of a church:

Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love, to your life's end?

I will, with God's help.¹

If you have answered this question, what do you remember about your life at the time that you responded "yes" to it? What other disciples surrounded you on that occasion? Who was there to support you, pray for you, and partner with you in the gospel?

If you have not answered that question, how do you think you would feel if asked? What other people whom you consider disciples of Jesus would you want there with you? How can others support you, pray for you, and partner with you as you take your first steps as a member of the church?

Pray. This week in your prayers, remember with thanksgiving all those who have supported you in faith and encouraged you in discipleship. Open your heart, and pray that God will do a new thing through you. Offer prayers of gratitude for your church—for all those called, gathered, and empowered through Christ. Pray that God will do a new and wonderful thing through all of you.

1. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 449.