

Engage Youth: Discipleship

Introduction.....	3
Gathering 1: Discipleship—Continuing Christ’s Ministry.....	5
Gathering 2: Discipleship Directions.....	14
Gathering 3: Up (Cultivating Our Relationship with God)	22
Gathering 4: In (Growing in the Body of Christ)	30
Gathering 5: Out (Following Christ into Mission)	39
Gathering 6: Continuing Christ’s Ministry Today	49

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

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations in this publication are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. Every effort has been made to trace copyrights on the materials included in this book. If any copyrighted material has nevertheless been included without permission and due acknowledgment, proper credit will be inserted in future printings after notice has been received.

© 2014 Witherspoon Press, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Louisville, KY. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced without the publisher's permission.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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

Introduction

Engage Youth: Discipleship seeks to call, train, inspire, and support young disciples of Jesus Christ. The six gatherings are intended to ignite the participants' call to serve as Christ's disciples, to strengthen their abilities to witness to him, to boost the ways in which they invite others to a life of discipleship, and to motivate them simply to enjoy life in the body of Christ.

- Preview the scope of the study by looking through the themes, Scriptures, and activities of the six gatherings.
- Involve your youth throughout the study by inviting them to share in the readings and in leadership. Listen to them as they share what it means for them to be disciples and followers of Jesus Christ.
- Throughout the study, encourage and challenge the youth with “Now what?” questions, asking, “What does this study mean for you as a young disciple of Jesus?”

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

Discipleship is all about living a life connected to God through Christ and to all of God's children. It is to live as Jesus lived, connected to God's love. 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.

The following question, or one similar to it, is asked of people who want to follow Christ and 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

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

The youth might be familiar with that question. Maybe they have answered it themselves or have heard others answer it. The question probably once was asked of you! If so, what do you remember about your life at the time that you responded affirmatively to that question? What other disciples surrounded you on that occasion? Who was there to support you, pray for you, and partner with you in the gospel?

As you plan for this study, ask yourself: How can I share my enthusiasm for being a follower of Christ with the young people I am about to lead on this journey? How can I inspire them to be Christ's faithful disciples? How can I invite them to obey Christ's Word and show his love in meaningful and concrete ways?

You can use this study as:

- A Lenten study
- A retreat over a long weekend
- A special series to be completed by graduating seniors
- A summer study series
- A midweek series
- A high-school camp resource

Discipleship—Continuing Christ’s Ministry

Scripture

2 Timothy 1:9–10 God’s salvation in Christ

Matthew 28:16–20 The Great Commission

Acts 1:1–11 The ascension of Jesus

Main Idea

To be a disciple is to follow Christ in our everyday lives. This means that we need to know more about the way he lived in connection to God and how he taught that connection to his disciples. Jesus calls, teaches, blesses, and sends disciples to continue his redeeming and reconciling work. Discipleship is all about living life in Christ.

Teaching Points

This gathering invites participants to:

1. Define and explore what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.
2. Identify specific actions they can do to continue Christ’s ministry.
3. Complete an inventory of discipleship essentials related to worship, fellowship, learning, and serving.

Leader Prep

The objective for *Engage Youth: Discipleship* is to call, train, inspire, and support your youth as they seek to live their lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. The six gatherings will lead them in reflection and renewal of their desire to commit to a life of discipleship. They will learn how to witness more effectively, to share the life of discipleship with others, and to enjoy being an active part of the body of Christ.

Before the gathering, review the material, looking at the titles for the gatherings, the Bible passages, and the activities in each gathering. To prepare for each gathering, look at the accompanying notebook. Your group members can use the notebook during the gathering, but they also may use it as a devotional piece and as a follow-up to what they have learned.

Consider the following when preparing for the gathering:

- For Gather, choose which option (or options, as time allows) you will use and obtain any supplies needed. Your youth will start thinking about how they are called to be disciples and what that means and will identify ways in which they witness about being a disciple to others.
- For the opening prayer, place a candle on a table that everyone can see. You will start each worship experience by lighting the candle and by reading the Bible. Notice that you will use several versions of the Bible, including the New Revised Standard Version, the Common English Bible, and The Message.
- For Encounter, you might need the *Called by Our Baptism* video (available on YouTube).
- One of the options for Engage will involve a physical activity. Follow the safety tips so that everyone can enjoy it with no incidents. Another option uses the film *Henry Poole Is Here*.
- For Depart, you will be using the *Book of Common Worship*, especially page 449.

For spiritual grounding, read Matthew 28:16–20, and think about these questions:

- What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus Christ?
- What is God calling you to do or to be?
- How can you help your youth group to be good followers of Jesus Christ and to discover what God is calling them to do or to be?

Gather

Option A: Name Catch

Supplies needed: foam ball or other soft object, music player, appropriate music

Welcome your group as they arrive. Use the following directions to play a game of “Name Catch”:

- With the group members seated or standing in a circle, play the music and invite them to pass the ball around the circle.
- Stop the music. The person caught holding the ball must call out his or her name and fold his or her arms, indicating that the ball cannot be thrown to him or her again. Start the music again.
- Continue stopping and starting the music until all names are called and all arms are folded.
- On the second round, when a player is caught holding the ball, he or she calls out the name of the person to the right in addition to his or her own name. On the third round, he or she adds the name of the person to the left. On the fourth round, he or she adds the name of a person across the circle.

After your group is finished with the exercise, ask members to share their expectations for this study. Ask:

- What do you think about the name of the study, *Engage Youth: Discipleship*?
- What do you expect to hear and to learn?

Explain that the purpose of this gathering is to think about how Jesus calls us to follow him, to understand what being Jesus’ disciple means, and to identify ways we can share being disciples with others, inviting them to do the same.

Option B: “Cross of Gold”

Supplies needed: collection of various cross necklaces, music player, recording of “Cross of Gold” by Michael W. Smith

Before the participants arrive, place the cross necklaces on a table in the center of the meeting space and prepare the music player.

Listen to “Cross of Gold” together. Ask the participants to listen for words or phrases of the song lyrics that are especially meaningful to them. Explore the following questions:

- Do you wear a cross necklace? Why?
- What words or phrases do you remember from the song? Why are these words or phrases meaningful to you?
- What message about being a Christian can you understand from listening to this song? Do you agree with the message? Why or why not?
- What message is a person sending if he or she wears a cross necklace?
- What responsibilities come with wearing a cross necklace or other cross jewelry?

Opening Prayer

Supplies needed: white candle, matches

Invite a volunteer to light the candle while another volunteer reads 2 Timothy 1:9–10 (Common English Bible):

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.

Pray:

Faithful God, mold us and shape us into the image of Jesus Christ by the pouring out of your Holy Spirit upon us. In his name, we pray. Amen.

Encounter

Option A: What Is a Disciple?

Supplies needed: newsprint, colored markers, *Called by Our Baptism* video and viewing equipment

Before the gathering, download or stream the video *Called by Our Baptism* from YouTube.

Form groups of two or three people. Give each group a piece of newsprint and markers. Ask each group to draw the silhouette of a person on the newsprint and to answer the question “What is a disciple of Jesus Christ?” Give the groups time to draw their ideas and then to share their posters with the larger group. Then encourage the participants to continue the dialogue by using the following questions:

- Who is someone you consider to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ?
- How does a person become a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- Do you consider yourself a disciple of Jesus Christ? Why or why not?

Watch *Called by Our Baptism*, and explore the following questions:

- Have you been baptized? If so, what did it mean for you? How has your baptism helped shape who you are today?
- If you have not been baptized, do you think doing so is important? Why or why not?
- What do you think about when you hear the words “baptismal identity”? What do you think is the relationship between being a disciple and living out our baptismal identity?

Option B: Name the Disciple

Supplies needed: newsprint; marker; name tags with acts of the disciples: *witness, baptize, serve, proclaim, learn, teach, make disciples, love, bless, pray, worship, share,* and *obey*, one for each participant

Post the question “What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ?” on newsprint. Give each participant a name tag bearing an act of a disciple. Ask participants to speak about how their words help define what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Recruit a participant to record the responses on newsprint.

Invite the participants to imagine that a particular individual (such as a child, teenager, young adult, parent, lawyer, educator, builder, athlete, politician, artist, skeptic, seeker, and so on) is asking, “What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ?” Ask:

- How would you respond to each person?
- What might Jesus’ call to discipleship mean to each person?

Explore

A Life Connected to God

Supplies needed: Bibles, newsprint, markers

When asking questions, make sure that you give enough time for the participants to respond, especially when they will share something personal. Do not be anxious about moments of silence. Most people need time to think and prepare their thoughts. The Holy Spirit is at work.

Share with the group that the key to discipleship is living a life connected to God through Christ and to all of God's children. Invite the youth to name ways of staying connected to God and God's people.

Post two sheets of newsprint in a visible location. Write *Matthew 28* on one sheet and *Acts 1* on the other sheet. Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 28:16–20. Invite the group to name ways the passage says the disciples are to carry on Jesus' ministry. Then have them name ways the disciples will remain connected to Christ. Do the same with Acts 1:1–11. Have a volunteer record the observations on the appropriate sheets. Ask:

- 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?
- What does it mean to remain connected to God and to God's people?
- Why do you think that connection is the key to discipleship?
- What do you think love has to do with being a disciple of Jesus?

The instructions of Jesus found in the Gospels provide the heart of the disciples' witness. Many of these instructions you may already know: how we are to love God and love our neighbor, to pray, to offer our worship, and to serve others. Some of Jesus' teachings are easy to grasp; others are more difficult to understand. All of his instructions are intended to train his disciples to live their lives in the same manner as Jesus lived his life.

Engage

Option A: The Risky Adventure

Supplies needed: blindfold for each participant, long rope

Safety tips for this activity:

- Pay attention to safety concerns as you lead your group. People may be pulled too hard if the group isn't moving together.
- Use the phrase "safety stop" to communicate safety issues. Participants can say the phrase if they experience a problem, and explain that they need to stop immediately if they hear the phrase.
- Use the following chant to be sure each person is ready each time you begin to walk:

Leader: Walkers ready? *Group:* Ready!

Leader: Walking? *Group:* Walk on!

Have the participants stand in a line, facing forward with about 18 inches between each person. Place the rope on the ground parallel to the line of people. Have each participant put on a blindfold and grab the rope. Holding onto the front end of the rope, lead the blindfolded participants around the church and church grounds. If possible, include obstacles such as going up and down stairs, fitting through tight spaces (e.g., pews in the sanctuary), or crawling under a table. Conclude the walk in a place where you can gather to explore the following questions:

- What was it like not to know where you were going? How much risk was involved?
- Would the trip have been as interesting or fun if you had not been blindfolded? Would it have been as interesting or fun if you had known where we would end up?
- How might this experience be like being a disciple of Jesus Christ? How might this experience be like following God's call?

Option B: *Lectio Divina*

Supplies needed: Bible; “*Lectio Divina* Guidelines” (notebook, p. 8); candle; matches; music player; recording of contemplative, instrumental music; paper; pencils or pens

Ask the group to sit in a circle. Place the candle in the middle of the circle, and light it. Play suitable music (repeating, if possible) at low volume. While the music plays, use the information found on “*Lectio Divina* Guidelines” to lead the group in a *lectio divina* reading of Acts 2:42–47. (The guidelines are for an individual *lectio*, but you can use it for the group as well.)

If time allows, help participants compare what they learned from this passage with what they learned from the Scripture passages in Explore.

Option C: Film Clip—*Henry Poole Is Here*

Supplies needed: Bibles, *Henry Poole Is Here* (2008, PG) and movie-viewing equipment

Before the gathering, preview the following clips from *Henry Poole Is Here*: 9:51–13:08; 1:10:45–1:12:15; 0:52:40–55:40.

Note: Henry Poole curses in the third clip.

Explain to the participants that *Henry Poole Is Here* is a film about a man named Henry Poole (played by Luke Wilson), who tries to withdraw into solitude for what he believes are the last few weeks of his life. His neighbor sees an image of Christ in a paint stain on his house. Henry resists believing in the image even after Patience, a girl with impaired sight, recovers her vision, due to what she thinks is the power of the image. In these three clips, Esperanza first tries to share her belief with Henry, Patience explains why she believes, and Henry argues that faith is selfish and foolish. Watch the clips, and explore the following questions:

- Which character do you identify with the most? Why?
- Why does Henry not believe?
- What reasons do some people in real life give for being skeptical? (*God isn't provable; some Christians have acted hypocritically; and so on.*)
- How would you respond to Esperanza's faith in the Christ image? How would you respond to Patience's argument? How would you respond to Henry's angry rant against faith?

Make sure each participant has a Bible, and have the group read Matthew 28:18–20 together. Explore the following questions:

- Did Esperanza and Patience follow Jesus' Great Commission from Matthew 28? Did they try to do it properly?
- How would you share the glory of God with someone like Henry?
- If Henry showed some interest in God, how would you teach him more?
- Why is it important to share your faith with people like Henry?

Depart

Invite the group members to name with thanksgiving all those who have supported them in faith and encouraged them in discipleship. Close the gathering with prayer.

Closing Prayer

O God, open our hearts, and do a new thing through each of us. We are grateful for our church—for all those called, gathered, and empowered through Christ. Help us to be your faithful disciples in all we say and do. In Christ's name. Amen.

Invite the participants to reconfirm their commitment to being Jesus' disciples by asking the following question and prompting the answer:

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

Group: I will, with God's help.¹

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



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.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations in this publication are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. Every effort has been made to trace copyrights on the materials included in this book. If any copyrighted material has nevertheless been included without permission and due acknowledgment, proper credit will be inserted in future printings after notice has been received.

© 2014 Witherspoon Press, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Louisville, KY. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced without the publisher's permission.

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:

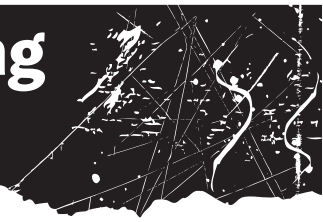
Will you be Christ’s faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love, to your life’s end?

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
prayer
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.