

Experiencing Discipleship



Teacher's Guide

Surveying the Source

Matt. 17:1–13; 18:1–4, 24; 28:19, 20; Mark 8:27–30; John 6:41–58.

Plotting the Course

The students will:

- ▶ Understand that Christianity is not just a set of beliefs, but a way of living one's life according to God's will.
- ▶ Learn how to live their lives in such a way that they can discern and practice

God's will for them.

- ▶ Know the importance of looking to Jesus as their example and source of strength as they go about living a life that pleases God.

Preparing to Lead

Would you trust an expert on China who couldn't order lunch in Beijing, or a personal fitness trainer who clutches their chest after only mild exertion? Clearly, whatever knowledge such people have hasn't made much of an impact on their own lives. And even in this age of more information on any given topic than a

single person can master, we want to see that what one knows has some effect on how one lives.

In the same way, Christianity is knowledge that changes the way we live our lives, or else it is mere pious noise. Christianity that changes lives is called discipleship.

Getting Started

A. Who or what is a disciple in a Christian sense? Most people—in Western culture anyway—regard being Christian as a good thing, but may not actually know what it means. Pass out the reproducible activity (p. 38) to the class members. Ask them which definition of Christian discipleship they think is true. Discuss each possible answer.

B. As Christians, we are to look to Je-

sus as our example, but it also helps to have people in our lives who model Christianity to us. Ask the students to name people who functioned or function for them as examples of Christianity. Why were they good examples? What specifically did their lives teach them about God's love and grace that they can use and pass on to others?

Delving Into the Word

A. In His time on earth, Jesus spoke a great deal about what it meant to follow Him, or to be a disciple. Give each of the following texts to a student and have them read it aloud. If there are a variety of Bible versions available, have each verse read from two or more versions to

bring out more aspects of the meaning: ●Matt. 18:3, 4; ●Matt. 28:19; ●Mark 8:34; ●John 6:53–57; ●John 13:34, 35.

Ask the students to share what these verses mean to them and how they might be specifically practiced in one's life. Also allow students to discuss items they

Materials

Bibles

might find difficult or confusing in these verses.

B. At first glance, it might appear that discipleship involves a heavy emphasis on doing things, something that could easily slide into a form of salvation by works. But in reality, discipleship requires changes in attitudes, priorities, and motives. These are not things we can do by ourselves.

Have the students read the following verses:

●John 6:53, 54: Discuss what it means to eat Jesus' flesh and drink His blood.

Not only are we being told that we have to literally make Jesus a part of us, we are being told so in a way that may be shocking to us and certainly was so to His original listeners. Maybe we are indirectly being told that following Jesus may require us to break with our established,

safe patterns of action and judgment.

●1 Corinthians 13: Paul lists all the things we could do as Christians, and then points out that they are all valueless without love.

Discuss if we can make ourselves feel love. If not, who can?

●Matthew 18:3, 4: Discuss the characteristics of a little child.

For an adult, it may involve forgetting what you think you know and allowing yourself to be retaught.

Discuss how we can be retaught, and and by whom.

●John 13:35: Jesus' disciples love one another.

Discuss why this is so difficult.

Also discuss how God's power can help us achieve this seemingly impossible goal that is necessary to discipleship.

Discussing the Ideas

1. How might the things Jesus wants us to do as His disciples conflict with what the world regards as correct and sensible?

2. What might be involved in making a disciple of someone who has accepted Christianity and joined a church?

3. Why is a vital personal devotional life necessary to discipleship?

4. How is the love Jesus says is a defin-

ing trait of His disciples different from what the world thinks of as love?

5. Jesus was an example for His disciples. How can we work to be good examples for others?

6. Discipleship is a life of action, yet the modern lifestyle tends to be one of passivity. How can we make active discipleship a habit in our lives?

Closing the Activity

Say: Jesus describes the life of discipleship as taking up a yoke (Matt. 11:28–30). And indeed, the word *disciple* is directly related to the word *discipline*, which isn't always a popular concept. Yet we are also promised that while it looks like a heavy burden, once we take it up, it will prove to be mysteriously light com-

pared to what we were carrying before. In fact, we may move through life with more grace and ease than ever.


Close with a prayer that God will help your class members to take up this light burden and carry it with such joy and gratitude that others will see them and want to take up this burden, too.

Alan Hecht, Takoma Park, Maryland, U.S.A.



A DISCIPLE IS:



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- Someone who is born to Christian parents and has not converted to another religion.
 - Someone who knows and believes the important Christian doctrines and can explain them.
 - Someone who is kind and honest.
 - Someone who sees Jesus as a good example for one's life.
 - Someone who accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior, and tries to find and do His will.