



# COMMUNITY MAKES DISCIPLES:

## What does it mean to follow Jesus?

### Facilitator's Guide

COMMUNITY

#### 🎯 OVERVIEW:

To become a rooted disciple of Jesus, you need to be discipled and eventually disciple others. How is being a disciple different from hanging out with other believers or going to church? What does it mean to be a disciple? This lesson focuses on the importance of discipleship and includes some biblical instruction on becoming a disciple of Jesus. Students will be asked to take intentional steps toward making discipleship an important part of their community.

#### ? OPENING QUESTIONS:

- Out of everyone you know, who are you most like (a parent, a sibling, a best friend)? What makes the two of you so similar?
- Who is someone you wish you were more like? What about that person do you wish you could imitate?

#### 💬 WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT:

Disciple. Do you know what that means? A disciple is someone who follows someone around who they want to be like. Not in a mob of middle schoolers swarming a pop star kind of way, but in a way where you're being sharpened by someone else. Think about the word "disciple." What does it sound like? It sounds like the word "discipline," doesn't it? There's actually something to that. Discipleship takes some effort; it takes some discipline. Discipleship is when you have an intentional relationship with someone who is helping you to systematically improve yourself. In a Christian context, discipleship is about doing the hard work of digging deep with other Christians to become a better follower of Jesus, a better disciple. And since Jesus isn't literally walking around the planet anymore, we have the church community and other Christ followers to teach us the ropes and help us follow Christ with our whole lives.

Now, this isn't an easy task. It's actually incredibly hard, but incredibly worth it. Note what Hebrews 10:24–25 says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Did you catch that? The NIV translation says we should "spur" each other "towards love and good deeds." A spur is a spiky piece of metal used to make a horse go faster. That's what discipleship does. It gets you on the right path, the path toward Jesus, and makes sure you get as far down it as you can.

Another great metaphor for discipleship is shared by Jesus in the book of John. As Jesus speaks about how he is the vine and we are the branches, try to untangle how that teaching relates to discipleship.

**Read:** John 15:1–17

**LEADER'S NOTE:** Discipleship is right at the center of what the church is about. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was something of an expert on discipleship, said it this way: "Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."<sup>1</sup> The church exists to follow Christ, and that's the task of discipleship.





### **Discuss:**

- How close should disciples be to the one they're following? Why?
- According to this passage, what is a major indicator that you're a true disciple of Jesus?
- What kind of fruit could you point to in your own life to show that you're Jesus' disciple?
- How do discipleship and community go together?

**LEADER'S NOTE:** In this passage, Christ is speaking to the 12 men who followed him on earth. It's a tough passage for students (or anyone) who may not be following Christ, or who may have prayed a salvific prayer but show no actions of following Christ. Regardless of how your church interprets this passage of Scripture, it is an opportunity to challenge these students to start following Christ now. Consider offering to go through a book. (A great option is *I Am a Disciple*, which includes mentor pages for you to walk through with a student. Find out more at [leadertreks.com/deep-discipleship](http://leadertreks.com/deep-discipleship).) Or, challenge them to find a mature Christ-follower to disciple them. Use this lesson as a chance to start leading students down the discipleship path. Don't let guilt or apathy prevent students from following Christ.

### **\* A SECOND LOOK:**

Have you ever noticed that, after you've spent a lot of time with your friends, you start to pick up their mannerisms? Maybe you've picked up certain words or phrases you never used before meeting them. Or perhaps someone's told you that you're just like your parent—not just how you look, but how you talk and act, too. There's no doubt that the more time you spend around someone, the more like them you become.

Now imagine that on a larger scale. What if you lived in a town that you couldn't get to by car or plane? The only way to get in or out is by walking, so this town doesn't get many visitors. You'd be around the exact same people your entire life, without much outside influence, so everyone would start to act alike and sound alike. That's exactly what happened in Cinque Terre, a stretch of five towns across the Italian Riviera (spanning only about seven miles total). Even though these towns are only a few miles apart, "each of the five villages comes with a distinct dialect and its own proud heritage." Think about that for a second. Imagine meeting someone from the next city or town over. Could you tell which city they were from, just by their accent? Probably not. You'd have to travel quite a distance for someone's accent to change. Not so in the five cities of Cinque Terre. Generation after generation, they've stayed in the same place around the same people. Now, each small town is so different from the others, they might as well be different countries!<sup>2</sup>

That's the basic idea behind discipleship—you hang around and learn from a person for so long that you start to act like them. Hopefully the person discipling you is someone worth imitating, someone who's made it a priority to become like Christ. That way, if you're becoming like them, you're actually becoming like Christ, too. And there's one more step to this chain. Jesus calls each of us to be disciples, but he also tells us to make disciples (Matt. 28:19). That's a weighty calling, but it's an important part of following Jesus. We should be disciple-making disciples!





Impression 2: What type of soft drink best describes this group member?

Examples:

- *Coca-Cola Classic—You're always yourself. Even when circumstances change, you stay the same.*
- *Mountain Dew—You have a ton of energy, you're excited about life, and you love the outdoors.*

Impression 3: Which Disney character best describes this group member?

Examples:

- *Jiminy Cricket—You're a voice of reason for your friends, always helping them do the right thing.*
- *Belle—You're intelligent, independent, and you love to read. You see the best in people, even if no one else does.*

<b>PART ONE: MY IMPRESSIONS</b>			
<b>GROUP MEMBERS</b>	<b>IMPRESSION 1</b> Candy	<b>IMPRESSION 2</b> Soft Drink	<b>IMPRESSION 3</b> Disney character

**PART TWO:** Once everyone's finished writing, have students go around the circle, telling one another what they came up with for each member. Again, don't let students give one-word answers. Have them explain why they chose the three items they did. Have students write down what other's chose for them. Hopefully, they will start to see a pattern in the impressions they make on other people.

<b>PART TWO: IMPRESSIONS ABOUT ME</b>			<b>NAME:</b> _____
<b>IMPRESSION 1</b> Candy	<b>IMPRESSION 2</b> Soft Drink	<b>IMPRESSION 3</b> Disney character	

**Discuss:**

- What did you think of the impressions other people had of you? Are there any you disagree with? Why or why not?
- Was it harder to think of impressions for the people you'd known forever or the ones you'd just met? Why?
- What people see in us reflects more than just ourselves—it reflects the people who've taught us and poured into us. Could the impressions people had of you also describe one of your parents, teachers, coaches, or mentors? If so, who?
- Out of all the impressions you received, choose your favorite. Could this impression also fit Jesus? Does your best impression reflect Jesus to others? Why or why not?



### ↓ APPLY IT:

Write down one way you are going to apply what you now know about being a part of a community that makes disciples. Think of something you can do this week.

#### **Be specific:**

What are you going to do?

When are you going to do it?

Is there someone who can keep you accountable?

**LEADER'S NOTE:** Whenever students make applications, challenge them to be specific. It's one thing to say, "I'm going to trust God more." The truth is, our students won't really know if they did this, or if they grew in trust over the week. It's another thing to say, "Every morning this week before I eat breakfast, I'm going to tell God that today is his and that I trust him, and I'm going to ask him to give me the strength to replace worries with trust." Challenge your students to answer the questions under the "Be Specific" section. You can even have them pair up, share their applications, and ask for accountability from their partner.

### 💬 THINK ABOUT IT:

"Just as a child picks up traits more or less simply by dwelling in the presence of her parent, so the Christian develops tenderheartedness, compassion, humility, forgiveness, joy, and hope through 'the fellowship of the Holy Spirit'—that is, by dwelling in the presence of God the Father and Jesus Christ his Son. And this means, to a very large extent, living in a community of serious believers." – Robert C. Roberts<sup>5</sup>

\*\*\*Any reference within this piece to Internet addresses of websites not under the administration of LeaderTreks is not to be taken as an endorsement of these websites by LeaderTreks; neither does LeaderTreks vouch for their content.

<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 59.

<sup>2</sup> Rick Steves, "The Enchanting Cinque Terre: Fiat-free Italy," *Ricksteves.Com*, accessed July 14, 2017, <https://www.ricksteves.com/watch-read-listen/read/articles/the-enchanting-cinque-terre-fiatfree-italy>.

<sup>3</sup> Robert C. Roberts, "Fruit of the Spirit," *Reformed Journal* 32, no. 10, (February 1987): 12.



**LIVE IT OUT: *Good Impressions***  
Each student needs a copy of both charts.

<b>PART ONE: MY IMPRESSIONS</b>			
<b>GROUP MEMBERS</b>	<b>IMPRESSION 1</b> Candy	<b>IMPRESSION 2</b> Soft Drink	<b>IMPRESSION 3</b> Disney character

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