



COMMUNITY MAKES DISCIPLES:

What does it mean to follow Jesus?

Student Guide

COMMUNITY

- 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

Answer:

- 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?

* **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!

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!

Answer:

- Is there someone in your life you'd call a mentor, someone who is discipling or could disciple you?
 - If so, do you think they were a disciple of someone in the past (or even right now)? How could you continue the chain of discipleship?
- If not, what are some steps you could take to find a mentor? What are some of the benefits of becoming a disciple of a mature Christ-follower?



↓ **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?

🗨️ **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





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

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

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