



# CREATING A CULTURE OF CALLING

## Intergenerational Faith Formation Program *Call to Follow Jesus*

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This program explores the dynamics of becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ: experiencing a personal call, following Jesus, and changing one's heart. Becoming a disciple is explored through the stories of New Testament disciples who accepted Jesus' call to follow him. Inspired by the New Testament disciples and the example of Jesus, participants discover what it means to follow Jesus today and how they can practically live out discipleship in their lives and homes.

### **Design**

(90-120 minutes)

Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

Part 1. All Ages Learning Experience: Jesus Calls People to Follow Him—New Testament Stories (20-30 minutes)

- Option A: "People Who Followed Jesus" Quiz Show - Large Group Option
- Option B: "People Who Followed Jesus" - Intergenerational Group Activity

Part 2. In Depth Learning Experience: Following Jesus Today (1 hour)

1. Families with Children Activity
2. Adolescent Activity
3. Adult Activity

Part 3. Sharing Learning Reflections (10-15 minutes)

Closing Prayer

## Group Formation

Organize people into intergenerational small groups of approximately eight people for the All Ages Learning Experience. Ask all members of the same family to sit together in these intergenerational groups. Each group should have as many of the following categories as possible: family (parents, children, teens), young adults, adults without children, and older adults. If members of the same family are intergenerational—children, teens, parents, and grandparents—keep them together in one group.

For the In Depth Learning Experience (Part 3) organize the participants into three types of table groups: family clusters of two or more families, groups of adolescents, and groups of adults.

## Opening Prayer Service

Set up a prayer table with symbols of Baptism: Bible, cross or crucifix, bowl of water and small white towel, bowl of oil, paschal (Easter) candle, white (baptismal) candle. Consider displaying icons, paintings, and/or statues of Jesus calling the disciples or Jesus with the disciples.

Light the paschal candle or a large candle to begin the prayer service.

### Gather

#### Opening Prayer

Come, Lord Jesus,  
startle us  
    with your presence, life-sustaining as air,  
to open our hearts  
    to praise you,  
to open our minds  
    to attend you,  
to open our spirits  
    to worship you,  
to open us  
    to live our lives  
        as authentically and boldly  
        as you lived yours.

Come, Lord Jesus,  
be with us  
    in our longing;  
come, stay with us  
    in our needing;  
come, go with us  
    in our doing;

come, struggle with us  
in our searching;  
come, rejoice with us  
in our loving.

Amen.

(Ted Loder. *Guerrillas of Grace*. San Diego, CA: Luramedia, 1984. p. 89)

### **Listen**

Call of the Disciples: John 1:35-42 or Mark 1:16-20

### **Respond**

Christ Jesus, you love us so much that you seek us out and personally call us to follow you.

Response: Give us the grace to follow you.

Christ Jesus, you call us to open our lives to God's love and will.

Response: Give us the grace to follow you.

Christ Jesus, you call us to shape our lives on the pattern of your own life.

Response: Give us the grace to follow you.

Christ Jesus, you call us to love and forgive, to serve those in need, and to proclaim your Good News.

Response: Give us the grace to follow you.

### **Closing Prayer**

Gracious God, we ask you to open our hearts and minds to the call of Jesus. We want to follow him on the path of discipleship, but it is a hard journey. Give us the courage to accept Jesus' invitation and to live our lives as he lived his. Inspire us to find ways to follow Jesus every day. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **Part 1. All Ages Learning Experience: Jesus Calls People to Follow Him—New Testament Stories**

(40 minutes)

The All Ages Learning Experience focuses on the stories of people in the New Testament whom Jesus called to follow him—getting the participants “inside the shoes” of real people who were called by Jesus. People will encounter Jesus through the lives of those in the New Testament who chose to follow him and then find out how their lives were changed because of their acceptance of his invitation to follow him. There are two options for engaging people in exploring the stories. The first option is designed for the entire group; the second option uses intergenerational small groups.

**Option A: “People Who Followed Jesus” Quiz Show (Large Group Option)**

OR

**Option B: “People Who Followed Jesus” Intergenerational Group Activity**

## Option A: “People Who Followed Jesus” Quiz Show (Large Group Option)

Handout: People Who Followed Jesus: Who Am I?

You are organizing a quiz show with New Testament disciples who followed Jesus. You will need a moderator for the quiz show and ten disciples from the New Testament. Give the disciples one New Testament person and the following Scripture passages to read. Participants should prepare using their own bibles.

1. Mary Magdalene: Matthew 27:55-61 and John 20:1-18
2. Matthew (Levi): Mark 2:13-17
3. Nicodemus: John 3:1-21 and John 19:38-42
4. Thomas: John 20:24-29
5. Peter: Matthew 4:18-22, Matthew 14:22-33, Mark 14:32-41, Mark 14:66-72, John 13:3-20, John 21:15-19, and Acts 2:14, 22-24, 32-33, 36, 37-42
6. Paul: Acts 9:1-30, Acts 26:2-23, and Acts 16:16-40
7. Zacchaeus: Luke 19:1-9
8. The Samaritan Woman: John 4:5-30, 39-42
9. Stephen: Acts 6:5-15 and Acts 7:54-60
10. Bartimaeus: Mark 10:46-52

Ask each disciple to become familiar with the Scripture passages about their New Testament person. On the Quiz Show they are going to be interviewed by the moderator, who will ask them the following questions:

- How did Jesus call you? How did you meet? Why did you meet?
- How were you “changed” when you chose to follow Jesus?
- How did you follow Jesus after you met him? How did you live your decision to follow Jesus? (If the story does not include lots of details about this, suggest ways you think that person would have followed Jesus.)
- What feelings did you have toward Jesus?

If the New Testament stories do not include all of the answers to the above questions, disciples should prepare a response in keeping with the New Testament disciple’s story, e.g., the ways a person may have lived out their decision to follow Jesus. Each disciple must keep his or her identity a secret because the participants are going to identify each of the people.

You may want to have gift prizes for the individuals or families who identify each disciple correctly.

### Activity

The moderator guides the Quiz Show using the following process:

Introduce the Quiz Show, using the words below or your own words.

Welcome to the “People Who Followed Jesus” Quiz Show. We are going to hear the moving stories of ten people who met Jesus and chose to follow him. We are going to hear about how they met Jesus and how he changed their lives. But, we are going to keep their identities a secret. Our studio audience is going to have to figure out the real identities of our ten New Testament disciples. So let’s begin.

Begin the Quiz Show with all of the New Testament disciples “on stage.” When each disciple is interviewed they should stand. Call them New Testament disciple #1, #2, and so forth. It is important to keep the person’s identity a secret. Keep the interviews moving. You should only spend about two minutes interviewing each person.

Interview each disciple using the following questions:

- How did Jesus call you? How did you meet? Why did you meet?
- How were you “changed” when you chose to follow Jesus?
- How did you follow Jesus after you met him? How did you live your decision to follow Jesus? (If the story does not include lots of details about this, suggest ways you think that person would have followed Jesus.)
- What feelings did you have toward Jesus?

Pause after each interview to give the participants an opportunity to identify the New Testament disciple and write his or her name on Handout #3. Families should work together to determine who the New Testament disciple is.

Reveal each New Testament disciple’s identity after you have interviewed the last person. Ask the disciple to stand and reveal his or her name. After the last person has revealed his or her name, check with the “audience” to see how well they did. Were there one or two disciples who “stumped” the audience? Give prizes for the individuals or families who identify each disciple correctly.

Conclude the activity by inviting the table groups to discuss the following questions as a group. Each person should share an answer to the first question before the participants discuss the second and third questions.

Write these questions on newsprint or create PowerPoint slides with the questions.

- Which New Testament disciple seemed the most interesting to you? Why?
- How were people changed when they met (encountered) Jesus and chose to follow him?
- What did it mean for them to follow Jesus?

## **Option B: “People Who Followed Jesus” Intergenerational Group Activity**

Resource: Bibles

There are ten New Testament disciples included in this activity. You can use all ten passages with families, but certain Scripture passages have been recommended for families. These are shorter

passages that will make it easier for children to read or for parents to read to their children. (You can also select two or three passages for Peter and include him in the family group.)

1. Mary Magdalene (recommend for families)
2. Matthew (Levi) (recommend for families)
3. Nicodemus
4. Thomas (recommend for families)
5. Peter (select 2-3 readings for families)
6. Paul
7. Zacchaeus (recommend for families)
8. The Samaritan Woman
9. Stephen
10. Bartimaeus (recommend for families)

Introduce the activity, using the words below or your own words.

Our first activity gets us “inside the shoes” of real people who were called by Jesus to follow him. We are going to encounter Jesus through the lives of ten people in the New Testament who chose to follow him and then find out how their lives were changed because of their acceptance of his invitation to follow him.

Guide the groups through the following process:

Ask each person in the intergenerational groups to select one sheet of paper with the name of a New Testament disciple and Scripture passage(s) that describe his or her relationship with Jesus. There are certain Scripture passages designated for families only. These are shorter passages that will make it easier for children to read or for parents to read to their children. Each family member should have their own New Testament disciple.

Explain that each person will read the designated Scripture passage(s) to gain information about their disciple. Distribute a large index card to each person. Explain that each person should write on the index card their answers to the questions for the person they have selected. Parents can write for children. Younger children can draw a picture of their person, illustrating the Scripture story. Provide each table with paper and crayons or markers.

Write these questions on newsprint or create PowerPoint slides with the questions.

- How did Jesus call you? How did you meet? Why did you meet?
- How were you “changed” when you chose to follow Jesus?
- How did you follow Jesus after you met him? (If the story does not include lots of details about this, suggest ways you think that person would have followed Jesus.)
- What feelings did you have toward Jesus?

Direct participants in the group to present their New Testament disciple, using their responses to the four questions or sharing their drawing. Participants should not reveal the identity of the person.

Encourage people to speak in the first person, literally becoming the character. After each presentation, the group should try to determine who the New Testament disciple is.

Conclude the activity by inviting the table groups to discuss the following questions as a group. Each person should share an answer to the first question before the participants discuss the second and third questions.

Write these questions on newsprint or create PowerPoint slides with the questions.

- Which New Testament disciple seemed the most interesting to you? Why?
- How were people changed when they met (encountered) Jesus and chose to follow him?
- What did it mean for them to follow Jesus?

## **Part 2. In Depth Learning Experience: Following Jesus Today**

(60 minutes)

### **Preparation**

- Have several Bibles or New Testaments on every table or in every group.
- Make copies of Handouts.
- For family activity plan: You will need large sheets of poster paper or newsprint, crayons, and markers for “We Follow Jesus” poster. You will also need light colored construction paper, glue, and scissors if you have families cut out footprints.
- For the adolescent activity plan: You will need large sheets of newsprint or poster paper, paper, colored markers, and creative arts materials for drawing.
- Write the essential instructions for each age group on newsprint or create a PowerPoint presentation with the instructions.
- Facilitators can guide the process, share Scripture passages, and give presentations to the entire group.

## **1. We Follow Jesus: Families with Children**

### **Introduction**

Jesus call us personally to follow him. We have experienced the stories of New Testament disciples who were called by Jesus and followed him. In this activity you will work together as a family to explore what it means to follow Jesus today by describing what a disciple believes, what a disciple feels, and how a disciple acts. For example:

- **Believes:** A disciple believes Jesus is the Son of God.
- **Feels:** A disciple experiences Jesus’ love and forgiveness.
- **Acts:** A disciple serves people in need.

### **Creative Activity**

Together with your children you are going to create a “We Follow Jesus” poster with footprints of family members. In each footprint you and the children are going to write one thing a disciple believes, feels, and does (acts). Each person in your family will take off his or her shoes and socks and outline

the shape of both feet on individual sheets of paper that you can cut out and glue on the poster or by outlining your feet right on the poster. Make sure that you have 12 footprints on the poster.

**Step 1.** As a family develop your own ideas for what a disciple believes, feels or does (acts). Record your answers on the worksheet.

**Step 2.** Think of what you have learned about following Jesus from the stories of the New Testament disciples. Try to identify what they believed, what they felt, or how they acted. You might want to read several stories from the opening activity of the session. Record your answers on the worksheet.

1. Mary Magdalene: Matthew 27:55-61 and John 20:1-18
2. Matthew (Levi): Mark 2:13-17
3. Nicodemus: John 3:1-21 and John 19:38-42
4. Thomas: John 20:24-29
5. Peter: Matthew 4:18-22, Matthew 14:22-33, Mark 14:32-41, Mark 14:66-72, John 13:3-20, John 21:15-19, and Acts 2:14, 22-24, 32-33, 36, 37-42
6. Paul: Acts 9:1-30, Acts 26:2-23, and Acts 16:16-40
7. Zacchaeus: Luke 19:1-9
8. The Samaritan Woman: John 4:5-30, 39-42
9. Stephen: Acts 6:5-15 and Acts 7:54-60
10. Bartimaeus: Mark 10:46-52

**Step 3.** Read the following Scripture passage from the Gospel of Luke in which announces his mission. It provides insights into what was important for Jesus and those who follow him. Using this passage discuss as a family what would you add to the ideas on your worksheet.

*When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:*

*'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'*

*And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'* (Luke 4:16-21)

**Step 4.** Review your list of what disciples believe, what they feel, or how they act. Is there anything missing? Discuss the following questions to see if there is anything you would add to your list. The Scripture passages are only examples. You may want to read one or two stories together as family.

- If you saw Jesus in action and heard him teach, what would you believe about Jesus? (Example: Matthew 15:13-17)
- If you were healed or forgiven by Jesus, what would you believe about him? (Example: John 9:1-7, 35-38 or John 8:1-11)
- If you were healed or forgiven by Jesus, what would you feel?
- If you saw Jesus serving people in need, what would he say to you about serving others? (Example: Matthew 25: 34-40 and John 13:12-16)
- If you heard Jesus telling people about relying on God, what would he say? (Example: Luke 1-13)

**Step 5.** Create your twelve footprints by selecting four things disciples believe about Jesus, four things disciples feel about Jesus, and four things that disciples do (act). Write or draw one characteristic in each footprint. (For small feet you can write the characteristic around the foot.) On the top or in the center of the poster, write, “We Follow Jesus,” in large print.

**Step 6.** Share your “We Follow Jesus” poster with other families at your table or nearby tables when everyone is done.

Take your poster home and hang it on a wall to remind everyone of how you are following Jesus.

### **Concluding Reflections**

When you have finished your creative projects and shared it with the families at your table, discuss the following questions as a table group:

- What did you learn about following Jesus from this activity?
- When you think about what you wrote on your poster about following Jesus, where does your family feel affirmed and where is your family challenged to grow?
- What can your family start doing now to follow Jesus more faithfully?

## **2. Being a Disciple Today (Adolescents)**

### **Introduction**

Explain to the group that:

Jesus call us personally to follow him. We have experienced the stories of New Testament disciples who were called by Jesus and followed him. In this activity you will explore what it means to follow Jesus today by creating a job description for a disciple. Your mission will be to develop a job description for disciples today using what you already know and what you are learning in this session.

Your job description will have three components: what a disciple believes, what a disciple feels, and how a disciple acts. For example:

- Believes: A disciple believes Jesus is the Son of God.
- Feels: A disciple experiences Jesus' love and forgiveness.
- Acts: A disciple serves people in need.

Divide your group into three work groups, one for each component: **believes, feels, and acts**. Each group will focus on only one aspect of the job description. Use the following steps to develop your job description.

### Develop a Job Description for a Disciple Today

**Step 1.** Ask the young people to develop their own your own ideas, as a group, for what it means to be a disciple today. Have them focus on their part of the disciples job description: **believes, feels** or **acts**. Have each group record the answers on a sheet of newsprint or individual post-it notes.

**Optional.** Think of what you have learned about following Jesus from the stories of the New Testament disciples. Try to identify what they believed, what they felt, or how they acted. Record your answers on the worksheet.

- Mary Magdalene: Matthew 27:55-61 and John 20:1-18
- Matthew (Levi): Mark 2:13-17
- Nicodemus: John 3:1-21 and John 19:38-42
- Thomas: John 20:24-29
- Peter: Matthew 4:18-22, Matthew 14:22-33, Mark 14:32-41, Mark 14:66-72, John 13:3-20, John 21:15-19, and Acts 2:14, 22-24, 32-33, 36, 37-42
- Paul: Acts 9:1-30, Acts 26:2-23, and Acts 16.16-40
- Zacchaeus: Luke 19:1-9
- The Samaritan Woman: John 4:5-30, 39-42
- Stephen: Acts 6:5-15 and Acts 7:54-60
- Bartimaeus: Mark 10:46-52

**Step 2.** Read the following Scripture passage from the Gospel of Luke in which announces his mission to the group. It provides insights into what was important for Jesus and those who follow him. You may want to make a copy of the passage (or put it on a PowerPoint slide or have Bibles available for the group).

Ask each group to review their ideas for the discipleship job description and add new ideas from the Scripture reading.

*When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:*

*'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim release to captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'*

*And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'*  
(Luke 4:16-21)

**Step 3.** Introduce the questions and Scripture passages below and have the young people read the passages and determine if there are new ideas they want to add to what disciples believe, what they feel, or how they act. You may want to make a copy of the passage (or put it on a PowerPoint slide or have Bibles available for the group). The Scripture passages are only examples; you may want to add other passages.

- Believe: What did the disciples believe about Jesus? (See Matthew 15:13-17)
- Believe: What did those who were healed by Jesus believe about him? (See John 9:1-7, 35-38)
- Believe: What did those who were forgiven by Jesus believe about him? (See John 8:1-11)
  
- Feel: What did those who were forgiven or healed by Jesus feel?
- Feel: What were the disciples feeling after Jesus died? after Jesus appeared to them?
- Feel: What did the disciples feel during times of trouble? (See Matthew 8:23-27)
  
- Act: What did Jesus send out the twelve apostles to do? (See Matthew 10:1-15)
- Act: What did Jesus say about serving others? (See Matthew 25: 34-40 and John 13:12-16)
- Act: What did Jesus say about relying on God? (See Luke 1-13)

**Step 4.** Have each group compile all of the results into one report that they are going to present to the whole group. As each group presents their report, create a newsprint sheet with three columns—Believes, Feels, Acts—and write the results from each group work on this one newsprint sheet. After all of the groups have presented, invite the whole group to add other ideas to the list.

### **Optional Activity**

Using your job description for a disciple, develop a creative project that “recruits” people to follow Jesus today. Select an audience for your presentation. You can recruit an all ages audience or target families with children, teenagers, young adults, or adults. Develop a “recruitment campaign” that will get people’s attention, and invite them to follow Jesus today.

Here are several ways that your group can create a presentation. Ask the group to identify other formats for the advertisement.

- Write your job description in the form of a song. Write an original song, such as rap song, or take a popular song and re-write it with new lyrics.
- Create a radio advertisement.
- Create a Facebook or Google ad.

- Create a visual advertisement to recruit people to follow Jesus. Think of the type of media that people you are targeting read or view: magazines, posters, billboards, radio, TV, web sites, and so on.
- Create artwork that illustrates the job description of a disciple today. Artwork can take many forms, such as drawing pictures or symbols or using magazine photos to represent what a disciple today believes and feels and how a disciple acts.

## Concluding Reflections

When you have finished your creative projects, discuss the following questions:

- What did you emphasize in your job description?
- What did you learn about following Jesus from this activity?
- When you think about the “job description” for a disciple today, where do you feel affirmed and where are you challenged to grow?

## 3. Following Jesus Today (Adults)

Organize the adults into small groups. Guide the adults through the learning activities as outlined below. Write the essential instructions on newsprint or create a PowerPoint presentation with the instructions. There is a handout, “Following Jesus Today,” that guides the adults through the activities.

### Part 1. Our Experiences of Being Called

#### Personal Reflection

Throughout our lives each of us have experiences of being called – into a new relationship, to a new job, to a new project or activity. Take a moment to reflect personally on one experience of being called

Think of a time in your life when you experienced being called:

- What were you called to?
- What was involved?
- What did it require of you?

#### Group Sharing

Share your reflections with your group. This is a storytelling experience, so give each person an opportunity to share without discussion or comment.

### Part 2. A Personal Call to Follow Jesus

#### Reflections on Being Called by Jesus

*As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers,*

*James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. (Matthew 4:18-22)*

“This Gospel story (of the calling of the disciples) makes it clear that being a disciple of Jesus is not a career choice. It is a personal call. As in the case of the fishermen of Galilee, it can come unexpectedly into our lives and completely disrupt what we normally do. For others it can be a more gradual process, a slow awakening to the meaning of the Gospel for our lives. In every instance the call to follow Jesus is a gift of God, a ‘grace’ in the full sense of the term. It is meant to reach down into the very depths of our being and affect every aspect of our life.

“When we are called by someone we can either fall silent and turn away, or we can respond. The personal categories of call and response are important when considering the implications of Christian discipleship. Following Jesus does not entail only one aspect of our life; being a disciple touches everything about us—our values, our choices, our resources, our dreams. Therefore, we can expect changes and challenges once the call to be a disciple of Jesus has been heard and if we choose to respond to it.” (Donald Senior, “Following Jesus: Discipleship Today”)

### **Personal Reflection**

Think about your call to follow Jesus:

- How were you called to follow Jesus? Was it a gradual process, a slow awakening, or an unexpected, almost sudden, discovery that you were being called?

### **Group Sharing**

Share several reflections about being called by Jesus with your group.

## **Part 3. Becoming a Disciple**

### **Reflections on Becoming a Disciple**

*Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.*

*When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:*

*‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’*

*And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’ (Luke 4:14-21)*

“Discipleship involves imitating the pattern of Jesus’ life by openness to God’s will in the service of others. This gets at the heart of the matter. The intrinsic meaning of discipleship is the notion of “following”; the disciple shapes his or her life on that of the master or mentor. “Follow me”—those two words from the Gospel story distill the essence of Christian life.

“Obviously “following” or “imitating” Jesus does not mean simply copying the surface details of his life, such as wearing first century garb or becoming an itinerant preacher. Imitating Jesus means that Christians are to shape their own lives in the pattern of Jesus. This is no simple process nor is there only one way of expressing the pattern of Christ’s life in our own. Here is where the authentic disciple becomes a true learner by constantly reflecting on the teaching and example of Jesus and by trying to see their meaning in our everyday lives.

Jesus announced the nearness of God’s reign in which the gifts of creation are not exploited but revered and shared, where human beings are treated as children of God, where oppression and injustice are expunged, where the sick are healed, where the disabled are not excluded but have full access to the community, where those pushed to the margins are drawn into the heart of the community, where enmity and violence are replaced by reconciliation and love. The Gospels illustrate that the reign of God was not some romantic utopian ideal for Jesus or beautiful words spoken without cost but rather something he embodied in his own life and mission. What Jesus proclaims by word, he enacts in his ministry.

Each of the evangelists portrays a Jesus consumed with compassion, a tireless healer who was willing to break social and religious taboos to carry out his mission. The sick and dispossessed were drawn to him like a magnet and several times the Gospels describe compelling scenes as scores of the sick stream toward Jesus seeking to be healed. Jesus was not afraid to risk his own reputation—and ultimately his own safety—in order to affirm the dignity of the marginalized and to draw them into the center of his community. He invited the hated tax collector Levi to be a disciple and welcomed the bold affection of a public sinner in Simon’s house. The detested Samaritans become the heroes of his stories. He included women among his disciples in an age and culture when women had no public status. Nor did Jesus fear to meet and even praise Gentiles who were regarded as enemies of his people.

In what he said and what he did Jesus embodied the values of God’s Reign. “Following Jesus” means absorbing that same inclusive, compassionate, and just vision of the human family. It would surely be empty religious rhetoric if the ministry of Jesus were construed solely in private, personal terms. Following the will of Jesus, without fail, leads to the hard realities of social, economic, and political justice.

Consider the Gospel of Luke. Jesus is portrayed as a prophet who challenges the community of Israel, particularly the rich and powerful, to remember their covenant with God, a covenant calling for the sharing of resources with the poor and defenseless. Like the great prophets before him, Jesus’ challenge was disturbing and met fierce, death-dealing opposition. Jesus’ death on the cross is the ultimate sign of his message: a life poured out in love for others. It is also the sign that looms ahead in every disciple’s journey: following Jesus is not without cost. The way of

discipleship can become the way of the cross.” (Donald Senior, “Following Jesus: Discipleship Today”)

### **Personal Reflection**

If you had to develop a “job description” for a disciple of Jesus Christ today, what would you include in this job description? Complete the sentence: “A disciple is someone who . . .”

### **Group Activity**

Together as a group, share your reflections on discipleship today and then create a summary report that reflects what your group believes it means to be a disciple today.

## **Part 4. A Change of Heart**

“The compelling beauty of the reign of God and the challenge it poses for many of our values and assumptions lead to another crucial dimension of discipleship. We are told that the disciples left everything—family members, hired hands, home, boats, livelihood—and followed Jesus. Jesus himself declared, “The reign of God is at hand! Reform your lives and believe in the Gospel” (Mk 1:15). The Gospel assumes that becoming a disciple of Jesus and attempting to live by the values of God’s reign will mean changes in the way we think and act. It will mean “repentance.” The Greek term used for this in the Gospel is *metanoia*. Literally it means a “change of mind” or “change of perspective.” That is an apt description of what has to happen if the Gospel is to take root in our lives. We need to change our perspective. Not “perspective” in a superficial sense but a change in our entire view of things, looking at reality through the values and vision of human life expressed in the Gospel.” (Donald Senior, “Following Jesus: Discipleship Today”)

### **Personal Reflection**

When you think about the “job description” for a disciple today, where do you feel affirmed and where are you challenged to grow, i.e., “change your heart”?

### **Group Sharing**

Share several reflections about the challenges you face to grow as a disciple.

## **Part 3. Sharing Learning Reflections**

The whole group sharing experience provides an opportunity for each age group to share something they have learned with the entire group. Here are several suggestions for sharing from each age group:

- Families: Ask families to share their “We Follow Jesus” poster. Children and parents can process around the room holding their posters high so that everyone can see them.
- Adolescents: Ask several adolescent groups to share their creative projects for recruiting people to follow Jesus.
- Adults: Ask several adult groups to share their job descriptions for being a disciple today.

Ask the participants to rejoin their intergenerational groups from the All Ages Learning Experience to share their concluding reflections on the session.

Present the following information using the words below or your own words:

Think of everything we have done in this session to understand what it means to follow Jesus today. To help us take our learning from this session and live in our lives and homes reflect on the following questions and share your thoughts with your group.

- What is the most important “lesson” you have learned about following Jesus?
- How can you as an individual and as family grow follow Jesus more faithfully in the coming weeks? Think of practical things that you can start doing now.

Invite participants to take several minutes for small group sharing.

## Closing Prayer

*Jesus, you call to our hearts: “Leave anything that holds you back from deeper love. Come follow me, again and again.” Grant us the courage to leave behind whatever keeps us from you and to trust you with our lives. May our heart’s connection with you be so strong and true that we will daily risk the road of following in your footsteps. Keep us open to the adventure of life where we meet you day by day. Remind us often of our inner goodness. Help us to believe that you look upon us with love. Thank you for the call to be your disciple. Amen.*

(Joyce Rupp. *Out of the Ordinary*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2000. p. 139)

# People Who Followed Jesus: Who Am I?

New Testament Person #1 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #2 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #3 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #4 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #5 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #6 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #7 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #8 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #9 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #10 \_\_\_\_\_

## Reflection Questions

- Which person seemed the most interesting to you? Why?
- How were people changed when they met Jesus?
- What did it mean for them to follow Jesus?

# People Who Followed Jesus: Who Am I? (Family Version)

New Testament Person #1 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #2 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #3 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #4 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #5 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #6 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #7 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #8 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #9 \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament Person #10 \_\_\_\_\_

Select a person to match with the Scripture reading:

Mary Magdalene, Matthew (Levi), Nicodemus, Thomas, Peter, Paul, Zacchaeus, Samaritan Woman, Stephen, Bartimaeus.

## Reflection Questions

- Which person seemed the most interesting to you? Why?
- How were people changed when they met Jesus?
- What did it mean for them to follow Jesus?

# Following Jesus Today

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## Part 1. Our Experiences of Being Called

### Personal Reflection

Throughout our lives each of us have experiences of being called – into a new relationship, to a new job, to a new project or activity. Take a moment to reflect personally on one experience of being called

Think of a time in your life when you experienced being called:

- What were you called to?
- What was involved?
- What did it require of you?

### Group Sharing

Share your reflections with your group. This is a storytelling experience, so give each person an opportunity to share without discussion or comment.

## Part 2. A Personal Call to Follow Jesus

### Reflections on Being Called by Jesus

*As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. (Matthew 4:18-22)*

“This Gospel story (of the calling of the disciples) makes it clear that being a disciple of Jesus is not a career choice. It is a personal call. As in the case of the fishermen of Galilee, it can come unexpectedly into our lives and completely disrupt what we normally do. For others it can be a more gradual process, a slow awakening to the meaning of the Gospel for our lives. In every instance the call to follow Jesus is a gift of God, a ‘grace’ in the full sense of the term. It is meant to reach down into the very depths of our being and affect every aspect of our life.

“When we are called by someone we can either fall silent and turn away, or we can respond. The personal categories of call and response are important when considering the implications of Christian discipleship. Following Jesus does not entail only one aspect of our life; being a disciple touches everything about us—our values, our choices, our resources, our dreams. Therefore, we can expect changes and challenges once the call to be a disciple of Jesus has been heard and if we choose to respond to it.” (Donald Senior, “Following Jesus: Discipleship Today”)

## Personal Reflection

Think about your call to follow Jesus:

- How were you called to follow Jesus? Was it a gradual process, a slow awakening, or an unexpected, almost sudden, discovery that you were being called?

## Group Sharing

Share several reflections about being called by Jesus with your group.

## Part 3. Becoming a Disciple

### Reflections on Becoming a Disciple

*Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.*

*When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:*

*‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’*

*And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’*

(Luke 4:14-21)

“Discipleship involves imitating the pattern of Jesus’ life by openness to God’s will in the service of others. This gets at the heart of the matter. The intrinsic meaning of discipleship is the notion of “following”; the disciple shapes his or her life on that of the master or mentor. “Follow me”— those two words from the Gospel story distill the essence of Christian life.

“Obviously “following” or “imitating” Jesus does not mean simply copying the surface details of his life, such as wearing first century garb or becoming an itinerant preacher. Imitating Jesus means that Christians are to shape their own lives in the pattern of Jesus. This is no simple process nor is there only one way of expressing the pattern of Christ’s life in our own. Here is where the authentic disciple becomes a true learner by constantly reflecting on the teaching and example of Jesus and by trying to see their meaning in our everyday lives.

“Jesus announced the nearness of God’s reign in which the gifts of creation are not exploited but revered and shared, where human beings are treated as children of God, where oppression and injustice are expunged, where the sick are healed, where the disabled are not excluded but have full access to the community, where those pushed to the margins are drawn into the heart of the community, where enmity and violence are replaced by reconciliation and love. The Gospels illustrate that the reign of God was not some romantic utopian ideal for Jesus or beautiful words spoken without cost but rather something he embodied in his own life and mission. What Jesus proclaims by word, he enacts in his ministry.

“Each of the evangelists portrays a Jesus consumed with compassion, a tireless healer who was willing to break social and religious taboos to carry out his mission. The sick and dispossessed were drawn to him like a magnet and several times the Gospels describe compelling scenes as scores of the sick stream toward Jesus seeking to be healed. Jesus was not afraid to risk his own reputation—and ultimately his own safety—in order to affirm the dignity of the marginalized and to draw them into the center of his community. He invited the hated tax collector Levi to be a disciple and welcomed the bold affection of a public sinner in Simon’s house. The detested Samaritans become the heroes of his stories. He included women among his disciples in an age and culture when women had no public status. Nor did Jesus fear to meet and even praise Gentiles who were regarded as enemies of his people.

“In what he said and what he did Jesus embodied the values of God’s Reign. “Following Jesus” means absorbing that same inclusive, compassionate, and just vision of the human family. It would surely be empty religious rhetoric if the ministry of Jesus were construed solely in private, personal terms. Following the will of Jesus, without fail, leads to the hard realities of social, economic, and political justice.

“Consider the Gospel of Luke. Jesus is portrayed as a prophet who challenges the community of Israel, particularly the rich and powerful, to remember their covenant with God, a covenant calling for the sharing of resources with the poor and defenseless. Like the great prophets before him, Jesus’ challenge was disturbing and met fierce, death-dealing opposition. Jesus’ death on the cross is the ultimate sign of his message: a life poured out in love for others. It is also the sign that looms ahead in every disciple’s journey: following Jesus is not without cost. The way of discipleship can become the way of the cross.” (Donald Senior, “Following Jesus: Discipleship Today”)

### **Personal Reflection**

If you had to develop a “job description” for a disciple of Jesus Christ today, what would you include in this job description? Complete the following sentence:

A disciple is someone who . . .

### **Group Activity**

Together as a group, share your reflections on discipleship today and then create a summary report that reflects what your group believes it means to be a disciple today.

## Part 4. A Change of Heart

“The compelling beauty of the reign of God and the challenge it poses for many of our values and assumptions lead to another crucial dimension of discipleship. We are told that the disciples left everything—family members, hired hands, home, boats, livelihood—and followed Jesus. Jesus himself declared, “The reign of God is at hand! Reform your lives and believe in the Gospel” (Mk 1:15). The Gospel assumes that becoming a disciple of Jesus and attempting to live by the values of God’s reign will mean changes in the way we think and act. It will mean “repentance.” The Greek term used for this in the Gospel is *metanoia*. Literally it means a “change of mind” or “change of perspective.” That is an apt description of what has to happen if the Gospel is to take root in our lives. We need to change our perspective. Not “perspective” in a superficial sense but a change in our entire view of things, looking at reality through the values and vision of human life expressed in the Gospel.” (Donald Senior, “Following Jesus: Discipleship Today”)

### Personal Reflection

When you think about the “job description” for a disciple today, where do you feel affirmed and where are you challenged to grow, i.e., “change your heart”?

### Group Sharing

Share several reflections about the challenges you face to grow as a disciple.