



The Journey

LEADERS GUIDE
VINEYARD YOUTH CURRICULUM

vineyardyouth

Week 1: Followers



Summary

We are all followers in one way or another. But what does it mean to be a follower of Jesus? Following Jesus means more than simply calling yourself a Christian, it means modeling your life after his. This often involves sacrifice. Jesus provides us with the perfect model for us to imitate, and as we imitate Christ, we can then provide others with an example to follow. Discipleship is the journey of a lifetime, and there is no better time to get started on that journey than today.

Soul Care

Before you start teaching today, take a moment to consider 1 John 3:2, "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" Remember today that before you are a leader, before you are a pastor, before you are a teacher...you are a child of God. You are more than what you do. You are who God says you are. Allow God to remind you of his love for you. No matter how your group is doing, God is proud of you, loves you, supports you, and has your back.

Intro

Followers

Time

5 minutes

Read

“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.’” – Matthew 16:24

Ask

Do you follow any sports teams, players, musicians or celebrities on social media or in the news? What does it mean to you to be a follower of someone else?

Teach

Everyone follows. Whether it's sports, music, fashion, movies, or trends, each of us is a follower in one way or another. Maybe you even have others following you on social media or through your influence.

When Jesus walked the earth, he called people to come and follow him, and many did. Those that followed Jesus came to be known by a special word, one that you've probably heard before: Disciples.

But what does it mean to be a disciple? And what does it look like specifically to be a disciple of Jesus? Let's see what Jesus has to say about it.

Point 1**Following Jesus****Time**

10 minutes

Read

“If you love me, keep my commands.” – John 14:15

Teach

To follow someone as a Disciple means exactly that – to be a follower, not only in one way, but in every area of life. A disciple is someone who follows the leadership and example of the one they are following in the way they speak, work, think, behave, and interact with others.

For the first disciples, becoming a follower of Jesus wasn't an easy decision. It meant leaving behind many comforts and securities and putting their total reliance on him to lead them. Today followers of Jesus Christ often call themselves “Christians,” meaning that we are those that try to live as little versions of Jesus himself in all that we do.

Calling yourself a Christian might seem easy. But living as a Christian isn't. Just like for the first disciples, representing Jesus in our culture today can involve sacrifice and ridicule. What would you be willing to give up or go through in order to follow Jesus?

Discuss

Have you ever had to give something up to follow Jesus? Do you find it easy or hard to keep the commands of Jesus? How has God helped you to learn to follow?

Point 2

Imitators

Time

10 minutes

Read

*“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”
– Ephesians 5:1-2*

Teach

Living as a disciple of Jesus means that we are called to copy or “imitate” his life and teachings in our own lives and actions. Like the number one fan of a musician or celebrity might try to talk, dress, or perform in the style of their idol, a disciple of Jesus tries to behave as Jesus would day to day.

Imitating Christ doesn’t only mean trying to match our behavior to his, it also means learning from his teachings. We find these teachings recorded for us in the four Gospel accounts, which we can read, study, and apply to our lives.

Applying Jesus’ teachings and example in the real world can be difficult at times, when our shortcomings or those of people around us get in the way. But there are also times that we get to experience the rewards of learning to model our lives after the greatest example who ever lived.

Discuss

How have you tried to imitate Jesus lately? How has it been difficult? What positive results have you gotten to enjoy?

Sum Up

Which Kingdom Will You Serve?

Time

10 minutes

Read

“Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” – Deuteronomy 6:5

Teach

Discipleship doesn't happen overnight. It's a process, one that takes time and perseverance. Unlike other kinds of learning – high school, sports, college, etc – there isn't any point in this life at which we find that we have graduated, and can't grow any more. Living as a disciple of Jesus is a lifelong journey, and as we follow that path, we find in many ways that we are slowly becoming more like him.

All of us, in one way or another, follow others. The question isn't whether or not you will be a disciple, but what kind of disciple will you be? Now, when you are first starting out on this journey, is an opportunity to choose to be the kind of disciple who follows Jesus with all your heart and mind, and if you do, one day you may find yourself living the kind of victorious life that he lived, and experience the joy of walking in his footsteps as a true disciple.

Act

Are you ready to make a commitment to be a disciple of Jesus? In what specific ways can you walk that out this week?

Pray

Let's begin by giving those areas over to God in prayer right now.

Week 2: Spiritual Disciplines



Summary

Discipline is a difficult word, but when we begin to understand what it means for our lives, we can discover that in it is the power to be transformed, one day at a time. How does this happen? It starts with habits, small daily choices that slowly over time form themselves into our character. By setting aside time to spend with God each day we can engage with the Holy Spirit's work in transforming us into His image.

Soul Care

Before you talk about spiritual disciplines, let's take a moment to meditate on this verse from Matthew 6:6, "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." Today, before you get with your students, make some space in your life to be alone with God. Invite him to speak to you, to fill your heart, and to bring peace and purpose to you.

Intro

Spiritual Disciplines

Time

5 minutes

Read

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize." – 1 Corinthians 9:24

Ask

Have you ever been involved in an activity that took training and practice to prepare for? How did practice help you succeed?

Teach

Getting good – good at anything – takes practice. Whether it's training for a sport or competition, playing in a band or orchestra, performing in a theater production, etc, if you want to do anything well, you've got to do the work to get there. And that takes discipline.

The word "discipline" probably isn't anyone's favorite word. It can sound difficult and boring or even painful. But when we learn what discipline is all about, we can find that there's so much more there to unlock, and discipline is the key to unlocking all that power and potential that lives inside of you!

Point 1

Transformation

Time

10 minutes

Read

“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” – 1 Corinthians 9:25-27

Teach

As disciples of Jesus our goal is eventually to be transformed to become like him. But how does that happen? You’ve probably heard the expression: “Actions speak louder than words.” Over time repeated actions develop into habits, and habits are what make us into who we are. Habits are hard to form at first, and that’s where discipline comes in

Inside the word “discipline” we can find the word “disciple.” If a disciple is someone who follows in the footsteps of their teacher, disciplines are the steps we take along that path. By regularly practicing certain disciplines we can train our minds and bodies until habits are formed. Once formed, actions that once were difficult at first become easier and more natural, as who we are is slowly changed from the inside out into the person we want to be. That’s the transforming power of discipline!

Discuss

What are some daily habits – good or bad – that you have? What repeated actions formed those habits? What is a new habit you’d like to form or an old one you’d like to change?

Point 2

Formational Habits

Time

10 minutes

Read

“Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God.” – Daniel 6:10

Teach

Spiritual disciplines are actions that we can take on a daily basis to build habits that will begin to help us become more like Jesus. Some examples of spiritual disciplines might include prayer, fasting, meditation, study, serving, and many more. Later in the year we'll talk more about specific spiritual disciplines and how you can make them a part of your daily life.

When you're just getting started down this path of transformation, we can begin by simply thinking of it as taking time to spend with God on a daily basis. It might look like starting a Bible reading plan, or listening to worship music on the bus to school in the morning, or taking time to pray before bed each night.

Whatever your time with God looks like, the key is to make it a regular part of your life, and if you stick to it, soon you will these habits becoming easier and easier, and time with God won't be a chore, but something to look forward to, an opportunity to find peace throughout the day.

Discuss

How often do you spend time with God? What does spending time with God look like for you? How can you make time to spend with God this week?

Sum Up

Disciples for Life

Time

10 minutes

Read

*“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” –
1 Corinthians 11:1*

Teach

As you are building habits through spiritual disciplines, it can be helpful to find someone to walk with you. Having a partner or mentor can help keep you accountable each week, and add fun to the journey as you travel together. Try joining a Bible Study group or start your own, ask a friend to pray with you during lunch, find a mentor who can take you along to serve in the community or at church.

By using the keys of spiritual disciplines, you are unlocking the power to change who you are into whoever you want to be. That’s pretty amazing! Remember that you can always look to Jesus as the one who both the one whose example we are following and the one who ultimately is doing the transforming in us. With time and discipline, someday we will find that his transforming work in us has brought us farther than we could have imagined when we started, one daily step at a time.

Act

Make a plan to engage in a time of daily spiritual disciplines, either on your own or with a friend or mentor this week.

Pray

For diligence in putting these disciplines into action and insight into how and when to spend time with God during the busyness of daily life.

Week 3: Everybody Gets to Play



Summary

In the Vineyard we have a slogan: everybody gets to play. In this slogan we find a value for teamwork, the same value that Jesus demonstrated for us when he called, equipped, and sent out the first disciples. A great leader is someone who doesn't just do everything for the team, but instead empowers the entire team to be victorious. Each of us has been given specific gifts and talents which we can discover as we find our place in the body of Christ, and leaders whose job it is to help us to do so, and to equip us to succeed in our task.

Soul Care

Let's take a moment before we start this lesson and contemplate with gratitude how God has used us. Often in ministry we can just go from one event to the next, one meeting to the next, and one conversation to the next without really appreciating the gift that God has given us. Can you believe that God *let's* you be part of his work on this earth? It is truly amazing. Take some time to thank him. Sit with your gratitude for a moment, and appreciate the gift of working with teens that God has given you.

Intro

Everybody Gets to Play

Time

5 minutes

Read

“What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.” – 1 Corinthians 14:26

Ask

Have you ever played a team sport? What about playing on a team was hard to learn at first?

Teach

Choosing to become a disciple of Jesus is a decision that each person makes for themselves, and your relationship with Jesus is yours alone. But the rest of the journey of walking as a disciple isn't meant to be lonely, it's meant to be traveled together!

Discipleship is a team sport, one that requires working with other disciples in order to grow and for the team to win. It's a game where no one is left sitting on the bench to watch. In the Vineyard we have a saying: “Everybody gets to play.” But what exactly does that mean and how do we support each other as disciples of Jesus? Let's take a look.

Point 1

Teamwork

Time

10 minutes

Read

“Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’”– Matthew 9:35-38

Teach

In sports we often look to the superstar players as the ones to cheer for and idolize. And while these players often lead the way to victory, in reality no single player is responsible for carrying the team, instead often the greatest players are the ones that empower the rest of the team to rise to their highest potential.

This was the example that Jesus set for his disciples. Instead of relying on his superstar status to handle everything himself, Jesus gathered a team of disciples, teaching and empowering them. Then when they were ready he gave them opportunities to try for themselves, and soon they too were doing the same works that Jesus did!

We too are called to follow the example of Jesus, and then to teach and empower others to do the same.

Discuss

What are some advantages of working as a team over trying to do everything yourself? Why do you think God wants us to learn to work together?

Point 2

Playing Your Position

Time

10 minutes

Read

“But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable... Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”
– 1 Corinthians 12:18-22,27

Teach

On an effective team each player knows his or her position and part to play. Each one is different and it is essential that the players play their own part and allow others to do the same. As disciples, each of us has been specially designed for certain tasks and with special talents and giftings. It’s important that we start to discover what our own giftings are so that we can begin to play our part and strengthen the team!

Sometimes we can be tempted to compare ourselves to others and begin to doubt our value if we don’t excel in the ways that others do. In times like these we need to remember that God knew what He was doing when He made you, and that you are specially designed for a unique purpose all your own. If you haven’t found out exactly what that is yet, that’s ok! Learning to play your part can take time, but with God’s help and the help of those around you, you will eventually find the position on the team that’s right for you!

Discuss

Have you ever felt less important than other people on your team? How has God helped you learned to find the value in your unique skills and abilities?

Sum Up

Equipment

Time

10 minutes

Read

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” – Ephesians 4:11-12

Teach

Getting good at what you do takes time. Star athletes don't get made overnight. It takes a lot of work and practice, but knowing that we don't have to do it alone can help in that process. Team players often have coaches and personal trainers that can help them to reach their potential.

In your church, youth group, and family you will find many leaders and mentors who can play this part for you! Talk with a mentor about how you can serve in church or at youth group. Learn how to pray for others, play an instrument, practice hospitality, or help a mom with her kids. As you find out what your giftings are and begin to use them to help and bring joy to others, you are beginning to discover one of the greatest sources of joy in your own life, and the belonging that comes from being part of a team – the winning team that Jesus leads!

Act

What steps can you take this week to get involved with serving in your church, youth group or community?

Pray

For God's guidance in finding your place in the body of Christ.

Week 4: Disciple Makers



Summary

Multiplication is what happens when one disciple becomes two, and when two disciples become four. Jesus taught that this is the way that the kingdom of God spreads and grows – through us! When we begin to live transformed lifestyles, it can rub off on the people around us, and open opportunities to share with, teach, and empower others to become disciples of Jesus. We were called to be disciples who make disciples, and by doing just that, we join with others on the great worldwide adventure that God has commissioned us as his disciples to embark.

Soul Care

As you finish up this series on being a follower of Jesus, I wonder if you could take a moment and think about someone who has been influential in your faith development. Who has been a mentor, or a friend, or a pastor who has inspired you to follow Jesus? What if you took a moment right now to text them how much their influence has meant to you? As you are pouring into others today, take a moment to thank someone who has poured into you.

Intro

Disciples Who Make Disciples

Time

5 minutes

Read

“The seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.” -- Matthew 13:23

Ask

What are you learning in math this year? Where does math rank among your favorite or least favorite subjects?

Teach

Math isn't everybody's strongest subject. When you get to high school Geometry isn't just "how many sides does a triangle have?" anymore, and Algebra can be positively headache inducing.

But whatever your skill level in math, hopefully by this time you've been able to master enough basic multiplication to understand that when you multiply, a very small number can get crazy big in no time. As an example, imagine a small group of ten people who get invited to a party. No big deal. But now imagine that each of those ten people goes out and invites two more. Then imagine that those 20 additional people go out and invite two more people, and those people invite two people... All of a sudden your party of ten has turned into 150 people, and it might be time to order a few more pizzas!

When Jesus teaches his disciples about how the kingdom of God grows, he uses multiplication to describe that process. So how do we as his disciples learn to multiply the kingdom?

Point 1

Multiplication

Time

10 minutes

Read

*“He told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.’”—
Matthew 13:31-32*

Teach

When Jesus called the first disciples, they were just a little ragtag band of 12 ordinary people. But it wasn't long before that little group began to multiply until there were literally thousands of people following Jesus. How does that happen?

Multiplication starts when one disciple starts to make other disciples. As disciples of Jesus we were never intended to remain a small, elite group of people who keep what we have been given to ourselves! Instead, Jesus teaches his disciples to go out and multiply the kingdom, one person at a time, by passing on what we have learned and received to others. This is still our calling today, to grow to become disciples who make disciples.

Discuss

Have you ever had something you were so excited about that you had to share it with everybody? What about Jesus? Do the people that know you see your excitement for him?

Point 2

Look Around

Time

10 minutes

Read

“Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.” – Luke 10:1-2, 8-9

Teach

When you’re looking for where to start with multiplying the kingdom, you don’t generally have to look very far. It starts with the people around you, friends, family, online, people you meet as you move through life. It can be as simple as letting your life show that you are a follower of Jesus.

Then comes the gospel, speaking up and explaining how God has changed your life and how He wants to heal, forgive, and transform your friends’ lives too. As you are discipling others, don’t forget to continue with your own discipleship. Mentors, teachers, parents and friends can help you continue to learn to be more like Jesus. And as you learn, those who show an interest in what you share with them can come along too. Invite friends to youth group, fun events, hangouts and bible studies, and watch as multiplication begins to spread from your life to theirs.

Discuss

Can you think of some people you might be influencing as you go about your daily life? What are some practical steps you might take to help make disciples in your school, family, or community?

Sum Up

The Great Commission

Time

10 minutes

Read

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go 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 I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” – Matthew 28:18-20

Teach

Remember that when you are participating making disciples, you are never alone in that process. There are many others who can help you as you do the work of a disciple!

But also never underestimate how important the role is that you have to play. God has placed people in your life so that you can be an influence in theirs! Your friends are just that – YOUR friends. There are probably few other people in the world who can have as powerful an influence on their lives than you can.

So let’s get out there, share what you have been given, and as you learn to become a disciple who makes disciples, remember that it is God that makes everything grow, we just get to play our part as He does His work, multiplying His kingdom in and through us!

Act

Bring to mind one person that God might be calling you to help disciple. What can you do this week to help that person come to know more about Jesus?

Pray

For the people that came to mind and for courage and wisdom in sharing Jesus with them.