3. Discipleship

Learning Objectives

- To understand that being a disciple is about growing to imitate Jesus.
- To understand that being a disciple means following Jesus above everything else.
- To learn a couple of simple tools that help us understand the different elements of discipleship.

Welcome [5 mins]

Welcome the group to this session, recap on last week's session and review how the challenge went.

The challenge was to share your story/testimony with someone, preferably someone who is not a Christian, and make sure you include the Gospel.

🏸 **Bonus Game:**
Select a game that will best suit your group and setting. Consider games this week that fit with the theme of following or imitating others.

> ***Pray for the session***

Introduction [10 mins]

Ask: If you could be an apprentice and work for anyone, real or fictional, who would it be and why?

This doesn't require a serious response, simply encourage the group to start reflecting and get their imaginations and creative juices going.

Ask: What do you think a disciple is?

Try to encourage everyone to add something to this question.

For first-century Jews, a disciple was someone who followed a Rabbi. You could summarise the word disciple in one word: imitation. It wasn't simply to learn all the Rabbi's knowledge and wisdom, but it was to echo how the Rabbi lived, prayed, the company he surrounded himself in, his service and his actions.

📖 Its says in Luke 6:4 "...everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher."

At age 4-5, Jewish boys would've begun their training to memorize large chunks of the Torah (the first 5 books of the bible). At age 13, most would finish their education and go on to learn their family trade. But for a select few who were considered talented and exceptional, a Rabbi would give the honour of becoming his disciples.

Becoming a disciple would mean leaving everything you know behind and fully committing to following your Rabbi wherever he goes; living with him and doing whatever he does to imitate their lifestyle. There was an ancient Jewish saying “cover yourself in the dust of his feet”. It was well known that disciples would literally follow their Rabbi so closely that the dust from the Rabbi’s feet would cover the disciple’s clothes.

So, a disciple in Jesus’ time was someone who imitated their Rabbi.

However, discipleship to Jesus is even more amazing than this. In Galatians 4:19 Paul prays for his Church that “Christ would be *formed* in them”. He uses a root word *metamorphoo¯ (meaning to transform*), which we use to describe caterpillars turning into butterflies. Discipleship is a process of us being transformed to look and act more like Jesus. This is why it isn’t simply enough to believe in God and receive the forgiveness that Jesus enabled for us on the cross.

Bonus: – Bible Quiz [2 Mins]

Let’s see how good our bible knowledge is! Let’s see if we can name all the books of the Old Testament. Have a go as a group to see if you can do it.

Make this fun not too intense. The aim is to show how by the standards of first-century Jewish disciples we wouldn’t get in.

The reality is, you and I probably wouldn’t have been considered good enough to be a disciple as we can’t even remember all of the book titles from the Old Testament let alone be able to recite it word for word!

Bible Focus [25 mins]

📖 **Read Matthew 4:18-22.** *"As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peterand his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him."*

ASK: Now knowing how hard it is to become a disciple. Why do you think Peter, Andrew, James and John literally dropped their nets and boats to follow Jesus ?

Draw out that it was a brilliant honour.

It’s as if Walt Disney, Richard Branson or Kate Middleton turned to us and asked us if we want to come work for them. It would mean leaving your family and having to move, but we would probably do it because it is an exceptional honour.

All four of them would have already been considered not good enough to be disciples, yet Jesus is telling them that they are. That’s one reason why they are willing to literally drop all that they were doing to follow Jesus.

Yes, it’s well-known that Jesus had 12 disciples that followed him, but he also extends the same invitation to us!

📖 **Read:**
Encourage different people to read out each verse
· **John 15:19**
· **John 8:12**
· **John 12:26**

We also have the same opportunity of becoming Jesus' disciple! This is amazing!

Ask: But why do you think it is hard to be a disciple?

Do not rush this question and ensure to draw out how it demands us to totally lose our old life in pursuit of the new one. It demands sacrifices. Specifically, draw out areas that are hard to imitate Jesus. Such as loving those we find difficult to love, dying to our own needs and wants every day, and how it may even lead to persecution.

Sometimes when we read where Jesus spoke to social outcasts and therefore think we should speak to those on the fringes of our friendship group or family. But perhaps he wants us to actually spend time with today's outcasts like the homeless, murderers and prostitutes too? Or, when Jesus said "*sell all your possessions and follow me*" we can think for us that means giving up something that we love like our subscription to Netflix. But perhaps he wants us to actually give away our possessions and trust he will provide for all our needs.

Following Jesus is a massive privilege, but it is also a massive challenge. The good news is God promises to be with us always and Jesus left us with the Holy Spirit to help us.

📖 **Read**
· Luke 9:23
· Luke 14:26-27

Reflect on these verses together and again draw out the cost of following Jesus.

Ask: Who remembers what famous verse is in Matthew 28?

📖 **Read:**

Matthew 28:19-20
"*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, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*"

Like the other disciples in 1st-century Jewish culture, there would become a time when Rabbis would say to their disciples you too must now go and teach others how to live. Jesus tells us to do the same. Not only should we help people encounter God and hear the Good News, but we should teach and train others what it means to live a life like Jesus too.

So, how do we grow in our discipleship to Jesus when he isn't physically here for us to follow?

Jesus' first disciples copied His example and found some disciples of their own. They made disciples who made disciples, who made more disciples…….and now we're here today 2,000 years later (along with millions of other Jesus followers) learning about following Jesus because of them.

Paul one of the Apostles (who wrote lots of the New Testament) said this in one of his letters:

📖 **1 Cor 11:1 “And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.”**

Paul encouraged people to imitate how he lived, as someone who was older and further along his journey of faith, as a way of helping people learn how to follow Jesus in their situation.

Later on, he told one of his disciples, Timothy, who he described as his spiritual “son”:

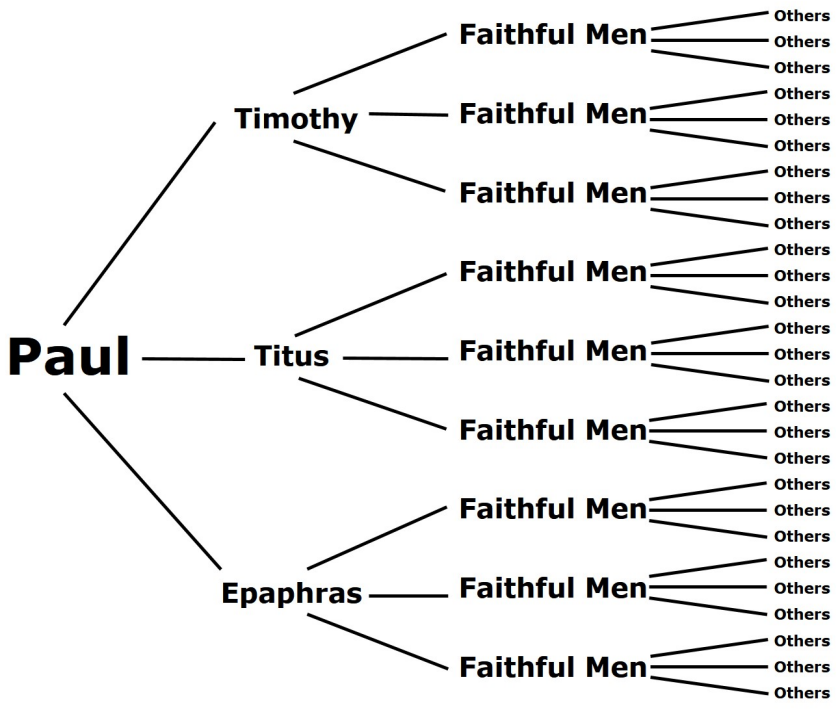
📖 **2 Tim 2:2**

“...Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.”

You can see Paul, teaching Timothy, to teach others how to teach others. There is a pattern of multiplication.

Draw: *On a whiteboard/flipchart paper draw the connection between Paul, Timothy and his disciples like a family tree to show the connection between disciples and how they multiply.*

Paul > Timothy > Timothy’s “Trustworthy people > Who teach others



This is why Catalysts includes a mentoring element. We believe we grow in following Jesus when we intentionally build relationships with mature Christians who can show us what following Jesus more closely looks like. Mentors can share their experience, challenge us when we’re wrong and encourage us when we’re struggling.

📽️ **Bonus Video: LiveLife123 – [5 Mins]**

This video explains this idea of multiplication a little more
LINK - https://youtu.be/P_4tMBB3upU

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Testimony: [5 mins]

Have a team leader share a time when following Jesus was costly. This could be because their physical life was in danger, it meant sacrificing money, or risked damaging a relationship or their reputation etc.

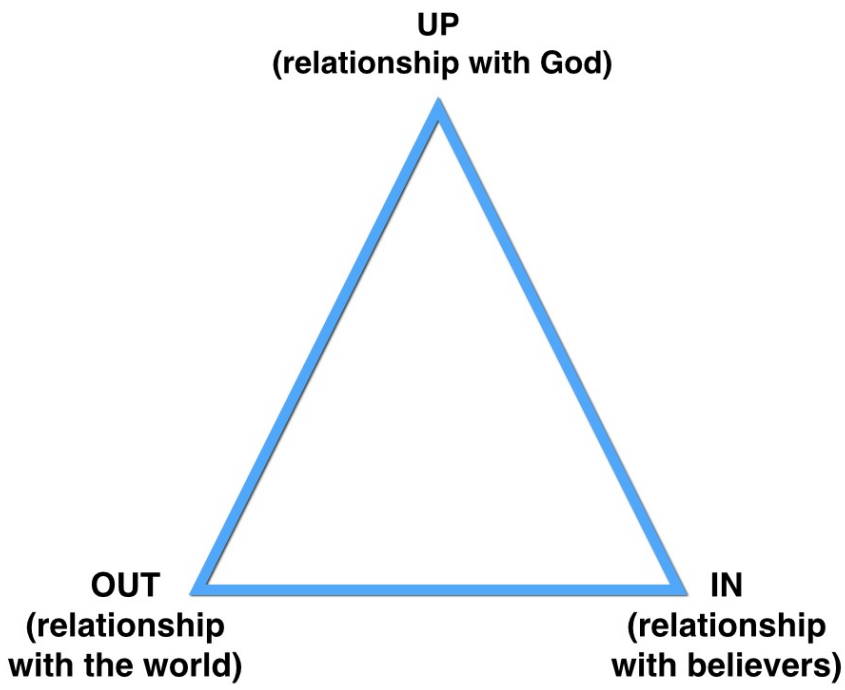
Ensure the team leader includes how they realised what they had to do, how the Holy Spirit helped them, the consequence of that action and how their faith grew as a result.

Application: [20 mins]

Just talking about your "relationship" with God can be too vague for most of us to consider. We're going to look at a tool to help you identify the different areas/elements of following Jesus and where you might need to grow.

You can draw these on a whiteboard/flipchart paper and encourage participants to draw them in their journal. These are simple enough to be drawn on a napkin in a coffee shop and therefore very reproducible.

Lifeshapes Triangle – UP, IN, OUT



Following Jesus can be roughly broken down into three areas:

(You may note these relationships were broken by the Fall and restored by the power of the Gospel).

- **UP** – Our relationship with God. This includes any practice or activity where you directly connect with God. E.g. Bible reading, time in praise/worship, prayer, fasting, listening to teaching, reading Christian books.
- **IN –** Our relationship with other believers and ourselves. Such as being part of a Church and youth group and your relationship with your mentor.
- **OUT** – Our relationship with the world which includes evangelism, mission and acts of justice.

Sometimes our rhythms of life can become out of balance where we focus on 1 or 2 parts of the triangle and not the other.

For example, we may spend lots of time with other believers, reading the Bible and praying BUT we don't ever share our faith with others. This could lead to us having a very insular and personalized faith.

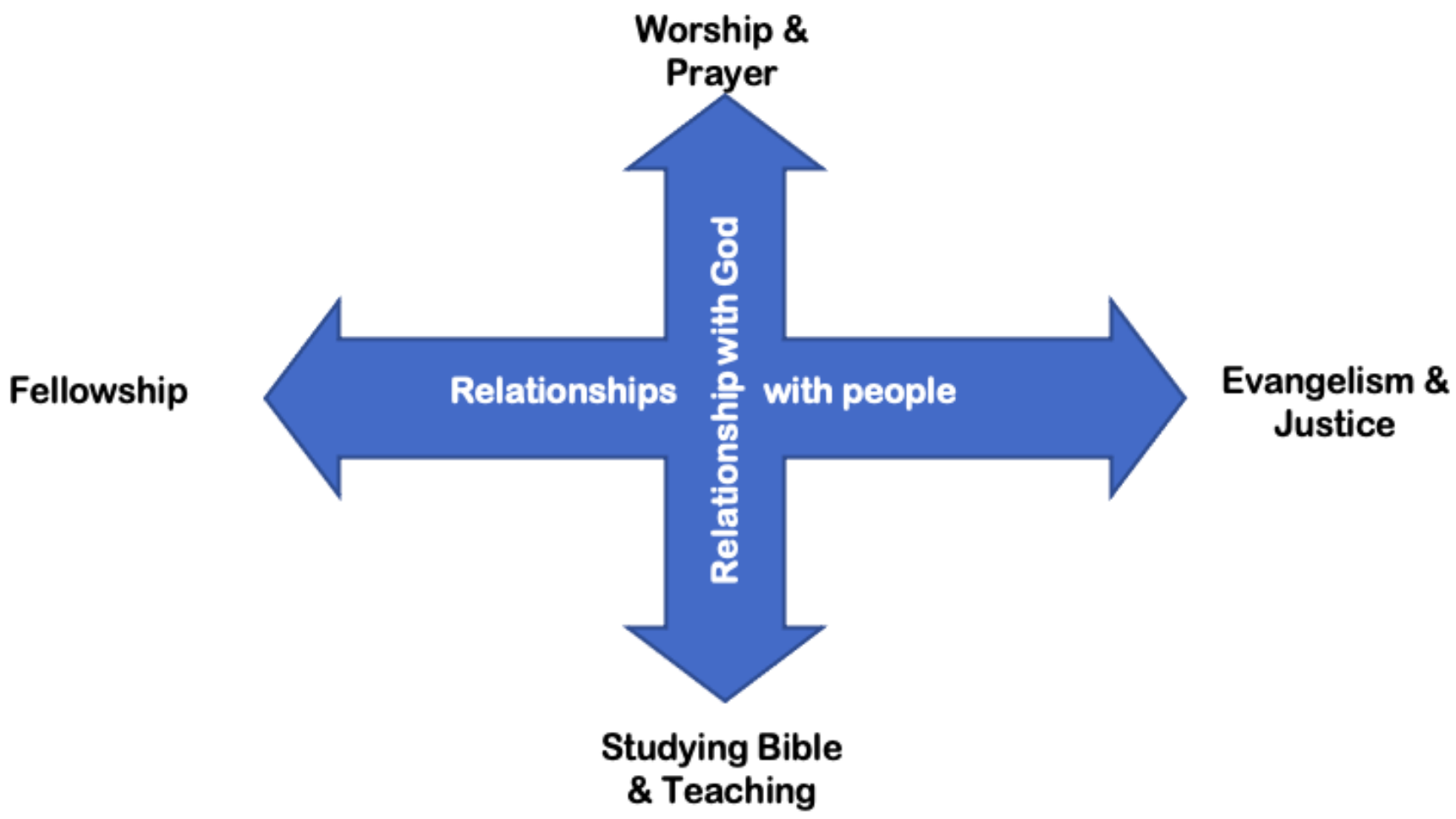
Or, we may spend lots of time with Christians and also sharing our faith but no time directly with God. This could lead to us getting very burnt out or having a shallow faith where we don't deeply know God for ourselves.

> **Activity:**
>
> *You could put some quiet worship music on in the background.*
>
> *Encourage the group to spend 5 minutes asking God to show them one thing they could do or change in each area, Up, In and Out, to grow in their faith.*
>
> *Make some practical steps and encourage participants to talk about these steps with their mentor.*

Bonus Content: The Disciples Cross [10 minutes]

Another helpful diagram is called the Disciples Cross.

Again you can draw this on a whiteboard or flipchart paper and talk through the points below as you go.



Vertical: The two vertical elements focus on your relationship directly with God.

Upward includes activities like worship and prayer and downward is studying the Bible and listening to teaching/reading.

These can get out of balance. If you spend all your time praying and worship but not studying the Bible you could have some great experiences of God but they wouldn't be grounded in truth. But if you spent all your time studying the Bible, you may learn about God but not know him.

Horizontal: The two horizontal elements focus on your relationships with people.

On one side is your relationship with believers and the other non-believers. Again they can get out of balance. If you only spend time with believers, you may be encouraged but you won't be obeying Jesus' commands to make disciples. However, if you spend most of your time with unbelievers you may struggle in your faith and get burnt out.

Activity:

Encourage the group to spend 5 minutes asking God to show them one way they could grow in each area.

Conclusion & Challenge [2 mins]

In this session, we have looked at the incredible privilege of being Jesus' disciple. But like all disciples, it is costly. Following Jesus demands us to not only learn Jesus' wisdom but calls us to imitate Jesus' love and action with His Heavenly Father and His neighbour.

📖 As it says in **Luke 9:23** *"Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."*

Challenge:

Your challenge from this session is to look for an opportunity where you can give up something or take up something. For example, you may wish to buy a homeless person a coffee or start giving to Church regularly (even if it is a small amount). Or you might want to start a daily quiet time or read a Christian book. (It's important that you are safe in whatever you do so please be wise.)

> ***Pray to end the session***