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THE  
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OF FAITH

**What we want students to learn:** That students would understand that the call to follow after God, and to identify as “His,” is at the core of what it means to be a Christian

**What we want them to do with what they’ve learned:** To consider how this call has looked in their life so far.

**Scripture Focus:** Psalm 128:1, Deuteronomy 26:16-19, Ephesians 2:13-18

**Overview:** When we think of discipleship, we think of the New Testament. We think of the twelve men Jesus chose to follow Him. And, of course, we’re correct in that thinking. The Greek word from which we get the word “disciple” isn’t a word unique to the Bible. It was a word used in Greek culture meaning “a learner,” someone kind of like an apprentice. But Jesus gave the word a new, richer meaning. Jesus introduced the concept of “following.” He didn’t just want learners. Jesus wanted followers, people who would devote their lives to living as He lived. But, the cool thing is that the foundation for following after God isn’t a New Testament creation. Discipleship finds its roots in the heart of the Old Testament. This lesson will help your students see that the call to follow after God is intertwined with God’s character, and is at the core of what it means to be a Christian.

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## TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each **Activate** lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your **Discipleship** lesson 23 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 23, and click on the “Background” tab. You’ll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.

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## BIBLE BACKGROUND

The **Bible Background** is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you’ll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what’s happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by “context”?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you’ll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By “context” we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What’s the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don’t get a “big picture” understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God’s plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

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## THE DETAILS

### Psalms

- **Author:** God inspired various authors to write a majority of the Psalms in their era, including seventy-three by David, twelve by Asaph, eleven by the Korahites and two by Solomon. Heman, Ethan, and Moses each wrote one, while the authorship of fifty other Psalms remains unknown.
- **Timeframe:** The Psalms were written during different eras of Israel's history, spanning from 1100 BC (i.e., Psalm 29, 68) to 400 BC (i.e., Psalm 119).
- **Purpose:** The Psalms are inspired by God to poetically reflect humanity's journey with Him. Each psalm serves a different purpose, such as a personal or communal lament, hymn, song, reflection or declaration. Many of these were set to music and intended to be shared publicly, even when sharing a revealing confession (i.e., Psalm 51).

### Deuteronomy

- **Author:** While there's no specific author named within the text, Moses is the accepted author for Deuteronomy, with some editing and additions done after his death (such as the account of his death!).
- **Timeframe:** The dating of the Deuteronomy is a point of debate. The issue is that no one knows for sure when the Exodus occurred, whether it was in the mid-1400s BC or a later date around the mid-1200s BC. The writing would have happened around those general dates.
- **Purpose:** Deuteronomy means "second law." It was a reminder of the law of God for the second generation of Israelites in the desert before they entered the Promised Land. It reminded the people that the Lord is God. He is faithful to keep his promises to His people.

### Ephesians

- **Author:** The Apostle Paul wrote the letters to the Ephesians. Of course, we know Paul as the one-time chief enemy of the Church. After his miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul would go on to have a position of great importance in the early Church and beyond. He wrote 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament.
- **Timeframe:** Ephesians was probably written by Paul from prison in the latter years of his life, sometime around 60 or 61 AD.
- **Purpose:** Paul had a very close relationship with the church in Ephesus. It seems as if the motivation for the letter was merely that the church would know how he was faring in his imprisonment. But, true to form, Paul couldn't help but teach. The letter covers general teaching on the work of Christ to redeem believers, unity among believers, and how believers are supposed to conduct themselves.

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## THE MAIN POINT

These passages help combine to lead students to grasp that following after God is at the core of what it means to be a Christian. Being identified as "God's" is set up throughout Scripture as going hand-in-hand with truly following God. Psalm 128:1 praises the concept of following God and paints the picture of walking in the same path, or in the same manner, as God Himself would walk. (A pretty good definition of following, right?) Furthermore, it implies that there is blessing attached to walking (or following) after God.

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The Deuteronomy verses show that God Himself wanted followers. We see this in how He created Israel, setting them apart to be people after His own heart and character. Finally, Ephesians shows us that God created Israel so that through His people, He might send Jesus, the Messiah, and make it possible for all people to follow Him. This lesson will set up the idea that from the beginning, God was working all things to His will so that He might raise up disciples, followers who would commit to living according to His ways.

## LESSON PLAN

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: An introductory activity called *The Lead In*; the Bible study section called *The Main Event*; an application-focused segment called *The Last Word*.

## THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To help your students understand that the Old Testament model for following God was complete and 100% obedience to the law.
- **Set-Up:** Print the "In It To Win It" PDF and make enough copies for each of your students to have one. (The PDF is located with your Lesson 23 documents.)
- **Don't allow them to see the PDF until you're ready to start the game.**

FIRST, explain to students that you're going to give each one of them a sheet with ten different actions described on them. Instruct them to read all the steps, then see who can be the first to complete the activities just as they are represented on the sheet. Explain that the first one to complete the actions just as they are described on the sheet is the winner. (It's crucial to the activity that the first thing you tell them in describing the game is that they are to read the actions on the sheet and that the winner is the one who does the steps EXACTLY as the sheet says.)

THEN, distribute the sheets face down. When all the sheets have been given out, say, "Ready? Set? Go!" and let the students flip the sheets over. (You'll have most of the students frantically doing all the actions listed on the sheet. But remember the winner is the one who does number ten and gives you a high-five without doing any of the other actions.) If someone does this, he or she will be the winner. Otherwise, there will be no winner since the last instruction was to NOT do all the things on the list.

FINALLY, explain that to win the game someone had to follow your instructions completely. 100% obedience was the key. Then transition into The Main Event by saying the following to the students:

- **Over the next few weeks, we're going to be taking a real close look at the concept of discipleship. We'll learn that being a disciple means both being a learner and a follower. But our journey begins in the Old Testament, where we'll see God first call a people to follow Him. Following God in the Old Testament meant total obedience to the Laws that God gave to Moses. That was the means by which God gave His people to be in relationship with Him. In the weeks ahead we'll see how, when Jesus came to Earth, He changed not only the way we relate to God but what it means to be a disciple. But let's start by looking at God's original intent to call followers to Him.**

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## THE MAIN EVENT

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- **Goal:** Your students will begin to look at the meaning of discipleship by looking at how the concept evolved from the Old Testament to the New Testament.
- **Set Up:** No set-up needed.

FIRST, take a few moments to introduce your students to the concept of discipleship. Ask them to name some disciples. They will probably mention some of the 12 guys Jesus chose to follow Him while He was on Earth, guys such as Peter, James, John, Andrew, Phillip, and so on. But then ask them if they have ever thought of Moses, or David, or Daniel, or Joseph as being a disciple. Remind students again that the concept of discipleship has its roots in the Old Testament.

NEXT, read or have a student read Psalm 128:1 aloud. Explain that the call to be a disciple in the Old Testament is often placed in the context of this phrase, "walking in God's ways." Take a moment to help your students explore what this phrase means. Ask:

- **What do you think it might mean to walk in God's ways?**
  - Answer: Walking in the ways of God was another way of talking about keeping His commandments. Remind your students that, according to the Old Testament, a relationship with God was dictated by strict adherence to God's commandments, including but not limited to the Ten Commandments given to Moses by God.
- **What does this passage say about the person who walks in God's ways?**
  - Answer: The passage in Psalms tells us the person who fears God and walks in His ways will be both happy and blessed.

THEN, instruct students to find Deuteronomy 26 in their Bibles or on their Bible apps. While they are locating it, set the stage for the passage you'll be reading by referring to the "The Details" section of the Bible Background. Then read or have a student read Deuteronomy 26:16-19. Explain that Moses spoke these words to the new generation of Israelites before they entered the Promised Land. They had wandered in the wilderness for forty years because their ancestors were not willing to trust and have faith in God to lead them into the new land. Moses reminded this new generation of what was required to be faithful followers of God.

Explain to your students that this passage is the confirmation of what is called a covenant. A covenant is an agreement between two parties. In this case, the two parties were God and the Israelites. Lead your students in a discussion of these verses. Ask questions similar to the following:

- **Verse 16 functions as the conditions, or the terms of the covenant. Describe the terms in your own words. What was God asking of the Israelites?**
  - Answer: He was asking for obedience to His commands.
- **God seems to go farther than just obedience. How does He describe what He's looking for?**
  - Answer: A few ways. One, God wants careful obedience! He meant for every letter of the Law to be followed. Half-hearted obedience was equal to rebellion. But more than that, He wanted them followed with the heart and soul engaged. He wanted people to obey because love for and awe of God motivated them.
- **Verses 17-18 are a rephrasing of what both parties had agreed to. What did the Israelites agree to do and be?**

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- Answer: They would “walk in his ways”; they would obey God, keeping His decrees, commands, and laws.
- **What did God agree to do?**
  - Answer: Keep the Israelites as His chosen people, unique among all nations.
- **Finally, what did the Israelites stand to gain if they kept God’s commands and “walked in His ways”?**
  - Answer: Israel would be more significant than any other nation; they would be a holy or set apart people, devoted entirely to God.

Sum up this passage by making it clear that God was calling to Himself disciples, followers, people who would be identified with God. Explain that if we’re trying to define the picture of the Old Testament disciple, it would be a person who respected and feared God and kept the laws, including sacrifices for sin, rites of purification, the Ten Commandments, etc.

THEN, instruct students to turn to Ephesians 2:13-18 and read or have a student read these verses. (Provide some context from the Bible Background if you have time.) Explain that the Apostle Paul wrote these words around 1,500 years after the passages from Deuteronomy were written. Say:

- **Between the writing of Deuteronomy and Ephesians, something happened that forever altered how human-kind would relate to God. Any thoughts on what that was?**
  - Answer: Jesus was sent to earth to live and die an atoning death, making a right-standing with God possible apart from the Law.

Take your students through these verses to capture Paul’s essential words on the dramatic new way of relating to God that Jesus ushered in. Ask the following questions:

- **Verse 13 says that we’ve been brought near to God through the blood of Christ. What was it Jesus did to bridge the gap between man and God?**
  - Answer: He was crucified on a cross as a sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sins.
- **Verses 14-15 mention a wall of hostility between the Jews and Gentiles. Jesus removed the separation between Jews and Gentiles. What impact did that have on advancing the discussion of what it means to be a disciple?**
  - Answer: God was making a relationship with Him available for all people, not just the Jews. Jesus’ death created a new covenant between man and God that included all who would believe.
- **Verse 18 says that all people come to God the same way now. What is that way?**
  - Answer: Through faith in God through His Son Jesus Christ.
- **What wording seems to be missing in Paul’s description of a New Testament believer compared to the Old Testament passages?**
  - Answer: There is no mention of the strict adherence of the Law to be qualified to follow God. The only requirement is to believe in Jesus and confess Him as Lord. Make sure students aren’t under the belief that God isn’t interested in our obedience. God still wants followers who “walk in His ways,” as you’ll learn more about in the next two lessons.

Make sure your students understand that God has always been about the business of identifying those who are His people. This ID, if you will, is part of what makes up the concept of discipleship. Remind them that God has always wanted to have a close and personal relationship with us, but our sin stood in the way.

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FINALLY, remind students that this is the first lesson of an in-depth series on discipleship. Explain that they have just begun to set the stage for what it means to understand discipleship. The next two lessons will take the discussion to an excellent new place. But for now, leave them with something similar to the following words:

- **While some expressions of discipleship changed with Jesus' work on the cross, the heart of being a follower of God has always been the same. It begins and ends in the very nature of God. He created us, and He desires to have a relationship with us. He wants us to be His followers, or disciples. Today, this begins with believing in Jesus as God's Son and allowing Him to lead from inside our hearts and souls.**

Transition to The Last Word activity to wrap things up.

## THE LAST WORD

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- **Goal:** Your students will begin to think about the New Testament concept of discipleship, especially as it pertains to Christ living and dwelling in His people.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need a dry-erase board, or anything students can easily see, for this activity.

FIRST, explain to students that the distinction in how Christ advanced and deepened the concept of discipleship is an important one. But we don't need to miss that God wanted the same thing from Old Testament followers that He wants from us. Explain that the key is in the phrase "walking in God's ways." Say:

- **Walking in God's ways is a phrase that paints a pretty cool word picture. It refers to the idea of literally walking a path, or a road, in the same manner as the person in front of you. Which, in this case, is God. God asks the same from us today that He asked of His people thousands of years ago. He wants to look back and see us putting our feet where His feet have been, going places that He's leading us, conducting ourselves on the journey in the same way He would conduct Himself.**

Lead students to understand this as merely living a life that identifies us as God's. Explain that in the next two lessons you'll dig into this concept. But as you move to wrap up your lesson, take a moment to lead them in a short exercise to evaluate how their lives already reflect their commitment to walk in God's ways.

THEN, draw a circle on the board. Ask students to help come up with ways of dividing the circle into slices that represent the areas in their lives where they have reason to interact with others. Encourage them to consider categories that represent how they spend their daily or weekly lives. (Categories might include school, home, activities, church, etc.) It doesn't have to be perfect, and you might not get 100% consensus. But get to a place where you can begin to use these categories to lead students to think about their day-to-day lives.

NEXT, encourage students to begin thinking of examples of how they "walk in God's ways" in these different categories. In other words, what are some behaviors or attitudes they exhibit that identify themselves as God's? Lead students in getting as much on the board as possible. The idea is to define a nice look at a cross-section of opportunity they have to show the world they are followers of God's.

FINALLY, challenge students to look at what's on the board and to consider areas in their own lives where they are strong in their identification with God, and areas they are weak. Part of what you'll be covering in the next two lessons

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will be a strong call to a deepening commitment to God. This doesn't happen without a heart change. Encourage students to dwell on these concepts this week. Challenge them to an increased awareness of what their words, actions, and attitudes say about their level of commitment to being identified as a disciple.

Close in prayer.

- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're posting them on Instagram, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the **Social Media** guide to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at [feedback@youthministry360.com](mailto:feedback@youthministry360.com).