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**What we want students to learn:** That your students would understand how Christ defined discipleship not as learning, but as following

**What we want them to do with what they've learned:** To evaluate how this impacts the very nature of their identity as Christians.

**Scripture Focus:** Matthew 4:18-22, Luke 9:23, John 12:23-26

**Overview:** Your students have a lot of examples of nominal Christians in their lives, those people who are Christians only in name but not in how they live. But this type of faith is never really given as an option. The kind of faith Jesus gives as an example is a faith of action, a faith that follows. In this lesson, your students will begin to see that Jesus desires a discipleship relationship with His children. He wants followers, people who will surrender the leadership of their lives to Him, putting Christ above all else. Your students will be challenged to take this definition and place it next to their lives, examining how their current relationship with Christ looks when compared to the example Jesus gives.

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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 24 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 24, 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:** Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his Gospel.
- **Timeframe:** Most people hold to Matthew's Gospel being written in the late A.D. 50s or 60s, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.
- **Purpose:** Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his Gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

### Luke

- **Author:** Luke was a doctor, a Gentile Christian and a companion of Paul.
- **Timeframe:** The Gospel of Luke was written around 60 AD.
- **Purpose:** Luke is the only Gentile author of the Bible. His entire purpose was to write an accurate account of the life of Jesus to present Jesus as Savior, fully God and fully man. It is one of the synoptic Gospels, having much in common with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

### John

- **Author:** The Gospel of John was written by John the Apostle, son of Zebedee. A fisherman who left his trade to follow Jesus, John also penned the Book of Revelation, as well as the three letters in the New Testament that bear his name.
- **Timeframe:** The Gospel of John was probably written between 85 and 95 AD. John most likely wrote his gospel in Ephesus before he was exiled to Patmos.
- **Purpose:** John's stated purpose for writing this book can be found in John 20:30-31, the last two verses in his gospel: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John's goal seems to have been to communicate a full theology of Jesus as the Messiah, the promised Son of God.

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## THE MAIN POINT

In this lesson, your students will see how Jesus called people to be His disciples, and how He defined discipleship as forsaking-all-else followership. We see Jesus first set this desire in motion with the call of Peter, Andrew, James, and John. We fast-forward and see Jesus defining what it means to follow Him in Luke, followed by one final look at Jesus' drilling-down on what He expects from those He calls. Your students will be challenged to examine how their current relationship with Christ looks like when compared to the example Jesus gives.

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## 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**.

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## THE LEAD IN

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- **Goal:** To help students see that they are prone to follow things in life that are not reliable, sometimes this can include their minds.
- **Set-Up:** Pre-arrange to show a clip from YouTube. You'll want to search on YouTube for "optical illusions." Preview a few of the clips and find a few your group will like. Arrange to show the clip in class.

FIRST, ask the students if they can think of anything that is 100% reliable. They might mention machines or gadgets or even relationships. Give them time to name as many reliable things as possible. Then ask if they think they can rely on their minds, or their ability to make logical judgments based on what they observe. Explain that you're going to show a video that will toy with their confidence in what they see.

THEN, play the videos you've selected. Have students say which one was their favorite, or have them respond to something that was particularly fun to experience. Allow some time to discuss how easy it is to believe you're observing what you think you're observing when in reality, your mind is playing tricks on you.

FINALLY, transition out of this activity into The Main Event. Ask students if they can think of some things that are NOT reliable. Some might mention the second-hand car they're driving. Or gadgets they have at home. Or even people. Explain that it's no wonder so many people are skeptical of committing to anyone or anything; in a lot of ways, our experiences tell us that relying on anyone is a tricky proposition. But, there is hope. Say:

- **Last week we started looking at the word discipleship and how a follower of Christ is someone who begins by making a personal decision to accept Him as Lord. Today we are going to go deeper and see that Jesus wants us to give Him our lives entirely. 100%. Nothing held back. But, we can move forward knowing that Jesus is the most "sure thing" there is. He can be trusted. He can be relied upon. In short, there is nothing that should keep us from diving in headfirst into a discipleship relationship with Him. But don't take my word for it. Let's look at what the Bible has to say.**

## THE MAIN EVENT

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- **Goal:** To help students look at different passages where Jesus called His disciples to follow Him and what they did in response.
- **Set Up:** No set-up needed.

FIRST, remind the students what was covered in lesson 23 as a review, or just in case some of them were not at the last meeting.

- **God has always called people to follow Him and be His disciples.**
- **In the Old Testament, the mark of a disciple was one who feared God and walked in His ways.**
- **We live under grace, not Law, which means our relationship with God is secured in Christ.**

NEXT, lead your students into a time of Bible study by explaining that this week they will be learning about the kind of discipleship Jesus calls us to. Instruct students to find Matthew 4 in their Bibles or Bible apps. Give some context for these

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verses by telling students that Jesus had just gone through the forty days of fasting and temptations in the wilderness. He was beginning His ministry time on Earth. (You can also utilize “The Details” from the Bible Background.) One of the first things Jesus did was call twelve men to engage in a teacher-learner relationship with Him. These would be known as the Twelve Disciples.

Then read or have a student read Matthew 4:18-22. Have a student or students summarize what was just read. Then, explain that the purpose of reading this passage is to make an important point that is the key to understanding the concept of discipleship. Say something like:

- **In calling the disciples, Jesus began a process of re-framing the idea of discipleship. Before Jesus, the concept of a disciple had merely meant “a learner,” almost an apprentice of sorts. But Jesus added a new dimension, one we alluded to in last week’s lesson. Jesus was changing the idea of a disciple from someone who is only a learner, to someone who is a follower. Jesus was a rabbi, a teacher. But He didn’t just want His students to learn. Here we see Jesus giving the disciples a new vocation, a new way of living. In this, He went WAY beyond the traditional notion of discipleship as “learning.”**

Explain to your students that this call is the same today as it was 2,000 years ago.

THEN, read or have a student read Luke 9:23. When you’ve finished, ask if they caught the three distinct things Jesus said a disciple of His must do. Lead them to understand each of the three points. Ask:

- **Jesus first said we must deny ourselves. Can anyone guess what this might mean?**
  - Answer: Denying ourselves means being more interested in carrying out the will of Christ in our lives than following our self-interests.
- **Next, He said followers must take up their cross daily. What do you think this means?**
  - Answer: The cross was one of the most shameful ways of punishment in Jesus’ time. This would have been a shocking statement to His audience. But Jesus was identifying Himself as set against the ways of the world. He was, in a sense, saying that His disciples must be willing to take on Jesus’ identity at the sake of the world shaming and ridiculing them for doing so.
- **Finally, Jesus said to follow Him. This sounds easy. Why is it so hard to live out?**
  - Answer: As simple as it sounds, it may be the most demanding. It means to continue to follow Him daily, through teenage years, adult years, and even into senior adult years. It means missing the mark, getting back up, and following Him again. To follow Christ is a lifetime commitment.

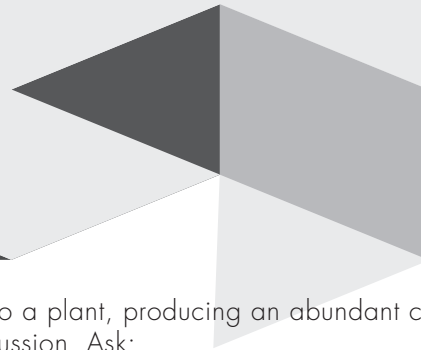
Allow students to respond to the three parts of Jesus’ definition of a disciple. Which one seems the hardest to them? Ask if they see most Christians living out Jesus’ definition of a disciple. If they are responding, ask what support they have for their response. Explain that Luke 9:23 is a short verse, but one of the most powerful when it comes to what Jesus expects from us. Say:

- **The following Jesus demanded can only be achieved when we put our complete trust and confidence in the Lord. There can be no holding back. If we’re to embrace this definition of discipleship, we can’t let anything come in between Christ and us.**

NEXT, read or have a student read John 12:23-26. Remind the students that Jesus often gave illustrations that utilized elements that were familiar to His audience. Explain that Jesus’ audience would have known that when a seed was placed

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in the ground, with the proper nourishment, it would grow into a plant, producing an abundant crop. Help students see how this applies to their lives by leading them in a short discussion. Ask:

- **What happens to a seed if it's planted in the ground?**
  - Answer: Students will likely reply that something grows out of it. This is true. But it's not the question. The question is what happens to the seed? In the process of growing a plant, the seed as it is understood is no more. It's gone. And yet, it's part of a newer, grander experience. It becomes part of a new thriving life.
- **Do you see how Jesus was relating this to verse 25? How is the idea of seed a parallel to the idea of gaining life by losing it?**
  - Answer: A seed that isn't planted doesn't die. But, it also doesn't reproduce. And it's not fulfilling its purpose. To live purposefully, we have to surrender to Christ. The less we give to Him, the more we're like the seed that isn't planted. We don't die, but we don't live, either.
- **Jesus ended the passage by reminding the disciples that if they followed Him, they'd enjoy what?**
  - Answer: They would be where Jesus is (that means experiencing His incredible presence), and the Father would honor them.

FINALLY, allow for questions or clarification. Make sure students are tracking with you. Encourage them by explaining that they've just been through some of the most demanding teachings of Jesus when it comes to the cost of following Him. Ask them if this seems too difficult of a thing to do. Encourage openness.

Remind them that discipleship is a process. As teenagers, they're still in the early stages of their walk with God. Many of them may have already experienced the cost of following Christ by being made fun of at school or work, or perhaps even by parents who aren't believers. Make sure you allow some time for a cooling down period if you need it. Allow room to talk about the things we face when surrendering leadership of our lives to God. You might even ask some of the following questions:

- **What is the hardest thing you face in following Jesus?**
- **What are some things a teenager can do to "die to self"?**
- **Does giving God your life feel like being out of control? Should it feel that way?**

Transition to The Last Word to wrap things up.

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## THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To give students a picture of the cost of discipleship using seeds and a plant.
- **Set-Up:** Consider purchasing a pack of seeds from your local hardware store or garden shop. Or, you could always do a Google image search for seeds and arrange to display the images you find.

FIRST, remind students that Jesus said the seed must fall to the ground and die to produce other seeds. Ask if any of them have ever been on a farm or if they have parents who have a garden. Ask if anyone has watched a plant grow throughout the spring into the summer. Explain that when the seed goes into the ground, the outer protective shell disintegrates and what is left inside multiplies into a beautiful plant or a source of food. Explain that the result of the harvest is ALWAYS bigger than the original seed.

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THEN, display the seeds or images of seeds you've provided. Take note of how small a seed is. But remind students that the enormous trees in your community started as seeds not much bigger than the ones you're observing. Bring the lesson home by making the analogy between seeds and disciples. Say:

- **God wants us to be seeds who embrace being planted in the ground. Jesus challenged us to see our identities so wrapped up in Him that His purposes become our purposes. He asks for our sacrifice so that through us, He can multiply our gifts, talents, and desires. A seed that never dies will never reach its full potential. The Christian who never denies himself or herself will never know the joys of being a true disciple, a faithful follower of Christ.**

Challenge your students to spend some time in reflection of where they are in their process of following Christ. Challenge them to seriously consider what leads their lives more, their "self" or Christ. Explain that Jesus wasn't giving us an option. He wasn't saying, "Here's some extra credit you guys can do." Jesus was defining what He expects out of every one of us. Say:

- **I want each of you to promise me you'll continue to think about this. What in your life is keeping you from genuinely following God? It's not enough to come to church and collect knowledge. Jesus wants disciples. What will it take for you to surrender your will and follow Him?**

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).