

# THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLESHIP  
LESSON 1: THE CALL TO FOLLOW

**What we want students to learn:** That the Holy Spirit both empowers and enables our discipleship.

**What we want students to do with what they've learned:** That the saving relationship Jesus offers us is wrapped up in the concept of following Him.

**Scripture Focus:** Matthew 4:18-22

**Supporting Scripture:** Matthew 9:9-13

**Overview:** The purpose of this lesson is to help students begin to understand discipleship as following after Jesus. This is an introductory lesson that will help set the stage for what you will be studying for the next 51 weeks.

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## TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each **LIFE** 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 **LIFE** lesson 1 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 1, 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.

## THE DETAILS

- **Author:** Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his Gospel.
- **Time frame:** 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

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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.

## THE SETTING

This passage picks up as Jesus began His public ministry, preaching the need for repentance. John the Baptist previously declared Jesus' significance and publicly baptized Him according to Jesus' instruction. Jesus recently completed the period of fasting and praying in the wilderness and endured the temptation from Satan. Many people had heard about the reputation of Jesus, but it had not yet developed into a formal following.

## THE MAIN POINT

Jesus declared His purpose to His followers from their very first encounter – "Follow me." This is critical in understanding that the call to discipleship is an invitation to enter a lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ.

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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

- **Goal:** To help students experience the struggle of following instructions second hand.
- **Set-Up:** You will need enough plain paper plates (or thick paper) and pens for half of your students. You'll also need to display an image of your choosing that you have printed or arranged to otherwise digitally display. The best images for this type of activity are objects that are fairly complex, but not too complicated (a child's tricycle, a prom dress, a piece of heavy machinery, a house, etc.).

FIRST, you will need to tell students that you are dividing them into two groups for an activity. Either have students choose a partner or count off into two groups. Instruct partners to face each other and stand or sit so that one of them, the "drawer," has his/her back toward you and the other is facing you. Only one person in each pair, the "describer," should be able to see what you are about to display.

NEXT, tell the pairs of students that you are about to display an image that one of them is going to describe and the other is going to attempt to draw. Pass out a plate and pen to each pair.

Tell the "drawers" that these are their rules:

1. No peeking.
2. Your plate is to lay flat on YOUR HEAD so that you cannot see what you are drawing.
3. You cannot ask any questions.

Tell the "describers" that these are their rules:

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1. You cannot touch the person drawing or their supplies.
2. You can only give verbal instructions as to what your partner is drawing.
3. You have one minute to describe the image and instruct your partner as they draw what you say.

THEN, display the image and start a one-minute timer (any smartphone will do). When the minute is up, call time and have each pair hold up their drawing. Allow everyone to turn around and see what they were trying to draw.

NEXT, gather students back together and lead a brief discussion using the following questions:

- **How close was your drawing to the original design?**
- **What was difficult about this task?**
- **Was it more frustrating to give instructions or to follow them?**
- **What would have made drawing the picture easier?**

FINALLY, say something like:

- **Most of us would agree that it would be easier to replicate the design if we could have seen for ourselves what was expected rather than just hearing about it. In today's lesson, we will see that Jesus understood this and extended a call to not just know about Him, but to follow Him closely and learn His ways. This is the first lesson in a yearlong study of what it means to truly follow Jesus. What you'll see in this lesson, and in the weeks to come, is that the faith that Jesus calls us to is an active one, a faith that demands a lifetime of relational discipleship. Let's dig in and see where we see this in Scripture.**

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of your lesson.

## THE MAIN EVENT

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- **Goal:** To help students see that the saving relationship Jesus offers us is wrapped up in the concept of following Him.
- **Set Up:** Make sure each student will have access to a copy of God's Word

FIRST, ask students these questions to get the conversation started:

- **What is the first thing that pops into your head when someone comes up to you and says, "Follow me"?**
  - Answers will vary.
- **Are you the kind of person who just says, "OK!" and takes off? Or are you a question asker?**
  - Answers will vary.
- **What kind of questions might you ask of someone who wants you to follow them?**
  - Answers: Why? Where are we going? What do you want? Who else is coming?

THEN, have students turn in their Bibles to Matthew 4:18-22 and tell them that we are going to look at how a few people responded to a call to follow. Use The Details and The Setting sections from your study to give students a brief idea of where we are in history as we pick up this story.

NEXT, read or have a student read Matthew 4:18-20 and ask something like:

- **What, specifically, does Jesus call these men to do?**
  - Answer: Follow me.

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- **What promise does He make to them in that same statement?**
  - Answer: That He will make them fishers of men.
- **Why do you think it is significant that the men were fishing when Jesus approached them?**
  - Answers will vary. Students will probably guess that it served as a clear illustration, but may not realize the significance of the fact that these men were working, not playing. Fishing in Jesus' day was a job, not a sport. He was showing them that they were in for a life change that would be costly.
- **What response do these men give to Jesus' invitation?**
  - Answer: They immediately followed Him.

THEN, explain to students that Jesus wasn't just asking these men to follow Him for a few minutes. He was asking them to leave life as they knew it and take up a new cause. He would help them see beyond the daily struggles of making a living and embrace a lifestyle of reaching lost souls with the truth of His message. These men had met Jesus before but had gone back home and continued with their routine. Jesus was about to change all of that!

NEXT, continue by having a student read Matthew 4:21-22 and ask something like:

- **What similarities and differences do you see between the calling of these men from the two before?**
  - Answer: Both accounts show the call to follow and an immediate response. The difference is that these brothers are in the presence of their father. He would have been an authority in their life, as well as someone who clearly depended on them in the family fishing business.
- **How do you think the presence of the father might have made the response more difficult?**
  - Answer: Let students think about this. Understand that their relationship with their parents will influence their answer. Lead them to consider that it might have been a temptation to consider what the father thought before responding to Jesus.

THEN, explain to students that verse 22 is significant in noting that the men left their father, as well as their livelihood. We all have excuses that make us feel unavailable when it comes to following God. Scripture shows here that these men were no exception. God's Word is clear that we are expected to honor our parents (Exodus 20:12, Ephesians 6:2), but our commitment to follow God must be upheld even before our own family. This can be a difficult issue for students, especially if they have parents who are not believers. Make sure to emphasize that Jesus was not calling the men to disrespect their father, only to submit to Him as the ultimate authority in their life.

NEXT, say something like:

- **Jesus wasn't just asking these men to give up what was important to them; He was inviting them to experience something even greater. Jesus was inviting them to pursue a daily relationship with Him so that they could learn His ways. This is discipleship. That's why these men became known as the first disciples. It wasn't a job. It was a new life.**

THEN, turn over to Matthew 9:9 and have a student read the verse aloud. Ask something like:

- **What is different about Matthew from the previous men who were called? Why is this significant?**
  - Answer: Matthew is called alone, and he is a tax collector, not a fisherman. This is significant because of the reputation that tax collectors had for being dishonest and cruel.

NEXT, read or have a student read Matthew 9:10-13 and draw attention to Jesus' words. Point out the following key

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concepts from this passage by saying something like:

- **Pharisees were the authorities on religious law. They were more than skeptical of Jesus and His teachings and dedicated themselves to finding fault in everything He did. They were attempting to discredit His character by pointing out that He associated with the undesirable. In your own words, how would you explain Jesus' response to the Pharisees?**
  - Answers will vary. Allow students to respond in their own words and then point out the emphasis on mercy. Jesus did not come to start a "good guy's club," but rather to show mercy on the broken and the needy. He didn't call these men because of what they had to offer, but for their willingness to follow Him.

FINALLY, say something like:

- **The same is true for Christ's call on your life. It is not what you have to offer, but how willing you are to follow!**

Ask if there are any questions, then transition into *The Last Word*.

## THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** For students to begin to see their faith as a lifelong, relational journey with Jesus.
- **Set-Up:** You will need a note card or paper and a pen for each student.

PASS out a note card or piece of paper and a pen to each student and instruct them to copy down Jesus' words from Matthew 9:12-13:

- **"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, and not sacrifice. For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners".**

THEN, ask the students something like:

- **Does anyone here feel like they have learned what this means? Can you explain it?**
  - Answers will vary. Allow students time to answer in their own words. Point out that Jesus calls only sinners because that is what we all are! He knows our need for Him, and that is why He calls us to Himself.
- **How does Jesus' invitation to follow Him display His mercy?**
  - Answer: None of us are worthy to follow Him, but He invites us anyway.
- **When you follow Jesus and become a fisher of men, how do you get to display that same mercy?**
  - Answer: When we share the love of Christ with a hurting world we are displaying God's mercy to them.

NEXT, challenge students to memorize Jesus' words in Matthew 9:12-13 this week by placing this card somewhere they will see it often. Encourage them to pray daily, thanking God for the privilege to follow Him and asking Him to give them a tender heart toward others.

FINALLY, allow time for any closing thoughts or questions from students. Close in prayer, asking God to help each of His followers have a heart like His, seeing others and having mercy as we invite them to a relationship with Him.

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- 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.

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## 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).