

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

Part 2: The Picture Of A Disciple
Unit 6: A Disciple Invests In Multiplication
Lesson 48: The Challenges of Disciple-making

What we want students to learn: That while disciple-making is the call of all Christ-followers, there are real challenges that come with it.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To agree that they are called to stay faithful to their commitment to the Gospel message even if others don't.

Scripture Focus: 2 Timothy 4:1-8

Overview: Similar to what you've studied about sharing their faith, your students can expect to experience challenges in disciple-making. The challenges with disciple-making can often be somewhat different than the challenges faced in sharing the Gospel (though, certainly there is some crossover). The challenges faced in disciple-making are often related to a lack of commitment or desire in those we are trying to disciple. In spite of this, we're called to be serious about our task, and to align ourselves with others who are like-minded. And in the end, it's important to know that no matter how tough, the task we're about is the right task. It's a rewarding task. And it's the call God has put on our lives as Christ-followers.

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 48 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 48, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.

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 of what's happening in and around the passage. *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:** Though in the last 200 years or so there have been efforts by some scholars to shed doubt on Paul's authorship of both 1 and 2 Timothy, their arguments aren't very compelling.
- **Time frame:** Most scholars believe Paul wrote these letters to Timothy, his apprentice in ministry, between Paul's first and second imprisonment in Rome. By most accounts, this would place the writing of 1 and 2 Timothy sometime around 64–65 AD, though 2 Timothy could be as late as 67 AD.
- **Purpose:** Paul tells Timothy in the first epistle to continue to combat false teachings. In addition, Paul gives Timothy specific instructions on how to protect against such teaching, including how to install faithful leadership in the church at Ephesus. In

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- 2 Timothy, we see Paul passing along his final words to Timothy. 2 Timothy can be thought of as a personal note from an old man awaiting his death to a young, son-like figure. It's personal, tender at times, encouraging, and practical.

The Setting

2 Timothy is letter written from Paul to Timothy, his ministry protégé. Paul wrote this letter to Timothy near the end of his life as he was imprisoned in Rome. This letter serves as Paul's final encouragement to Timothy to continue preaching the Gospel in Ephesus. In a sense, Paul is handing off the ministry to Timothy with these words. Part of Paul's encouragement to Timothy is to preach even if he struggles to see fruit from his hard work. This message is particularly meaningful coming from an imprisoned Paul – even though he is in chains, he is spreading the Gospel of Jesus in any way he can.

The Main Point

2 Timothy 4 is Paul's final challenge to Timothy. As he closes his letter, Paul personally charges Timothy to continue preaching the Gospel of Jesus. He wants Timothy to understand the importance of what he is doing. This is no mere job or task; it is the Holy calling of carrying the truth of Jesus' sacrifice to the people of the world. Paul shows Timothy that there will be challenges, even apathetic people, but Timothy must persevere and above all, remain steadfast. Paul uses the analogies of a fight and a race to help Timothy see the difficulties that may lie in his future. All of this hard work serves to lift up the Gospel of Jesus: the truth that *He* has made us righteous. With this final challenge, Paul is justifying Timothy's calling: he will give his all to help people see the truth of Jesus. And Paul's final summary of this work is simply this: it's worth it.

Lesson Plan

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

The Lead In

- **Goal:** To help your students begin to think about the "why" behind the hard work of discipleship
- **Set-Up:** You'll need a whiteboard set-up in front of your group.

FIRST, explain to your students that you're going to take a little trip down memory lane this morning.

THEN, write these three Children's story titles on the board: The Little Engine That Could, The Tortoise and the Hare, and Cinderella.

NEXT, ask your students to help you summarize these stories. It may be helpful to write some of the plot points on the board. Walk through what happens in each story, and make sure you write the outcome at the end. Point out that there is a "reward" in each of these stories (see below).

- **TITLE:** The Little Engine That Could
- **PLOT:** The Little Engine must work really hard to carry a train of toys over the mountain to all the boys and girls that need toys. Without the Little Engine, they will have no toys! By telling herself "I think I can," and working really hard, she makes it to her destination.
- **REWARD:** The Little Engine makes all the boys and girls happy! Everyone loves her.
- **TITLE:** The Tortoise and the Hare

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- **PLOT:** The Hare wants to race the Tortoise to show off how fast he is. He is so fast that he jumps out to a quick lead and decides to take a nap under a tree. The Tortoise, though he's slow, just keeps moving: slow and steady. Because of the Hare's arrogance and the Tortoise's hard working persistence, Tortoise wins!
- **REWARD:** The Tortoise wins the race.
- **TITLE:** Cinderella
- **PLOT:** Cinderella's family is the worst. But, because she continues to work hard and be kind in the midst of their awfulness, her Fairy Godmother makes her dreams come true!
- **REWARD:** Cinderella meets Prince Charming and falls in love

THEN, ask your students if they see a pattern with these stories. Make sure they land here:

- **Each of these stories is a tale of work and reward. The morals are all the same: if you work hard and don't give up, if you do what is right even when it's hard, you'll be rewarded for your hard work.**

Transition to the lesson for today. Say something like this:

- **This morning we're going to look at how this concept is turned on its head in God's Kingdom.**

FINALLY, ask your students to remind you of what you've been talking about the last few weeks in your lessons. They should be able to tell you about how you've been talking about sharing the Gospel and discipling others: essentially Jesus' challenge that we help people see the truth of Christ. Say:

- **We need to understand that the challenge of discipleship is not a simple task based on your last couple of lessons. There will be challenges, hard work, and even failure along the way. This morning we're going to look at a passage where Paul talks about why discipleship is worth the challenge and hard work.**

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

The Main Event

- **Goal:** To help your students see that while disciple-making is the call of all Christ-followers, there are real challenges that come with it.
- **Set Up:** You may benefit from a dry-erase board, but it's not critical. Make sure students have a Bible or that they are able to look along with a friend.

FIRST, start with asking a couple of questions to review the basics of the Christian call to discipleship. Ask:

- **Who can tell me the main idea of what we've been talking about over the last several weeks?**
 - *Answer:* We've been discussing the call for all Christians to share the Gospel and make disciples of Jesus. We are called to spread the Good News of Jesus and help others follow Him.
- **Where/Who does the call to share the Gospel and make disciples come from?**
 - *Answer:* Jesus. (This is an easy answer, but an important one. Make sure your students are clear that the idea of us making disciples of our world is the call from Jesus Himself. He modeled it and challenged us to do the same.)
- **Is this something that we are all called to do or just a select few Christians?**
 - *Answer:* We are all called to make disciples.

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THEN ask students to open their Bibles to 2 Timothy 4. Help them with a little context on this passage before you read it together (reference the *Bible Background* if you want additional information):

- **This letter is a letter that Paul wrote to Timothy before Paul died. It was one of the last things that Paul wrote. Paul was Timothy's mentor in ministry, and this passage was his final challenge to Timothy.**

NEXT, read or have a student read 2 Timothy 4:1-5. Lead in this discussion around these verses and some of the potential difficulties around making disciples. Ask:

- **What does Paul task Timothy with doing?**
 - *Answer:* The main challenge comes at the beginning of verse 2: "preach the word." He also calls Timothy at the end of this verse to "reprove, rebuke and exhort." (There is a connection to be made here with an earlier part of this letter in 2 Timothy 3:16 and the uses of God's Word.)
- **What do you think Paul means by "the word?"**
 - Let your students explore their thoughts on this, but help them land on the idea that Paul is referring to the Gospel of Jesus: the truth that Jesus died for the payment of our sins, was buried, and came back to life – defeating sin and death forever! Paul wants Timothy to continue to speak about that. This is important to remember: it's the Good News of Jesus that is the foundation of discipleship.
- **Does reproof, rebuking, and exhorting sound like fun?**
 - Not really. These are confrontational words. Paul is referencing the hard work of discipleship, here. The Gospel of Jesus forces choices and change in our lives. It is no different for anyone we might be helping along in their relationship with Jesus. Timothy is going to have to rebuke and reprove (point out wrongdoing) those he is disciplining.
- **What would be the difference between "in season" and "out of season"?**
 - Let your students answer this question – they will probably land somewhere around our circumstances – they might say that Paul is telling Timothy to be ready to share the Gospel and make disciples in any environment. While Paul is referencing the importance of preparing for different opportunities and circumstances to share the Gospel, we have to realize that the biggest variable in making disciples is *people*. We must be prepared and ready to engage in discipleship, even with those who may frustrate us.

Explain to students that there will be times where the most frustrating thing about making disciples is the disciples themselves. Your students may be trying to share the Gospel with someone who just isn't having it. They may be struggling to know what to say to someone's questions, or how to share effectively with someone who is suffering. There will be times when the people we're disciplining will disappoint us or even resent us for trying to point them to Jesus. Explain that this is normal and part of what it means to lead people closer to Jesus.

THEN, ask a student to read the end of 2 Timothy 4:2 again out loud. Ask:

- **What characteristic does Paul point out that Timothy will need as he does the hard work of discipling?**
 - *Answer:* Patience. He calls Timothy to do all of this with "complete patience." This will be a challenge for anyone seeking to make disciples. Patience can sometimes be a difficult thing to have when trying to help someone see the life-changing truth of the Gospel of Jesus. We want to see life change immediately, but it is a process that takes place over time.
- **Why does Paul encourage Timothy to have patience?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **(Once your students have had a chance to answer, have a student read 2 Timothy 4:3-4 out loud.) Do these sound like easy people to lead in a relationship with Jesus?**

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- Answers will vary.

FINALLY, explain that Paul's final charges to Timothy come in 4:5, as he tells Timothy that he will need to be "sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." This underscores the hard work of discipleship. Say:

- **Timothy is going to endure people who don't want to listen, don't want to change and may even fight his efforts to show them Jesus. Sadly, the same will be true for us. Discipleship is not always easy. We're going to close the lesson by looking at why Paul says all this difficulty is worth it.**

Ask if there are any questions, and if there are none, transition into *The Last Word*.

The Last Word

- **Goal:** To help your students agree that they are called to stay faithful to their commitment to the Gospel message even if others don't.
- **Set-Up:** Make sure students have a Bible or that they are able to look along with a friend. Make sure you've still got the children's story information on the whiteboard.

FIRST, read 2 Timothy 4:6-8 out loud. Then, lead students in this discussion:

- **Where is Paul while he is writing this?**
 - *Answer:* Paul is in prison. He's in prison for making disciples of Jesus.
- **How does Paul describe his experience in ministry for Jesus at the moment?**
 - *Answer:* He says that he is being poured out as a "drink offering." He says that he has "finished the race" and "fought the good fight." Paul uses these metaphors to describe his journey with Jesus. Though it has not been easy and has been a "fight," it has been a "good fight."
- **What is Paul talking about when he says that his "departure has come?"**
 - *Answer:* Paul knows that the end is near for him. He will die soon, but he is making clear to Timothy why everything he has endured has been worth it.

NEXT, Point out the children's stories on the whiteboard again and ask:

- **Why was the hard work worth it for the Little Engine?**
 - The Little Engine made the children happy.
- **Why was the hard work worth it for the Tortoise?**
 - He won the race.
- **Why was the hard work worth it for Cinderella?**
 - She met Prince Charming and her dreams came true.

FINALLY, connect this back to Paul's words to Timothy:

- **Why does Paul say that this hard work of discipleship is worth it?**
 - *Answer:* Let your students answer – they will probably center on "the crown of righteousness" in verse 8. It might seem like this passage has the same construction the Children's stories: 'work hard and get rewarded,' but we're about to show how it is different.
- **Paul doesn't say there is a crown of gold or jewels laid up for him. What is it a crown of?**
 - *Answer:* Righteousness!
- **Let's walk through the Gospel of Jesus. How are we made righteous?**

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- Answers will vary. But stress that this is the most important point of this entire lesson. We are not made righteous because of the hard work we do for Jesus, but we have *already* been made righteous by Jesus' death on the cross. This is the differentiation between this passage and the children's stories. It's flipped. We are not working in order to gain the righteousness of Jesus, we do the hard work of discipleship *because Jesus has forgiven us and made us righteous through His death on the cross!* This is the great truth of the Gospel: Jesus loved us enough to die for us before we did anything to deserve it. His love, demonstrated on the cross, motivates us to give our lives to help others see the truth of Jesus!

Explain that we follow Jesus even when others give up because it's difficult. Those we try to disciple may abandon their faith, our friends may even abandon Jesus. But, if we remember the love that Jesus showed us on the cross, we will pursue Him forever. Make the final connection for your students by saying something like this:

- **The reward for us has already happened. We were saved by *grace*. We will get to experience a fuller relationship with God when we're reunited with Him, but now we do the hard work of discipleship. We're not doing it for some reward, but because of the love that Jesus has already shown us on the cross! The difficulties and challenges are worth it because of what Jesus has done for us.**

FINALLY, close in prayer, asking God to help you have the strength to do the tough work of discipleship even when things are difficult.

- 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.