

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

Part 3: The Cost of Discipleship Lesson 49: Discipleship Is Not The Easiest Road

What we want students to learn: That being a Christ-follower is not easy, but that it's the only path to experiencing the life God desires for us.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To identify challenges 21st century teenagers face, and to brainstorm ways they can rely on God to see them through them.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 7:13-14

Supporting Scripture: Luke 13:22-24; John 14:6

Overview: As you begin to wrap up your look at what it means to be a disciple, it's important that you spend some time talking about what happens when your students live faithfully as followers of Christ. This unit helps students see that it's not easy to live as someone who identifies primarily as a Christ-follower. There will be tough times. And yet, Christ ultimately rules, and there is still no better life. This lesson will introduce this unit and will begin to examine the specific challenges faced by Christian teenagers in today's world.

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 49 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 49, 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:** 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 50's or 60's AD, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.
- **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.

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The Setting

This passage comes at the end of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The main point of the Sermon on the Mount is that true righteousness is about the heart, not just outward actions. The righteous heart will overflow into right action but actions alone do not please the Lord. Jesus finished this incredible teaching by comparing the lifestyle of the true disciple versus those who claim to know God, yet do not have pure hearts.

The Main Point

The way that leads to eternal life is narrow. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation; there is no other way to inherit eternal life. Following Him is not the easy or popular decision and there will be difficulties along the way. However, taking the easy and most popular way leads to destruction.

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 get students thinking about the difficulty of a narrow path.
- **Set Up:** A marble or small ball and two objects (could be books) to use as goal posts.

FIRST, have all the students stand at one end of the room and give one of them a marble. Set up a wide "gate" using two objects.

THEN, explain to the students that they will be playing a game. The object is to get the marble through the gate. If they do not get the marble through the gate they must sit out for the rest of the game.

NEXT, have all the students take a turn with the marble. If you have more than one marble or ball, you can let some of them go at the same time in order to move things along depending on your group size. Have any students that miss the gate sit down.

THEN, make the gate smaller. Have all the remaining students try to roll the marble through the gate. Any students who miss have to sit down. Continue to repeat this process until one player is left or you have made the narrowest opening possible. Ask something like:

- **When did this game get challenging?**
 - *Answer:* As the gate got smaller.
- **Why was it more difficult to get your marble through the gate as they narrowed?**
 - *Answer:* You had a smaller chance of success and different variables like your concentration or bumps on the floor had a bigger impact the smaller the gate became.
- **Why were there fewer people at the end of this game?**
 - *Answer:* The game got more difficult. The chances of people getting out kept going up.

FINALLY, say something like:

- **Today we are going to look at one of Jesus' teachings where He talks about a narrow way with a difficult path. As we study this passage, think about the ending of this game we just played. When the gate got smaller, the path through that gate became more difficult and fewer people were able to last until the end of the game. This is the analogy we'll be using for thinking about discipleship today. It's an analogy that Jesus made, so it's definitely one worth looking closely at.**

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

The Main Event

- **Goal:** To help students understand that being a Christ-follower is not easy, but that it's the only path to experiencing the life God desires for us.
- **Set Up:** You will benefit from a dry-erase board, but it's not essential. You'll want to make sure students have a Bible or a Bible app. Also, a piece of paper and pen for each student will be helpful.

FIRST, ask students to turn to Matthew 7. As students find Matthew, take a moment to provide context for this passage using information from the *Bible Background*. Read or have a student read Matthew 7:13-14. Ask something like:

- **Jesus described two gates. What are the two types of gates?**
 - *Answer:* Wide and narrow.

NEXT, make two columns on the board and write "Wide" at the top of one column and "Narrow" at the top of the other column. If you've distributed paper and something to write with to your students, ask students to do this same thing by folding their paper in half lengthwise. They should label the top of the columns "Wide" and "Narrow." As you ask your students to describe the gates, write the descriptions in the proper columns on the board and have students do the same on their papers. Say something like:

- **Jesus said that there are only two options—the wide gate or the narrow gate. We only have two options with our faith lives, too; we will either live our life according to the wide gate or the narrow gate. Let's look at how Jesus described these gates. Writing it down will help us understand which gate we should strive to enter through and what that is going to look like.**

THEN, lead your students in a brief discussion by asking something like:

- **How did Jesus describe the wide gate?**
 - *Answer:* The way is easy; leads to destruction; many enter by it.
- **How did Jesus describe the narrow gate?**
 - *Answer:* The way is hard; leads to life; few find it.
- **Which gate did Jesus say we should enter by?**
 - *Answer:* The narrow gate.
- **What was Jesus talking about when He mentioned these gates? What do these gates represent?**
 - *Answer:* These gates represent how we will enter eternity. We will either leave this life through the narrow gate and find eternal life with God in heaven, or we will leave this life through the wide gate and spend eternity in Hell. The gate we go through depends upon whom we have followed in our life, Jesus or the world. Will we live in a way that honors the Lord, or will we live to please men?

NEXT, direct your students to find John 14:6. Read or have a student read the passage. Explain that faith in Jesus is the only way to the Father. Salvation comes through Christ alone. In order to find eternal life we must go through Jesus, our gate to the Father. The gate that leads to life is narrow because there is only one way through it, and that is through Jesus. The path through the narrow gate describes the life of discipleship for the authentic Christ-follower.

THEN, direct your students' attention back to Matthew 7:13-14. Ask something like:

- **When you think about the wide gate and way that leads to destruction, what type of lifestyle do you picture? What are some characteristics of entering through this wide gate?**

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- Answers will vary. Some examples might include relying on good works to get you into heaven, striving to be super popular with others, or a wild lifestyle.

NEXT, explain that the wide gate is the popular way that most people are going to take. This is the way of the world, inclusive of many beliefs and lifestyles. People like it because it is easy and doesn't require much.

THEN, lead your students in a discussion about the wide gate by asking something like:

- **Can you give some examples in your life or in the lives of those around you of how the popular way of the world, the wide gate, has led to destruction?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Why do you think so many choose the wide gate?**
 - *Answer:* This is the easy way that doesn't require much sacrifice or hard work. Walking on the same wide path as many others brings company and comfort.
- **Why is the wide gate so tempting for so many?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Think about some of the things we have learned this year about being a disciple. What are some things that you have learned that are "hard"? What makes it hard to truly follow Jesus?**
 - *Answer:* Following Jesus requires sacrifice. We must give up our own plans, desires, and comforts to obey whatever God calls us to do. We must put Jesus first, others second, and ourselves last rather than always thinking of ourselves first. We have to risk popularity and the approval of others to stand up for what is right. Christ-followers can expect to face ridicule and difficulty just as Jesus did.

NEXT, say something like:

- **The narrow gate, salvation through faith in Jesus, is not hidden. It's just difficult for people to overcome their own sin-natures. Many people have heard the Gospel. The offer of salvation is open to all. However, so many deny that faith in Jesus alone is the only way to heaven; even fewer will give up their pleasures and sin to follow Jesus.**

THEN, ask something like:

- **Does the way of discipleship feel lonely sometimes? Explain.**
 - Answers will vary.

Remind students that Jesus said that following Him would be difficult. However, He also said that it is the only way to life. He told us which gate we are to walk through. We cannot experience the life God desires for us on any other path. Remind them that yes, being a Christ-follower can be lonely sometimes, but it is comforting to know that in the end it leads to life with Him.

NEXT, ask something like:

- **How can these words from Jesus about the narrow gate bring encouragement to you as a Christ-follower?**
 - *Answer:* Jesus told us that the way of discipleship would be difficult. When we go through hard times as a believer in Christ, we can be comforted that He knows what we are going through and He knows that the way is not popular. We can also be encouraged because He has promised that this is the way that leads to life.
- **Although the path of discipleship is tough, what are some of the blessings of walking the narrow way?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **When you think about the narrow gate and way that leads to life, what type of lifestyle do you picture? What are some characteristics of entering through this narrow gate?**

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- Answers will vary.

NEXT, say something like:

- **In the gospel of Luke we have another, similar statement by Jesus. Jesus was teaching about true salvation. Salvation does not come from the right actions or because you are in the right family (as the Jews thought), but from faith in Jesus Christ. Listen to what Jesus said about the way of salvation.**

FINALLY, read or have a student read Luke 13:22-24. Ask something like:

- **Why do you think Jesus answered their question this way?**
 - *Answer:* Rather than give the people a number, Jesus told them how they could be saved. Many would try to find eternal life through other ways, but we can only enter Heaven through faith in Jesus.
- **Think about what Jesus is saying in these two passages. When you think about the number of people in your school, the people in your community, do you think more will enter through the narrow gate or the wide gate? Why?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Why do you think many will not be able to enter through the narrow door?**
 - *Answer:* Many people aren't willing to come to saving faith in Jesus. Salvation is not complex, but the way of discipleship is hard. To truly follow Jesus, you must be willing to lay down your own life for the sake of Christ. You must be willing to give up your own wishes and desires to do what God has for you. Few are willing to do that.

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

The Last Word

- **Goal:** To identify challenges 21st century teenagers face, and to brainstorm ways they can rely on God to see them through them.
- **Set-Up:** Dry-erase board and something to write with, as well as one index card and pen for each student.

FIRST, begin this section by asking something like:

- **What are some challenges teenagers face today? What are some difficulties you experience?**
 - Answers will vary. As students provide answers, make a list on the board of common issues and challenges.
- **How do these challenges impact you following the wide or narrow gate?**
 - Answers will vary.

NEXT, lead your students in a discussion about how they can rely on God to walk them through these challenges. This can be specific action steps, memorizing Scripture, spending time in God's Word each day, getting in the habit of praying as soon something comes up, training their minds to intentionally pray when they start feeling stressed, etc.

THEN, direct students to write one or two of their biggest challenges on the front of the index card. Encourage them to use the back of the index card to identify how they can rely on God to see them through this challenge.

FINALLY, remind students that being a Christ-follower is not easy, but it is the only path to experiencing the life that God desires for us.

Allow time for any closing thoughts or questions from your students.

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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.

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.