

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLESHIP
LESSON 8: DISCIPLESHIP AND IMITATION:
IMITATING OTHERS

What we want students to learn: That one of the main ways we grow in discipleship is to imitate the lives of other Christ-followers, especially those who are older and more spiritually mature.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To identify specific Christ-followers in their lives worth imitating, and to commit to imitating aspects of their faith.

Scripture Focus: Hebrews 13:6-8

Supporting Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 3:17

Overview: The Apostle Paul knew that one of the most powerful learning tools is a great example. This is true in life. And it is especially true when it comes to faith. This lesson will help your students see that one of the ways we grow as disciples is by looking to those more mature, more developed Christ-followers around us and imitating the way they live out their faith.

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 8 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 8, 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 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:** Originally this letter to the Hebrews was entitled "The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews." However, since the Reformation, it's been widely recognized that Paul was probably not the writer. There's simply not enough textual or historical evidence to prove his authorship. Early historians suggested the author is perhaps Barnabas or Apollos, though there is no way to know for sure.

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- **Time frame:** Hebrews was almost certainly written before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD, since the author does not mention or give any hint to this catastrophic happening.
- **Purpose:** Hebrews was written to address Jewish converts to Christianity and challenge them to hold fast to their newfound faith. Many of them were resorting back to old traditions, and some were even considering merging with certain Jewish sects. Because of increased persecution of Jewish converts to Christianity, many of them were tempted to resort back to old rites and rituals purely to avoid the pain. The challenge from this Hebrew Christian writer to Hebrew converts was to hold fast to their Christian faith and not to slip back to the legalistic patterns of their Hebrew roots.

THE SETTING

This passage directly follows two fundamental chapters in the book of Hebrews. In challenging his Jewish audience to hold fast to their faith in Jesus Christ as Messiah, the author of Hebrews recounts the many faithful followers of God from the Old Testament (Hebrews 11) and lays the foundation for continued perseverance in the faith (Hebrews 12). Beginning in chapter 13, the author of Hebrews gives practical wisdom regarding habits and practices which will strengthen the faith of his readers. Among these practical instructions, the importance of imitating leaders who “spoke to you the word of God” is given. The practice of imitation was common to Jews of this time, who were required to imitate rabbis in their community from a very young age. The idea of imitation and discipleship set forth in this passage is a central aspect of living in lifelong relationship with God and growing in spiritual maturity.

THE MAIN POINT

The main point we want to make is that being a Christ-follower means listening, watching and imitating those who are spiritually mature so that we can know how to grow in our own faith. God didn’t leave us alone in this world to figure out how to grow; He gave us spiritually mature people all around us to imitate in our lives. This lesson will help your students to identify people in their lives who are spiritually mature and challenge them to commit to imitating those people in their own spiritual walk.

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 students begin to understand their need for a spiritual mentor.
- **Set-Up:** You will want to make sure you have a laptop or tablet that is connected to internet to look up the following video. You will also need two writing utensils and two pieces of paper. Watch the first 1:52 of this video before beginning the discussion. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=776niN4-A58>

FIRST, split your students into two groups and tell them that you are going to watch a video of someone imitating people around them. Based on what they see in the video, tell each group to come up with a definition for the word “imitation.” Give the groups two or so minutes to work out their definition.

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NEXT, ask each group to share their definition of the word "imitation." Once both groups have shared, ask them questions like these to begin a discussion:

- **Why did your group define imitation the way that you did? Explain.**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Does this video show imitation as a good thing or a bad thing?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What kinds of people in today's culture do you see being imitated? Why do you think this is the case?**
 - Answers will vary.

THEN, explain that in the lesson today you are going to be talking about imitation in the Christian faith. Say something like:

- **Whether we know it or not, each one of us is an imitator. Some of us imitate our parents, others imitate what we see and hear on television and the Internet, and some of us imitate the people we most look up to. But not everyone is worth imitating, and if we aren't careful, we could end up imitating someone who leads us further from God. So, the question for today is: "What kinds of people should we be imitating?"**

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

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help your students identify why they need to imitate the practices and faith of a mature believer, why that imitation is important, and how to take steps towards imitating people in their faith.
- **Set Up:** You'll benefit from a dry erase board. Make sure students have a Bible or that they are able to look along with a friend.

FIRST, have the students re-read their definitions of imitation aloud. Then, write the following definition on the board and compare: "Imitation: The action of using someone or something as a model."

NEXT, explain to your students that imitation is something that takes place in their lives, whether they are intentional about it or not. As Christ-followers, they are commanded to be intentional about who and what they model their lives after. Say something like:

- **As followers of Jesus, we need to be sure that we are being intentional about who we model our lives after. To be intentional means to take specific action. Many times, Christians assume that once they make a decision to follow Christ, they will immediately develop good habits and will naturally grow in their faith. The opposite is true! In his letter, James writes about the difference between those Christ-followers who are intentional in their faith and those who are not. James says that believers who are not intentional about their faith are "like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind." How can we avoid a faith like this in our lives? One of the ways is by being intentional about imitating mature Christ-followers.**

THEN, explain that in the lesson today you're going to be looking at the book of Hebrews to help guide their understanding of what they should look for when searching for someone to imitate in their lives. Ask students to turn in their

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Bibles to Hebrews 13. Be sure to use the Bible Background to help them understand the situation in which the author of Hebrews wrote.

NEXT, read or have a student read Hebrews 13:6-8. When students have finished reading, lead them in a short discussion. Refer back to verse 6. Ask something like:

- **What is the first encouragement the author of Hebrews gives to these struggling believers?**
 - Answer: To have confidence in the Lord. Write this on the board
- **What do you think it means to be confident in the Lord?**
 - Answer: To trust that God is sovereign and in control, even when we doubt or face trials in our lives.
- **How does a follower of Christ develop this kind of confidence in the Lord?**
 - Answer: Experience walking with the Lord through life cultivates confidence in the believer. Mature believers have more confidence in the Lord because they have seen God's faithfulness in their own lives.

THEN, say something like:

- **The writer of Hebrews was himself a mature believer in Jesus. He knew that because he had seen God's faithfulness throughout the Old Testament and in his own life, he could be confident that "the Lord is my helper." Similarly, when looking for someone in our own lives to imitate, we should look for someone who is older and more experienced in their faith.**

NEXT, tell students to keep this thought in mind as they continue studying this passage. Direct your students' attention to verse 7. Ask something like the following questions:

- **What is the next encouragement given by the author of Hebrews in verse 7?**
 - Answer: Remember your leaders and imitate them. Write this on the board.
- **What does the author of Hebrews tell us about the leaders who are to be remembered and imitated?**
 - Answer: They spoke the word of God and they enjoyed fruitful lives. The outcome of their lives was to be imitated.
- **Why is it important that the leaders spoke the Word of God?**
 - Answer: The Word of God teaches about God's character, will, and ways. If leaders do not use the Word of God as their foundation, they are not worth imitating.

THEN, say something like:

- **In these verses the author of Hebrews gives us two more clues to consider when looking for someone to imitate in our lives. If the person we are imitating is not rooted in the Word of God and producing good fruit that is glorifying to God in life, then we should not imitate them. Likewise, we should seek Christ-followers who are rooted in God's Word and exhibit the fruits of the Spirit.**

NEXT, ask something like:

- **How can we know that someone's life is producing fruit?**
 - Answer: If someone's life is producing fruit, it is obvious. Fruitfulness is not hidden or masked. It's evident to people. Take a moment and discuss the results of a fruitful life. Refer to Hebrews 11 and Galatians 5:22-24 for scriptural support.

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THEN, direct your student's attention to verse 8. Remind them that you are helping them to identify characteristics that they want to look for when finding someone to imitate. Ask something like:

- **What does this verse tell us about Jesus?**
 - Answer: Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. In other words, He never changes.

NEXT, say something like:

- **Not only does the author of Hebrews encourage his readers to imitate mature believers around them, but he also encourages them to imitate Jesus. In the end, every believer's goal is to imitate Jesus Christ in their faith. The author of Hebrews wants these believers to understand that by imitating mature believers who have confidence in faith, trust in the Word of God, and fruit in their lives, young believers will grow in their faith. But if the goal is to imitate Jesus, why have a spiritual mentor?**

THEN, explain to the students that the Bible has several passages that instruct Christ-followers to be imitators. Refer to 1 Corinthians 11:1 as an example. Say something like:

- **When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the church at Corinth, he instructed them to imitate him as he imitated Christ. The apostle Paul knew that in order to help the Corinthians grow in faith, they needed to imitate him in their lives and actions.**

NEXT, explain that Paul instructed the church at Philippi to also imitate he and the other leaders present in the church for their spiritual growth. Then, ask them something like the following questions:

- **How are Paul's statements in Philipians and 1 Corinthians similar to what we read in Hebrews 13?**
 - Answer: All three of these passages encourage younger believers to imitate those who are spiritually mature in order to grow in faith.
- **According to both of Paul's letters as well as Hebrews 13:6-8, why do we need to imitate spiritually mature followers of Christ?**
 - Answer: Help students to see that imitating mature believers is a biblical model that we should follow and is the design that God has given us to grow in our faith.
- **What are some of the qualities seen in Hebrews 13 that we should look for when searching for a spiritually mature believer to imitate?**
 - Answer: The goal is to get the students to review some of those answers which are given in the lesson. Examples include lives full of fruit, full of God's word, and confidence in faith.

FINALLY, explain to students that as Christ-followers, we must be intentional in our lives in finding and pursuing relationships with mature Christ-followers. Tell students that it is their responsibility to imitate mature believers' lifestyles and habits so that they can grow in their own faith. Say something like:

- **Sometimes as teenagers it can be difficult to live for Christ in our daily lives. Frequently, we try our best to grow but don't know how. Yet as the author of Hebrews shows us, we can grow in our faith when we identify spiritual leaders in our lives and imitate their habits and lifestyle. When we do this intentionally, we can learn from others how to grow deeper in our walk with Christ and take action based on their example.**

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

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THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** Have students identify specific Christ-followers in their lives worth imitating, and to commit to imitating aspects of their faith.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need pencils and notecards.

FIRST, set the stage for the example by saying something like:

- **Imitating those who are further along than ourselves is not a new thing.** In fact, in most professional sports environments, mentors are key in helping professional athletes like LeBron James take their game to an entirely new level. One of these mentors is the great basketball player, Hakeem Olajuwon. Listen to this short blurb from an article about Olajuwon's interaction with other great NBA players: "Hakeem Olajuwon is without a doubt one of the best mentors around today, and players know that. Guys like LeBron James and Amar'e Stoudemire are willing to spend time and money in the summer working out with Hakeem "The Dream" to improve their post games. The best part of Olajuwon's mentoring abilities is that he's such a soft-spoken individual. He teaches players with the way he approaches the game, the way he plays it and the way he understands it. Olajuwon is one of the most intelligent players to play the game, and that's exactly why he's such a great mentor for players trying to take their game to the next level."

Source: <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/1344432-10-best-current-player-mentors-in-the-nba>

NEXT, explain that just as LeBron James must practice and imitate a legendary basketball player like Olajuwon in order to improve his game, your students also need to imitate those believers who are mature in their faith so that they can grow into deeper relationship with Jesus. Say something like:

- **If someone as great at basketball as LeBron James uses imitation to make his game better, we too should take advantage of imitating mature believers so that we can learn what it means to follow and love God on a deeper level.**

THEN, explain that you will be leading your students through an activity so that they can identify possible people in their lives who they could imitate. Give each student a notecard. Then, say something like this:

- **Using the list of important qualities that we wrote on the board from Hebrews 13:6-8, think of three individuals who you have seen practice at least one of these things. Write their names on the card in front of you. Once you have written three names on your card, write down some specific action steps that you can accomplish to imitate those people. (Give some examples for each of the qualities that were given in the Main Event).**

FINALLY, ask students if they understand the importance of finding Christ-followers who are worth imitating in their daily lives. Allow some time to share action steps that they have laid out for themselves as they seek to imitate their specific people. Be sure to invite students who cannot think of three people to speak with you after the lesson, so that you can help them identify people in their lives worth imitating.

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Challenge your students to follow through on their action steps and let them know that they will have a chance to share these before the lesson next week.

- 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.