

Intro

This is a look at the life of discipleship - a look at the fact that we are all on a journey with Christ, but at different stages. This session thinks about the fact that church isn't just a place for 'Christians' but should be available and open to those who don't know Jesus. It's also a look at what the church / Kingdom of God is - so that we know the inheritance we have through Christ. If we know what we have, if we realise how awesome it is, we can spread the message of how incredible it is, so that others also become excited about the hope they too can have in Jesus.

JESUS – THE DISCIPLES - AND THE JOURNEY

Jesus chose different kinds of people – a quick overview could tell us that Peter and Andrew were fishermen on the Lake Galilee. Other 2 brothers also fishing were James and John. Matthew was chosen from a life of dishonest tax collecting. Also Philip, Bartholemew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas.

Today, we are disciples of Jesus. This is more than simply following, this is a lifestyle, a life, committed to Jesus and his purpose for our lives. You can be a 'Christian' without being a disciple, you can be a disciple without being a Christian. Let's make sure we follow, hear and obey Jesus.

CHURCH - NOT JUST MEMBERS ONLY

Paul Scanlon who was Pastor at Life Church in Bradford challenged his church to take a good look at what they mean when they used the word 'church'. He looked around and said, 'don't think that this is YOUR church.. this is the community's church, Bradford's church, the UK's church..'

What he meant is that the church should be open to others and not just be a club for 'Christians'. Of course the true church family are the people who belong to God.

He also said that we need to live lives that are 100% evangelistic, instead of trying to focus our evangelistic efforts simply into moments when we feel we have an 'opportunity'. If we're not careful, often these kinds of moments feel forced. Instead they should be very natural as sharing our faith becomes part of who and what we are..

For example, I was having my haircut just after I heard this message and I didn't wait for a forced moment to talk about God, it just naturally came up in my conversation. I was able to share with the hairdresser what I do and it was very natural and not forced.

But first, let's take a quick look at the concept of the Kingdom of Heaven...

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Did you know the word Christian only appears 3 times in The Bible (2 other times as headings inserted by translators). It was first used in the New Testament to describe God's people during a new work of God among the people in Antioch, including Greeks. (Acts 11.26). One speaker, called Dr Myles Munroe thinks that it is more helpful to talk about the Kingdom of God, rather than about being Christians.

Let's think about the Kingdom of God and why this is such a helpful analogy..

Get into groups and have people discuss what the Kingdom of God / heaven is - what are the promises - what does the Bible say. Then feedback and write up / project onto screen to feed back together.

Here are just some promises and realities of the Kingdom of God (KOG):

- In the KOG, there is one God but he invites people to become part of his family. Not only that but they have a share in the Kingdom, not as equals with God.
- The KOG has a King who died for his subjects, not subjects who have to die for their King.
- The KOG has promises of eternal life.
- The KOG has a King who calls us brothers and sisters
- The KOG is a family where you are called, valued, raised up, given gifts and loved unconditionally by God through Jesus
- You are part of this Kingdom if you know Jesus as your Saviour (the one who has saved you from a life of sin, to a life in Christ)

But why does this matter? Because the Kingdom of God is important, it is valuable and if people really knew what it was, they'd want to be part of it too.

Matthew 10.7-8: *As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.'*

So we know that something of the Kingdom of God is about healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing the lepers, driving out demons and freely giving as God has given. This is and can be part of the life of believers. It doesn't mean that all people will be healed, all people will be raised from the dead (and we do know from the Bible that there is a specific ministry of healing for some believers), but this is amazing stuff!

Matthew 13.44-46: *The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is*

like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

From these verses, we know that the Kingdom of Heaven is something worth having, something incredibly valuable, worth selling everything for. So we know that the Message of the Gospel, is a message of immense value, beyond our dreams. If we as the church could truly understand, live and breathe this Kingdom message, then we could share the message with others so much more effectively.

PHOTO MOSAIC

If you look around the Internet, you can find software that create photo mosaics. A photo mosaic is like the image below – it is one image, made up of lots of other smaller images.

Video direct link – <https://youtu.be/PveYWuqUBNY>

Or use our images:

<https://www.myfishbites.com/images/photomosaic/jesusphotomosaic.jpg>

<https://www.myfishbites.com/images/photomosaic/Mosaic.jpg>

Alternatively go to this Session on the myfishbites site and find the images on the page.

In a way, these kinds of images express a lot about disciples of Christ. Together, we make up the church, we are all in different places, with different places, playing our essential parts. Together we are in Christ, some closer than others, some more on the fringes than others closer to the centre of the action.

To bring out the most effectiveness of these or similar images, use a graphics or presentation programme and project onto a screen. Start by zooming in close to a section of the image (so for example in Photoshop - or PowerPoint etc, I would zoom in to the image using a magnification of say 1000%). Gradually, decrease the magnification.

What you are doing is starting with one image, perhaps one person. But as you draw out away from the image, you see that there are lots of other people and together we are in Christ. It's quite effective and powerful to describe the Kingdom of God.

THE 12 DISCIPLES / APOSTLES

If we have a quick look at the 12 Apostles that Jesus chose, we will see how we are all different, as they were all different. The apostles were in different places spiritually, had varied gifts and had their own unique place and personalities.

It is also interesting to note that, as an in the photo mosaic, some people were closer to Jesus than others. In a very real sense there were 4 levels to all the disciples of Jesus.

1. The disciple that Jesus loved (John)
2. The 'inner core' of Peter, James and John (see Matt 17.1 and Mark 14.33)
3. The 12 (at any one time) disciples
4. The wider followers of Jesus

You can find lists of the disciples in Matt 10:2-4, Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:12-19, Acts 1:13.

Simon Peter - normally called Peter, a fisherman and brother to Andrew. Quite impetuous and impulsive - he was the one who walked on water (Matt 14.29) and who even cut off the ear of a servant of the pharisees. He was married (see Matt 8.14 and 1 Cor 9.5). Peter had a large house at Capernaum where, along with his own family, his brother Andrew and mother-in-law also lived (Mark 1:29, Matt 8:14). Peter denied that he knew Jesus - as Jesus said he would (Luke 22:54-61) then repented for this (Luke 22:62). Peter, along with others, discovered the tomb empty (John 20:1-10)

Andrew - Also active in bringing people to Jesus (Matt 4:17-20. Brother of Peter (Matt 4.18). Name meant 'manly'. Heard about Jesus from John the Baptist and then met Jesus and brought Peter to Jesus (John 1:40-42). Likely that Andrew and Simon carried on as fishermen until their 'official' call from Jesus - (Matt 4:18-20). Andrew asked Jesus when His return would be (Mark 13:1-36). Andrew is believed to have been martyred, as were many of the disciples, except possibly John.

James - was the older brother of John. He was the first of The Twelve to be martyred. A fisherman with John and one of the first 4 disciples to be called (Matt 4.21-22). Jesus called James and John, "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17) - probably a reference to their bold and zealous personality - illustrated by a later incident in which they wanted to "call down fire from heaven" to destroy the people of a Samaritan village who had refused to allow Jesus and His apostles to pass through on their way to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-56). James was "put to death with the sword" (Acts 12:2) by King Herod Agrippa I about 44 A.D.

John - John was one of the closest friends of Jesus, and one of the bravest - he remained there with Jesus from the mock trial right to the end, while many others (eg Peter) had legged it. "When Jesus saw His mother there, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home." (John 19:26-27). A fisherman, brother of James, with a wealthy father

(Mark 1.19-20). They immediately followed Jesus. After the resurrection, John and Peter quickly ran to the tomb (John was fitter / faster than Peter as he arrived at the tomb first!) and discovered the empty burial cloth and strips of linen. (John 20.3-4). John lived to old age. While banished to the island of Patmos, after having already written the Gospel of John (of which his adopted mother, Mary would have been a very good source of information), God called him to write the Book of Revelation.

Philip. From Bethsaida, as were Andrew and Peter. Martyred.

Bartholomew. He was one of the disciples to whom Jesus appeared at the Sea of Tiberias after His resurrection. He was also a witness of the Ascension.

Thomas. Nickname of "Doubting Thomas" because he wanted to actually see and touch Jesus after His Resurrection (John 20.24-29). Asked Jesus for proof and Jesus gave it.

Matthew. A tax-collector at Capernaum who had his life changed and turned around by an encounter with Jesus (Matt 9.9-13).

James. Known as James the Younger, or James the Less.

Thaddaeus. Also known as "Judas the brother of James" or "Judas, not Iscariot."

Simon the Zealot. The Zealots were a nationalistic sect with very strong political views.

Judas Iscariot. The traitor, Jesus must have known this would happen, but chose and accepted him anyway. Strange to us!

Matthias. Chosen to replace Judas.

THE ROAD



Was a postcard available from CPO (no longer available).

Make your own card copying this. There are 3 sections on the card as explained below, with footprints going round.

This card breaks the life of following Jesus into different sections - those walking away, those moving forward but don't know Jesus, those who have accepted Jesus but who are wandering around uncertain, those walking with Jesus, and ultimately those really in step with Christ.

At the centre is the Cross. It may be a good idea to order these materials from CPO (they also come with a big poster thing and explanation notes). Then go through it.

You could make your own version - but most times it's good to support others, its easier - and we definitely do not want to break the law or copyright - as far as humanly possible.

FINALLY, LET'S LOOK AT THE FEEDING OF THE 5000

Matthew 14.13-21: When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food." Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered. "Bring them here to me," he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

The key phrases we want to pick out here to end are:

Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

Then (Jesus) gave (the food in the baskets) to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.

Why are these 2 phrases so important? Well, it explains a lot about the nature of discipleship. Jesus asked the disciples to serve the people, to take the food to the people, to touch and connect with the people, to share with the people, be in (but not necessarily) of the people and to be part of the solution of feeding them. This tells us so much about the life of discipleship. Let's list them again to help us:

- Serving
- Taking what was needed directly to the people
- Touching, connecting, relating to people
- Sharing with the people
- Being in but not of the world
- Part of the solution, working for Jesus

Now take some time in prayer to ask God what this means for you and ask God to show you, challenge you. Get into groups of 3-4 people that feel comfortable with each other. Have everyone pray for everyone else in their group, maybe even laying hands on each other.