

**DISCIPLES**

**GOD CALLS PEOPLE**

**TO BE**  
**JESUS' DISCIPLES**



**BAND**

**A**

**PLANNING GUIDE**

**DISCIPLES**



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This planning guide is a part of LIFE, a Christian Studies curriculum developed for Lutheran schools.

LIFE is a joint project of the Board for Lutheran Schools of the Lutheran Church of Australia and Openbook Publishers.

*God calls people to be Jesus' disciples* is one of twelve concepts covered by LIFE curriculum. This BAND A planning guide contains model units for the first three years of primary school.

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Published March 1999

© Board for Lutheran Schools, Lutheran Church of Australia, 197 Archer Street, North Adelaide, SA 5006

Printed and published by Openbook Publishers, 205 Halifax Street, Adelaide, South Australia 5000

# **GOD CALLS PEOPLE TO BE JESUS' DISCIPLES**

## **AIMS**

The ultimate aim of LIFE curriculum is that

- students will come to know God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- students will have faith in God as their Father, Saviour, and Helper.

We understand that faith is entirely a gift of the Holy Spirit.

We teach in obedience to Jesus' command to go and teach.

*How can people have faith in the Lord  
and ask him to save them,  
if they have never heard about him?  
And how can they hear,  
unless someone tells them?  
Romans 10:14 (CEV)*

## **GOD CALLS PEOPLE TO BE JESUS' DISCIPLES**

As Christians we believe this and are compelled to tell others.

Our aim in teaching this concept is that students

- hear,
- explore and
- reflect on

these faith statements:

1. God calls people to follow Jesus
2. Jesus' disciples are forgiven and forgiving
3. Jesus' disciples live by God-given values and ethics

# BACKGROUND NOTES FOR TEACHERS

## GOD CALLS PEOPLE TO BE JESUS' DISCIPLES

### LEARNERS AND FOLLOWERS

The main focus of this concept is on the relationship between Jesus and those who believe in him.

The word 'disciple' means 'learner'. Disciples of Jesus learn from him about God and themselves and their life as God's people. Jesus as rabbi (teacher) reveals to his pupils the 'secrets of the kingdom of heaven', often by means of parables (Matthew 13:11; 11:25–27). The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) is an example of Jesus' disciples learning from their teacher. Jesus teaches them such things as what it means to be under God's gracious rule, how to live as God's people, and how to pray.

Disciples are also 'followers'. They identify with their Lord and Master and go where he goes. They trust him to lead them. They obey his directions.

### 'I CHOSE YOU'

It was customary in Jesus' day for men who wanted to learn the law of Israel to apply for admission into a rabbi's school.

Jesus' disciples, however, did not choose him as their rabbi; Jesus took the initiative and did all the choosing (John 15:16). His choice was not based on their merit, past performance, or future potential. He selected most unlikely people: nobodies from the backblocks of Palestine, uneducated fishermen and hated tax collectors (Matthew 4:20–22; 5:3; 9:9; 1 Corinthians 1:26–31; compare with the choice of Israel in the Old Testament [Deuteronomy 7:6,7]). Jesus' choice of twelve disciples (= twelve tribes of Israel) suggests that his followers were the chosen people of God in the new covenant. In addition to the 'inner circle' there were many other disciples (Luke 6:17). Unlike other Jewish rabbis, Jesus also had female disciples, for example, Mary, who 'sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said' (Luke 10:38–42; see also Luke 8:1–3).

**COST OF DISCIPLESHIP** To be a disciple of Jesus requires total commitment. When Jesus commanded 'Follow me', people had to leave everything: their professions, possessions and families (Matthew 19:27–29). Disciples have to count the cost of following Jesus (Luke 14:25–33). Often the commitment Jesus demands of his followers seems harsh (Luke 9:57–62; Matthew 10:37; John 15:18–25), but because there is no real life apart from Jesus, we dare not let anything or anyone come between us and him. Following Jesus means saying no to one's old self, giving up all earthly security and being ready to suffer for the sake of the Lord (Matthew 16:24–26).

### FORGIVEN AND FORGIVING

Unworthy sinful people can become disciples of Jesus only because he comes to them in grace (undeserved love) with the forgiveness of their sins (Matthew 9:9–13; Luke 5:8,10b). Forgiveness is at the centre of the life of Jesus' disciples. God's forgiveness is

unmerited, unconditional and absolute. When God forgives, he also forgets (Jeremiah 31:34). (Note how in Jesus' parable about forgiveness the master takes pity on his servant and wipes out the huge unpayable debt. Matthew 18:21–35).

The weaknesses and failures of Jesus' disciples (their desertion, Peter's denial, etc) remind us that disciples live only by God's grace and forgiveness. Jesus taught his disciples to pray for the forgiveness he has won for all people (Matthew 6:12).

Forgiveness is the mark of Jesus' disciples in their relationships with other people. Forgiveness does not come naturally or easily to any human being. Our natural inclination is to demand justice and seek revenge, even though we ourselves have been shown mercy (Matthew 18:21–35). The more closely we follow our Lord, and the more we draw our life from him (as branches in the vine, John 15:1–5), the more we will be like our Father in heaven and be merciful and forgiving to those who sin

When Jesus lived on earth, he called people to follow him. He wanted to show them God's way and to prepare them for a new life of service as God's forgiven people.

Responding to God's call to follow Jesus as disciples changes people's lives. It makes them channels of the life and love of God.  
Theological Foundations of LIFE Curriculum

against us (Matthew 5:38–48; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12–14). It may not be possible for us to forget completely a wrong that has been done to us, but when that wrong comes to mind, we are to forgive it again and again, even 'seventy-seven times' (Matthew 18:21,22).

### VALUES AND ETHICS FOR

**DISCIPLES** Following Jesus includes living by values and ethics that are different from those of the rest of society. The natural human tendency is for each person to follow self-interests and to ask: 'What's in it for me?' The humanistic approach is to ask: 'What's best for the human race as a whole?' Jesus gives his disciples a different basis for their values and ethics — the guiding principle for his own life on earth: 'What is the will of the Father in heaven? What does our Father want us to value? How does our Father want us to act?'

The law of love is fundamental for disciples. Jesus taught that the 'greatest commandment' is: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind' and: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'

(Matthew 22:37,38). The Ten Commandments spell out what it means to love God and other people. For example, it means valuing God above anything or anyone else (see also Matthew 6:19–33), using God's name with respect, honouring and obeying parents and other representatives of God, regarding human life as sacred, being faithful in marriage, not being jealous.

The law of love and the Ten Commandments are 'moral absolutes', that is, they can never be put aside (Matthew 5:17–20); they apply in every situation. However, the application of these moral absolutes may vary from situation to situation. Jesus' disciples are called to listen carefully to his word and the word of Scripture generally, so that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they have 'the mind of Christ' (1 Corinthians 2:16). St Paul appeals to Christians 'in view of God's mercy': 'Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will' (Romans 12:1,2).

### FOR REFLECTION AND/OR DISCUSSION

1. What questions do the *Background Notes* raise for you? What questions do you think your students will have on this topic?
2. Why is this an important topic to teach to your students? What implications might the topic have for the life of your school?
3. Discuss the concept of commitment as an essential feature of discipleship. How does the commitment to Christ of modern Christians (church members) compare with the commitment people show to work, sport, education and other aspects of life?
4. Comment on the following:
  - a) 'Christians live by grace.'
  - b) 'Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven.'
  - c) 'I can forgive, but I can't forget.'
5. Are Christian schools meant to **reflect** the values of society or to **shape** them? How do you think the parents of your students would answer this question?

### FOR FURTHER READING

Explanations of the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer in Luther's *Large Catechism*

'Disciple' in *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, A Richardson

*One in the Gospel* F Hebart, chapter 7: *Saints and Sinners*

*The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Ethical and Social Issues section in *Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions of the LCA*

# BAND A STUDENTS

At this band level you are developing students' understanding of what it means to have a relationship with Jesus. Be aware of links between this concept and the concept *God saves people through Jesus*. As you teach, be sensitive to the range of students' understanding and knowledge of Jesus and what life with Jesus is like. Use the concept of 'friends' rather than 'disciples' or 'followers' (see John 15:13,14). Make sure that students clearly hear Jesus' call or invitation to be his friends. Remember, however, that we must not manipulate or attempt to force their response to this call. That is the Holy Spirit's business. When choosing activities, therefore, be inclusive of all students and do not force them to make responses which require faith that they may not have.

Forgiveness does not come naturally to any person. Students at this band level are learning to develop relationships. Recognise that their difficulties and struggles with forgiveness are part of the learning process. Accept honest responses rather than a superficial or forced 'I forgive you'. Reassure all students that God forgives even when people have difficulty in forgiving others.

The development of ethics and values is a complex process. At this band level you are laying the foundations for concepts that will be further developed as students progress through their schooling.

<b>DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<b>IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING</b>
<p>Apparent selfishness is normal. Students are learning to mix with their peers, who come from diverse backgrounds and have different behaviour patterns.</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for sharing and cooperation, in order for students to learn this behaviour. Do not ignore inappropriate behaviour but avoid making students feel guilty for failing to meet expectations which may be beyond their developmental ability. Model forgiveness yourself.</p>
<p>Students act without stopping to think of the consequences of their actions.</p>	<p>Discuss occasions where people have a choice in the way they behave. Identify the consequences of each choice.</p>
<p>As students move through this band, they become more adept at expressing the way they feel.</p>	<p>Help students understand that others may feel or think differently than they do. Model respect for the feelings and ideas of others. Avoid engineering situations to the 'moral' outcome you want.</p>
<p>Students find it more natural to 'pay back' than to forgive. Students do not normally use the words 'I forgive you' in daily conversation.</p>	<p>Make sure that in your teaching students hear a clear message of God's love and forgiveness. Help students recognise situations in which the words 'I forgive you' can be used to restore relationships. Identify ways that forgiveness can be expressed in everyday language.</p>
<p>Religious understanding grows from hearing adult expressions of belief.</p>	<p>This unit provides many opportunities for the teacher to witness to his/her relationship with Jesus.</p>

# NOTES