

*This midweek study will explore the biblical understanding of discipleship. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.*

### Essential Doctrine: Discipleship

Discipleship is a process that takes place both formally and informally to effect spiritual maturity as people follow Jesus. Informal discipleship, as passages like Deuteronomy 6:4-9 suggest, happens everywhere, in every arena of life. Growing in our faith and deepening our walk with Christ is something that requires our whole life, not just the mind. Formal discipleship refers to periods of instruction. We make disciples through our words and actions, providing verbal instruction from God's Word and non-verbal examples through our lives (Acts 20:17-24).

### 1 Discipleship is a process (Deut. 6:4-9, Prov. 22:6).

Invite students to discuss what it takes to build a house. Ask them what it would be like if the builders didn't believe building a house was a process and tried to frame the house without allowing the concrete foundation to dry.

- ▶ *What happens when we get ahead of ourselves with things that require a process?*

#### Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

- ▶ *How do these verses describe the process of discipleship?*

These verses make it clear: Discipleship is slow and repetitive. Our growth in Christ isn't something that occurs overnight. Discipleship is intentional and takes place over the course of our entire lives.

- ▶ *What actions do these verses tell believers to do when discipling others?*

The process of discipleship is not just memorizing words, but requires living out those words.

#### Read Proverbs 22:6.

We can often become impatient in our discipleship, especially when we are young. Even though discipleship is a process, you can see immediate benefits in your life.

- ▶ *What is the purpose of training young people in the way they should go?*
- ▶ *In what ways do you get frustrated with the process of becoming a disciple of Christ? How can you trust more in Christ's process of discipleship in your life?*

### 2 Discipleship involves every part of life (Matt. 22:37).

Option: Have a student attempt a "burpee" exercise, but allow them to use only one arm and one leg to accomplish the exercise. Discuss how "burpees" require the use of the entire body.

- ▶ *Why do certain activities require the entire body or complete, focused attention?*

Not only does discipleship require mental effort, but it also requires the heart, soul, and strength to be fully engaged.

### Read Matthew 22:37.

- ▶ *Describe how discipleship involves the areas of heart, soul, and strength. Why are each of those aspects of who we are vital in the process of discipleship?*
- ▶ *What would it look like if you loved God with all your mind but without your heart, or with all your strength but didn't pursue Christ with your mind? Is this possible? Why or why not?*

Similar to an endurance race—in that it relies not only on your physical endurance, but also on your technique, mental focus, and positive attitude—discipleship requires our whole lives to focus on Christ.

- ▶ *What areas of your life can you focus more intentionally on Christ to become a more committed disciple?*

### 3 Discipleship happens through both words and actions (Acts 20: 17-24).

#### Read Acts 20:17-24.

Paul believed his ministry was not limited to words, but that it mattered what he did with those words. Paul didn't only believe the truth in his mind and heart, but he was willing put his faith into action.

- ▶ *Paul said he didn't consider his life as valuable to himself so that he might preach Christ. What does tell believers about discipleship?*

Paul's actions were motivated by his desire for people to know the truth about the gospel that he received from Jesus. Paul wanted them to have a correct understanding of who Jesus is and His offer of grace through faith alone.

- ▶ *Why is important for our discipleship that we have not only right actions, but right beliefs about why we do what we do as Christians?*

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How are you trusting in the process of discipleship with both your words and actions? How would you answer someone if asked what it means to be a disciple of Christ?*
- ▶ *Challenge students to write their personal definition of what it means to be a disciple, along with three specific ways they could grow in their discipleship with Christ.*