

AN EIGHT WEEK JOURNEY HELPING FOLLOWERS OF JESUS
REFLECT ON AND LIVE OUT THE ESSENTIALS OF DISCIPLESHIP.



ESSENTIALS



INTRODUCTION

Living in a world full of options means we are constantly bombarded by choice. We find ourselves with a never-ending supply of on-demand programmes at our fingertips, multiple opinions vying for our attention through our social media feeds, events and opportunities rapidly filling slots in our weekly planner and a vast array of options in the aisles of our supermarkets. Choice seduces us to see ourselves as consumers at every turn. Society conditions us to expect that we get to choose what we want, the way we want it, when it suits us.

But how does all of this square when it comes to following Jesus?

Perhaps we are tempted to view faith in Jesus as just one extra choice in a life full of options. Maybe we treat Jesus as some sort of special deal to pick off the shelf of the supermarket of life whenever we need Him most – grabbing prayer when trouble hits, reaching for the Bible when guidance is needed, or the church when we feel lonely.

Living as a disciple of Jesus cannot just be an optional extra. Following Him is not a special deal, a weekend activity or something we try to fit in around the edges of an already crowded life. In fact, when it comes to faith in Jesus, it is less about choosing options and more about coming to terms with essentials. Even though the things we do as followers of Jesus will never earn us salvation, a particular way of living always flows from having real faith in Him.

In a world crowded by countless stories and flooded with an ocean of ideas, disciples of Jesus need to allow His message, mission and method of living to ring out and rise above them all. This journey through the essentials of discipleship aims to help us do that. Through these eight sessions you will discover how it is essential for disciples to come to Jesus, respond to His call, share in community, take their place in culture, reflect His courage, accept the cost, take up His challenge and continue with Christ. Through Bible teaching, real-life stories and group discussion you will be better able to learn what it looks like to live out the essential aspects of following Jesus in your life.

Enjoy the journey!

HOW TO USE

This guide works alongside the Essentials film series to provide a structure for group discussion, questions to reflect on and space for taking notes.

Discipleship works best in community, so making space to learn from God through talking with others and listening to their reflections will help you get the most from Essentials.

Each session is divided into the following sections:

BEFORE YOU WATCH

Intro questions to set the scene and stimulate discussion before reading the Bible passage together.

AS YOU WATCH

A heads-up of some things to listen for as you watch the Essentials film and a space to scribble what jumps out for you.

AFTER YOU WATCH

A set of five questions taking the group through the journey below:



REACT: initial reaction to what you have just heard and seen.



REFLECT: a reflection on the Bible passage.



APPLY: a question that pushes towards what this practically means in your life.



STORY: an aspect of the personal story.



RESPOND: one specific thing you commit to do as a result of the session.

BEYOND BEING TOGETHER

Some extra ways to go further in reading, reflecting or reacting to the theme.

THE ESSENTIALS JOURNEY

PAGE 6 **SESSION 1: *Come***
COME AND SEE: Discipleship starts with awareness of Jesus before activity for Him.
BIBLE TEACHING: John 1:35-51 / Charles McMullan and Stuart Hawthorne
STORY: Roseanne Woods, Donabate Presbyterian Church

PAGE 10 **SESSION 2: *Call***
FOLLOW ME: The essential call of discipleship is to follow our Master Jesus.
BIBLE TEACHING: Matthew 4:17-25 / Christoph Ebbinghaus and Andy Carroll
STORY: Clodagh Sharkey, Ebrington Presbyterian Church

PAGE 14 **SESSION 3: *Community***
SHARE LIFE: We can't do discipleship alone. We learn to follow Jesus as part of His church.
BIBLE TEACHING: John 17:20-26 / Pauline Kennedy and Gareth Maclean
STORY: Malcolm and Harriett McDonald, Donegal Presbyterian Church

PAGE 18 **SESSION 4: *Culture***
STEP OUT: Disciples don't escape or embrace culture, but engage with it as they follow Jesus.
BIBLE TEACHING: Matthew 5:13-16 / Michael Wylie and Christoph Ebbinghaus
STORY: Colin Ward, Sloan Street Presbyterian Church

PAGE 22 **SESSION 5: *Courage***
SPEAK UP: Disciples aren't just called to live well in culture, but also to speak up for Jesus.
BIBLE TEACHING: Matthew 10:1-16 / Gareth Maclean and Rachel Aicken
STORY: Ross Munro, Carnmoney Presbyterian Church

PAGE 26 **SESSION 6: *Cost***
DENY YOURSELF: Following Jesus brings a cost in every area of our lives.
BIBLE TEACHING: Mark 8:34-38 / Norman Cameron and Andy Carroll
STORY: Agnes Joyce, Drogheda Presbyterian Church

PAGE 30 **SESSION 7: *Challenge***
GO MAKE: The challenge of becoming disciples who make disciples.
BIBLE TEACHING: Matthew 28:16-20 / Stuart Hawthorne and Rachel Aicken
STORY: Gillian Wilson and Julia Morrow, Moneydig Presbyterian Church

PAGE 34 **SESSION 8: *Continue***
LOOK UP: We never graduate from needing Jesus but continue following him in every age and stage of life.
BIBLE TEACHING: Luke 9:28-36 / Charles McMullan and Michael Wylie
STORY: Stanley McFarland, 2nd Saintfield Presbyterian Church

SESSION 1: *Come*



First and foremost, Jesus invites His disciples to come to Him – that’s how the story begins. Some ordinary men were invited to come and see Jesus. This invitation changed their lives forever. Our journey of discipleship also starts with coming to Jesus. We are invited to come and see Him; to look at His life, to learn from His example and to invite others to do the same.

Come

BEFORE YOU WATCH

START: In one sentence, what do you think is the purpose of the church? Write it down and then share your answer.

SCRIPTURE: Read John 1:35-51 together.

SEE: How do different people 'come and see' Jesus in this passage?

AS YOU WATCH

As you watch the film, think about how the journey of discipleship started for these ordinary followers and what it leads them to. Write down your reflections in the space below.





SESSION 1: *Come*


“I wonder does this describe our lives as followers of Jesus: those who follow, those who learn, those who seek to imitate Him and those who seek to share Him with those around us?”


Come


AFTER YOU WATCH

 **REACT:** Share something that stood out for you from the film.

 **REFLECT:** In what way do we sometimes mix up religious activity with knowing Jesus?

 **APPLY:** Look again at John 1:39-41. What does “coming and seeing” Jesus look like in your life right now? How could you develop greater awareness of Jesus in your everyday life?

 **STORY:** Roseanne tells the story of her encountering Jesus. How have you encountered Jesus in your life?

 **RESPONSE:** In what practical, everyday ways can you help others around you to come and see Jesus?

BEYOND BEING TOGETHER

Following reading the passage, watching the film and sharing in discussion, write down what your understanding of a disciple of Jesus is now.

“When there’s an encounter with Jesus there is an urge to follow and know more about Him.”



SESSION 2: *Call*



The call to discipleship is essentially a call to follow in the ways of Jesus. Doing so involves leaving behind many well-worn ways of living and to discover new attitudes and actions. Change is essential for discipleship. Disciples of Jesus aren't just to be better informed but fully transformed.

Call

BEFORE YOU WATCH

START: Reflect on what you have been learning recently as a follower of Jesus. Write down some of your thoughts and share one with the group.

SCRIPTURE: Read Matthew 4:17-25 together

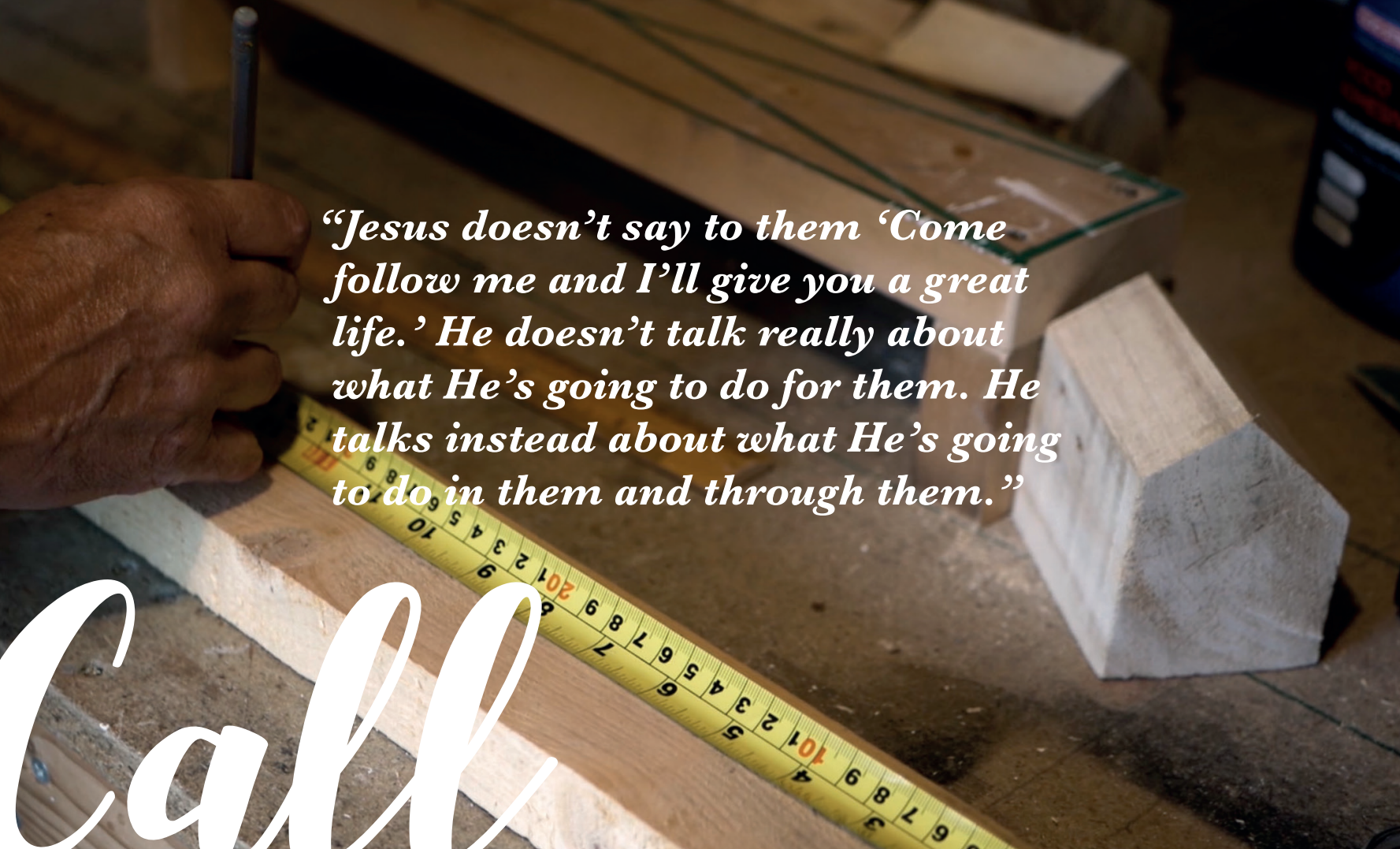
SEE: What do you notice about the disciples' response when Jesus called them to follow him?

AS YOU WATCH

As you watch the film, think about how the call to follow Jesus changed everything for these disciples. Write down your reflections in the space below.



SESSION 2: *Call*





“Jesus doesn’t say to them ‘Come follow me and I’ll give you a great life.’ He doesn’t talk really about what He’s going to do for them. He talks instead about what He’s going to do in them and through them.”


Call


AFTER YOU WATCH

 **REACT:** Share something that stood out to you from the film about the call of Jesus.

 **REFLECT:** Look at Matthew 4:19-24. What does Jesus call His disciples away from and what does He call them into?

 **APPLY:** Following Jesus calls us to change by allowing Him to transform our old selves, shaping us to become more like Him. While this call doesn't necessarily mean leaving our jobs or families like the first disciples did, what might following Jesus today require us to leave behind? (e.g. habits, attitudes, idols etc.)

 **STORY:** Clodagh describes how she responded to the call of Jesus in her life. What does it mean to respond to the call of Jesus in your life?

 **RESPOND:** Jesus' call to His first disciples involved introducing others to Him right from the start, even though they knew so little about Him. How do we feel about responding to that part of His call?

BEYOND BEING TOGETHER

Think about what Jesus is leading you away from and what He is leading you into. Use the space below to reflect on this.

WHAT IS JESUS CALLING YOU TO LEAVE BEHIND?

WHAT IS JESUS CALLING YOU TO PICK UP?

“Following Jesus is about a complete change in our lives. Jesus calls us to surrender everything and follow Him.”



SESSION 3: *Community*



Jesus gathered a group of disciples to grow together. His plan was that they would be united as one around Him. An essential aspect of living as disciples is taking our place among a wider community of followers and sharing life with them. Jesus' community of followers is called church and it remains His primary strategy for reaching the world.

Community

BEFORE YOU WATCH

START: Think of a group or community you are involved in. What are the elements that help to develop community in this context and what things don't work so well? Share some of these as a group.

SCRIPTURE: Read John 17:20-26 together

SEE: What does Jesus' prayer show us are the effects of Christians being united in community together?

AS YOU WATCH

As you watch the film, listen out for Jesus' heart for the togetherness of His disciples and think about what this means for how we live our lives as disciples and how we relate to the church. Write down your reflections in the space below.





SESSION 3: *Community*


“Community – we can’t grow without it and we can’t go without it.”


Community


AFTER YOU WATCH

 **REACT:** Share something that stood out to you from the film about Christian community in the church.

 **REFLECT:** What are some of the key aspects of Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17 that challenge us as His followers today?

 **APPLY:** What would this kind of unity contribute to your life as a disciple? And how could your life as a disciple contribute to this kind of unity?

 **STORY:** Malcolm and Harriett shared ways that they developed Christian community and strove for unity with others in their church. How can you go beyond seeing discipleship as a personal quest, to taking up your place as part of your wider church community?

 **RESPOND:** What practical ways could you contribute to the community life of your church and how could that contribute to your congregation's witness in the world?

BEYOND BEING TOGETHER

Take time to read Acts 2:42-47 and reflect on the things that this early Christian community prioritised. Who are the people you could develop deeper community with? Next time you are with them, push beyond the usual pleasantries of conversation by sharing what is going on in your walk with Jesus and see what doing so opens up.

***“Jesus’ greatest burden
for His followers is
one-ness.”***



SESSION 4: *Culture*



Two of Jesus' pictures of what it means to live as disciples are being like salt and light. He calls us to purify like salt and shine like light in the culture around us. Living like salt and shining like light demands that disciples are present in the world, actively transforming culture rather than conforming to its ways. The calling of a disciple is to serve Jesus in every place, every day, in every way. Christ's love isn't to be restricted to the sanctuary but revealed in society.

Culture

BEFORE YOU WATCH

START: What challenges or opportunities as a Christian do you find in engaging in the everyday places God puts you to be His witness?

SCRIPTURE: Read Matthew 5:13-16 together.

SEE: If followers of Jesus lived like salt and light, what effect should that have on those around them?

AS YOU WATCH

As you watch the film, listen out for ways in which living as salt and light makes an impact on others in the culture around us. Write down your reflections in the space below.




SESSION 4: *Culture*


“Faith is inherent in our identity and so we shouldn’t feel like we have to leave it behind when we enter the world.”


Culture


AFTER YOU WATCH

 **REACT:** Share something that stood out for you from the film about how Jesus wants us to relate to the world in which we find ourselves today.

 **REFLECT:** How do the words of Matthew 5:13-16 offer a third way between the extremes of escaping or embracing culture?

 **APPLY:** How do you feel about letting your light shine before others and what does that look like for you right now?

 **STORY:** Colin spoke about his workplace being a place of both worship and witness. What would have to change for you to see the everyday places where you spend most of your time in the same way?

 **RESPOND:** How could your group pray for you in the areas where you have opportunity to bear influence and shape a different culture for Jesus?

BEYOND BEING TOGETHER

Write the words of Matthew 5:16 on a Post-it note and place it somewhere you will see every day as a reminder of what it means to follow Jesus in the worlds into which He takes you. Read 1 Peter 2:9-12 and take encouragement from the effect living the way of Jesus has on those around us.

“We serve God when we live for Him in our day-to-day.”



SESSION 5: *Courage*



Jesus released His disciples into the world around them to proclaim His message. In doing so, Jesus was moving His disciples out of their comfort zones to situations in which they were active in reaching out to a hurting and hostile world. The places they found themselves and the people they would encounter called for courage, especially in speaking for Him. Discipleship is not an invitation to be a spectator in a cosy club but to play an active part in God's mission in the world.

Courage

BEFORE YOU WATCH

START: Are you by nature a cautious or courageous person? Go round the group and each share a short example of a time you needed courage to do something in your life.

SCRIPTURE: Read Matthew 10:1-16 together.

SEE: What things did Jesus call His followers to do in this passage that required courage?

AS YOU WATCH

As you watch the film, think about how courageous these first disciples needed to be in following Jesus' instructions. Write down your reflections in the space below.





SESSION 5: *Courage*


*“When Jesus calls you,
He equips you for the task.
He asks you to do something
and always gives you what
you need to do it.”*


Courage


AFTER YOU WATCH

 **REACT:** Share something that stood out for you from the film about the courage needed to follow Jesus.

 **REFLECT:** As you think about Matthew 10:1-16, how might you have reacted if you were one of the disciples given these instructions?

 **APPLY:** Jesus says that following Him is like being a lamb among wolves. When might it feel like this for you in your daily life?

 **STORY:** Ross needed courage to share about Jesus in his everyday life. Share examples of times when Jesus has given you courage to share about Him.

 **RESPOND:** What does it look like to speak courageously for Jesus in a culture that can be hostile to His message?

BEYOND BEING TOGETHER

Pray for an opportunity to introduce Jesus into a conversation with a friend, colleague or neighbour this week. Be courageous when that opportunity comes!

“This mission of Jesus is not one of staying and waiting for people to come... This is an outward moving mission.”



SESSION 6: *Cost*



The call of discipleship is to go public with our allegiance to Jesus in the face of a hostile world. Jesus tells His followers to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him. It is essential for disciples to serve Jesus and play their part in His mission whatever the price. While we find great reward in doing so, there is also cost to our reputations, our time, our money and our energy. We must not dodge the truth that discipleship comes at a cost.

Cost

BEFORE YOU WATCH

START: Talk about some of the things that are costly yet rewarding in your life.

SCRIPTURE: Read Mark 8:34-38 together.

SEE: In these verses what are the costs of following Jesus? What are the rewards?

AS YOU WATCH

As you watch the film, listen out for the specific costs for followers of Jesus today and think about the challenges they raise in your life. Write down your reflections in the space below.




SESSION 6: *Cost*





*“Salvation is free but
discipleship will cost you
everything you have.”
Billy Graham*


Cost


AFTER YOU WATCH

 **REACT:** Share something that stood out for you from the film about the cost of discipleship.

 **REFLECT:** What does Jesus mean when He talks about denying ourselves and taking up our cross? In what ways might following Jesus involve denying yourself?

 **APPLY:** We heard about how following Jesus may bring a cost to our time, treasures and talents. How might that feel like a death in your life? Which one is the greatest challenge for you and what might it look like to bear its cost?

 **STORY:** Agnes shared how she was prepared to follow Jesus no matter the cost to her business, energy or reputation. In what circumstances in your life does it feel like you are carrying a cross as a follower of Jesus?

 **RESPOND:** In what ways will you embrace the cost of following Jesus and how can the rest of your group pray for you in doing so?

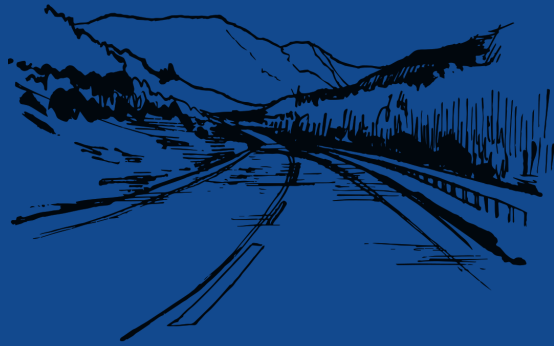
BEYOND BEING TOGETHER

Take time this week to pray for your other group members, that they might accept the cost of following Jesus, as well as know the joy and the reward that He brings.

“Disciples of Jesus Christ are going to feel a cost.”



SESSION 7: *Challenge*



Disciples are challenged to carry on the work that Jesus started. Jesus wasn't just adding more disciples to His club, He was releasing them to multiply His kingdom in the world. It is still the same today. The last words He speaks in Matthew's gospel weren't just for the first disciples, but continue to be the essential agenda for every follower of Jesus until He comes again. Being a disciple involves finding our place in the church's task of making more disciples.

Challenge

BEFORE YOU WATCH

START: If you could define the purpose of the church in one sentence, what would you say? Write it down, then each share your answer.

SCRIPTURE: Read Matthew 28:16-20 together.

SEE: How does Jesus' focus for the future of the church surprise or challenge you?

AS YOU WATCH

As you watch the film think about the specific challenge that Jesus left with His disciples and reflect on what it might mean practically for you in your journey of discipleship. Write down your reflections in the space below.




SESSION 7: *Challenge*


“We get to listen in to the final team talk of Jesus before He leaves them to return to heaven.”





Challenge


AFTER YOU WATCH

 **REACT:** Share something that stood out for you from the video about the challenge of being a disciple who makes disciples.

 **REFLECT:** Read Matthew 28:16-20 again. When the disciples met the risen Jesus, doubt mingled with their worship. How does that encourage you that God can use you despite your weaknesses? What doubts arise for us as we follow Jesus in our lives?

 **APPLY:** How does Jesus' instruction to "go and make disciples" challenge you and what ways can we be personally involved in this task today?

 **STORY:** How was Julia intentional about making disciples and what was the impact for Gillian? How can you also take up the challenge of being a disciple who makes disciples?

 **RESPOND:** What opportunities do you have in your life right now to make disciples and how can you step into it more fully in the weeks that lie ahead?

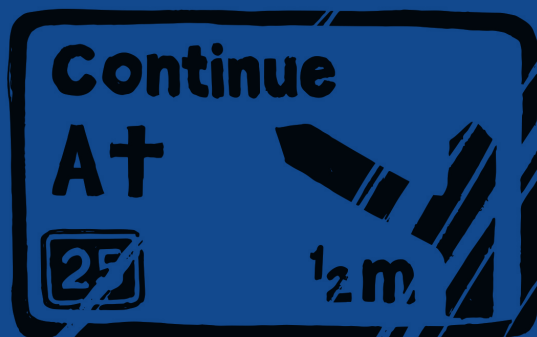
BEYOND BEING TOGETHER

Think of someone you could intentionally invest more time in to help them become or grow as a disciple of Jesus. What would it look like to do that?

“Being a disciple of Jesus means making disciples of others.”



SESSION 8: *Continue*



The journey of discipleship continues as we mature in following Jesus. No disciple ever fully arrives this side of eternity – we will never graduate from our need of Him. Discipleship is about continuing to be aware of this need. In a miraculous moment, the disciples’ reaction was to be active in building something for Him, but Jesus called them back to focusing on Him. Having come to follow Jesus, we continue as His disciples by looking to and learning from Him. What got us in will get us through.

Continue

BEFORE YOU WATCH

START: Reflect on some of the main things you have learned as you have worked through Essentials. Write them down, then share one with the group.

SCRIPTURE: Read Luke 9:28-36 together.

SEE: In what ways was the response of Peter misguided and inappropriate? What did he miss?

AS YOU WATCH

As you watch the film think about what gets in the way of us maintaining our focus on Jesus. Reflect on what foundations are important in helping us continue to follow Jesus. Write down your reflections in the space below.





SESSION 8: *Continue*


*“We get preoccupied
with the wrong
personalities at
times and our eyes
drift from Jesus.”*


Continue


AFTER YOU WATCH

 **REACT:** Share something that stood out for you from the film about what it means to continue living as a disciple of Jesus.

 **REFLECT:** How might this incredible moment of revelation have impacted the lives of these disciples? Can you share a significant encounter with God that impacted your own life?

 **APPLY:** Peter's response jumped to activity but God called them to intimacy. How can we ensure that we balance activity for Jesus and intimacy with Him?

 **STORY:** What do we learn from Stanley's example about how continuing to follow Jesus has shaped his life and work?

 **RESPOND:** What do you need to build into your life now to ensure you continue to follow Jesus in the years that lie ahead with passion and commitment? Pray that each member of your group might know the wisdom, grace and strength to keep following Jesus.

BEYOND BEING TOGETHER

As you reflect on all you have learned from the Essentials journey, what foundations do you need to build in to your life now to ensure you continue to live as a disciple of Christ into your future.

“How we got into the kingdom tells us how we continue in the kingdom.”



A PRAYER FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Loving Heavenly Father,
help me to follow in the footsteps of Jesus your Son,
by the power of your Holy Spirit.

Receiving Jesus' invitation to **come** follow Him,
give me ears to hear and eyes to see that I might learn your ways for me.
Responding to His **call**, lead me away from those things I need to leave behind
and into the new ways you have for me.

As I join in with your **community** of the church,
help me to bring all that I am and to receive from the gifts of others in my life.
As I inhabit the **culture** of places you call me to be salt and bring light,
help me avoid the temptations to embrace or escape,
but to lovingly engage with those who don't know you.

Give me **courage** to live out loud for you,
and to speak well for you, even when it's tough.
Going public with my life for you is going to **cost**,
so, help me spend the best of my time, treasures and talents in your service.

Facing the **challenge** only to care about what's in it for me,
make me more than just a disciple, but a disciple who makes disciples.
Focus my eyes on Jesus as I **continue** on this journey,
that I might know you with me and for me in the changing seasons of my life.

For I ask it in Jesus' name,
Amen

TIDES


Resourcing ordinary disciples through a rhythm of daily devotions accessible to all.

Having reached the end of the Essentials journey and as you seek to continue following Jesus in your daily life, Tides is a simple resource to help you develop a regular rhythm of Bible reading. As part of our vision to resource whole life disciples across the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the purpose of Tides is to help God's people discover afresh what regular engagement with God and His Word can mean for their lives.

Tides aims to fuel the devotional lives of ordinary disciples through a rhythm of daily devotions that is accessible to all. Each weekday morning, Tides provides you with a section of God's Word to read, a short reflection sharing what this could mean for your life, and a

simple way for you to respond. This is a homegrown resource, created and written by contributors from right across the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and currently being accessed by over 2,000 people.

If you are hungry to read God's Word, reflect on what He is saying and respond in your daily life then join this growing movement of Bible reading by registering at www.presbyterianireland.org/tides



**Resourcing ordinary disciples through a rhythm
of daily devotions accessible to all.**

Sign up at www.presbyterianireland.org/tides

TIDES



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