

Follow by Leading

MATTHEW 28:16-20



GOAL

Youth explore the role of teaching others about their faith while admitting that they are still learning how to follow.

- A Art
- AM Active/Movement
- AT Abstract Thinking
- C Conversation
- CT Concrete Thinking
- D Drama
- G Game
- M Music
- QC Quiet/Contemplative
- S Service
- T Technology
- X Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Holy Spirit, surprise me with your inspired words that come out of my mouth. Help me trust you with my concerns and feel comfortable with my questions. Amen.

THIS SESSION

This session is about looking at our own faith journeys and finding ways to extend them beyond ourselves. Youth explore safe ways to teach others about faith. Just as Jesus extends his invitation to follow in different ways, we hope youth may find the same freedom.

THE BIBLE STORY

This Bible story occurs after Jesus' resurrection and has Jesus' final words to his disciples. Typically, we call this the *commissioning* of the disciples because Jesus instructs his disciples how to make new disciples and how important it is that they do so.

The passage is full of juxtapositions, the most important being that, though all authority in heaven and on earth is given to Jesus, Jesus gives authority to his followers to teach and baptize. Jesus, though more powerful than we, empowers us! We can invite others into our faith even if we have doubt like some of the disciples in this passage.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Youth teach one another things all the time: how to enhance one's social media presence, how to do skateboard tricks, how to get better grades in certain classes, and so on. Youth should instinctively recognize the invitation to teach (and learn from) their peers. The challenge comes in the material being taught. Following Jesus requires taking risks, being vulnerable, and (in some situations) sacrificing social standing for faithfulness. Emphasizing how the disciples accepted Jesus' instructions to teach and baptize, despite their own fears and doubts, could be a crucial way that youth connect. Even though youth may be uncertain how to articulate their own faith, they can certainly demonstrate their faith by emulating Jesus when they support one another, speak up for one another, and take risks that affirm the value of all.

SESSION PREPARATION

- Research how your church teaches others about their faith in Jesus. There are several effective ways to do this, and youth may be curious about how their worshiping community understands faith.
- If you choose the panel discussion in "Finding the Practice Then and Now," invite and prepare presenters with plenty of time.
- A couple of days before the session, send youth a text or an email that says, "God loves you. Pass it on." This will remind youth of the previous session on love and set the tone for this session about inviting others.

GETTING STARTED

- Colorful construction paper
- Scissors

PREPARING FOR CLOSING ACTIVITY

A C

As in previous sessions, pass out construction paper and ask youth to cut out shapes of traffic signs (maybe triangles for yield signs or octagons for stop signs). For now, write nothing on the paper, but make sure you have at least one per person when everyone finishes cutting. As youth cut, give them the option to check in about their lives if they'd like (e.g., "what did you do this weekend?").

INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

- Paper
- Colored pencils

CREATING A PATH

A QC

Pass out paper and colored pencils. Ask youth to draw a curvy path on their paper, imagining that this path is their journey of faith. Along the path, ask youth to draw or write things that have made their faith journey easier and challenges that have made their faith journey more difficult. After all have finished, invite them to share their drawings if they feel comfortable. Conclude the activity by asking youth some of the things they have learned on their journey, both difficult and enjoyable things.

- Several objects from previous generations no longer used: a cassette tape, a beeper, a phone book, a floppy disk, an overhead projector, a film camera, an atlas, and so on

GOOD TEACHING

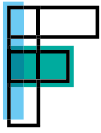
AT G



If you prefer not to use objects, ask youth to teach other youth something they are good at, such as how to do a particular sports move, how to use an ATM, how to work a math problem, how to play an instrument, and so on.

Display your random supplies in the room. Invite a youth who likes to speak a lot to pick one of the supplies. Give that youth sixty seconds to teach others in the room how to use that object. If they don't know how to use the object, ask them to make it up. If they finish before the sixty seconds are up, allow the audience to ask questions. After a few questions, lead the participants in a loud ovation and invite someone else to participate by choosing another object and taking sixty seconds to teach. Keep the exercise fun and, hopefully, funny. Encourage youth to laugh together at some of the old "technology."

Conclude by asking youth how it felt to teach and to learn about some of the old technology. What makes someone a good teacher? End by commenting that, today, we are going to explore how to teach (or rather, encourage) others to follow Jesus.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

LET'S TALK

C CT

Bibles

Give a quick summary of what we've been talking about so far. In session 1, we saw how Jesus called disciples, how different all of them were, and their different ways of following him. In session 2, we read about Jesus comparing himself to the vine and us to the branches. We saw that following him in community is imperative. In session 3, we read about how love is the most important thing followers of Jesus do. Today, we will look at what Jesus told followers to do when he was no longer physically with them on earth.

Prepare to read Matthew 28:16–20. If you have enough Bibles, or youth can get the verses on their phones, invite different people to read each verse. Then discuss:

- ➔ Why do you think some of the disciples had doubts?
- ➔ Why do you think Jesus has “all authority in heaven and on earth,” but asks the disciples to go and teach others about God?
- ➔ How do you think Jesus expects his disciples to go and “make disciples”?
- ➔ If Jesus were asking *you* to go and make disciples, how would you do it? Where?
- ➔ Can we teach others about God even if we have doubts?
- ➔ How did you respond this week when you got the text or email “God loves you. Pass it on.” Did you pass it on?

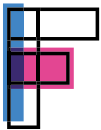
FOLLOWING JESUS

C

Newsprint
 Marker
 Bible

Ask youth to think through all of the things that they've learned about Jesus and all of the ways that Jesus connected with other people. Invite several volunteers to share what they remember, while making a list of these on newsprint. Some youth may mention that Jesus healed others, welcomed children, talked with others (including those of a different belief), listened, fed, disrupted the tables in the temple, told parables, and so on. Once you've got a robust list, read Matthew 28:16–20.

Go back through the list you originally made. For each of the actions of Jesus, brainstorm how youth can duplicate these actions. Keep this list for one of the options in “Practicing the Practice.”



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or both options.

TERESA OF AVILA

A QC

Copies of Resource Page 1 printed on card stock
 Colored pencils or paint and art supplies

Give each participant a copy of Resource Page 1 and explain that it is a quotation from Teresa of Avila, a sixteenth-century nun from Spain.

Invite youth to get some art supplies and settle in a space by themselves. Ask them to read the quotation slowly to themselves the first time. After reading through it once, invite them to respond to the quotation with their art supplies. They may do things like creating visual representation of what is on the page or highlighting in color certain words or phrases that speak to them.

As participants draw or paint, ask them to consider how their own lives embody this quotation.

When they finish, invite youth to share with others what they've created if they feel comfortable doing so.

Alternatively, print the quotation on a large sheet of newsprint or poster board and invite youth to color or decorate it as a group and then hang the poster in the youth space so they can see it when they gather.

PANEL DISCUSSION



Gather congregation volunteers for this activity in advance, giving them clear instructions for how you will connect with them during the actual session, whether in person or on a video call. Give them questions in advance, so they can think about their responses.

Before choosing your guests, think about the things that Jesus did and some people from your congregation who clearly emulate the work of Jesus in their vocation. For example, a doctor or a nurse heals. Someone who runs a nonprofit may feed. A school teacher teaches others. Invite two or three of these people in your worshiping community to gather in person or on a video call. Have youth ask them these questions:

- ➔ Why did you choose this vocation?
- ➔ How do you follow Jesus in your work?
- ➔ How do you demonstrate your faith in God to others?

Youth may have additional questions. That's fine. One alternative may be having youth (in groups of two or three) interview these volunteers (again, in person or video chat on their devices) and then report back to the large group.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

ACTING IT OUT



If you chose the "Follow Jesus" activity from "Finding the Practice in the Bible," use the list of things Jesus did that your group worked on for this activity. If you did not do the activity, create a list of some of the things Jesus did to connect with others (see "Follow Jesus" activity for ideas on p. 29).

Form pairs and call attention to the list of things Jesus did. Assign each pair of youth one of these activities to act out without letting the others in the group know which activity you assigned. Give them a few minutes to think about how they will act out the scene for the other youth. In the scene, they cannot mention the name *Jesus*, but it should still be clear from their reenactment which item on the list they are acting out. Have youth identify the action after each scene.

BRING-A-FRIEND DAY



- Paper
- Pens



This activity can be done regardless of whether the actual activity happens. If you are going to plan an event, have a date in mind. Consider using a regular youth group or Sunday school meeting as the time for the event.

Work with youth to plan an event they would feel comfortable inviting a friend to. What would happen at the event? What will visitors learn? How will they hear about how you follow Jesus in your group? Lead the discussion as little as possible, but make sure that the youths' suggestions are within the space and budgetary abilities of the church. The event may involve favorite games, movies, Bible study, worship, and so on. The idea is to allow youth to find what feels comfortable that they could reasonably hope their friend(s) would attend. Be sure someone is taking notes.

Once the event is planned, pass out paper and pens and have youth create an invitation for a friend they'd like to invite. They can then deliver the invitations themselves or take a photo of the invitation and text it to their friend(s).

Execute the event (at a future date) to the best of your ability, keeping in mind the concerns and ideas of the youth who planned it. If they want to lead certain activities and they are capable of doing so, allow that as well!



FOLLOWING JESUS

THE JOURNEY

Pass out markers and the road signs youth cut out at the beginning of the session. Ask participants to write on these signs one thing they'd like to teach their friends about God. After making the signs, have youth hang them on the wall (one at a time) while reading or explaining the signs to the group.

When they finish, close in prayer. Start the prayer by saying, "Dear God, we praise you for the opportunity to follow you. Give us courage to teach others that . . ." Finish the prayer by reading the signs on the wall. End by saying "Amen."

- Road signs from "Getting Started"
- Markers
- Wall-safe tape

Christ has no body now but yours.

No hands, no feet on earth but yours.

Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world.

Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.

Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands.

Yours are the feet.

Yours are the eyes.

You are his body.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

—Teresa of Avila¹

1. "Has No Body but Yours," CatholicLink, <https://catholic-link.org/quotes/st-teresa-of-avila-quote-christ-has-no-body-but-yours/>.