

wholehearted | Disciples Look Forward

Facilitator Guide

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

GOAL

The goal of this lesson is twofold:

1. *To help students grow their faith and learn to follow Jesus wholeheartedly* through Bible study, hard questions, activities, and specific life application.
2. *To make it easy for you* to facilitate and teach students. That is why the Facilitator's Guide is packed with easy to use instructions, timeframes, and questions that promote thinking and draw out real responses.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- A copy of the Facilitator's Guide for you and any other facilitators
- A copy of the Student Guide for each participant
- Be sure to check out the Live It Out section ahead of time to prepare. You'll need:
 - *blindfolds for each student*
 - *open area*
 - *one rope for every 2-4 students*

BACKGROUND

This lesson is recommended to go first in the *Wholehearted* series

1. Disciples Look Forward
2. Disciples Know Their Gifts
3. Disciples Inspire
4. Disciples Commit Wholeheartedly

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HOW TO USE: Small Group or Large Group

The Facilitator's Guide contains everything in the Student Guide, plus some additional material. This table outlines the elements of each lesson and provides an approximate timeframe, which you can adapt to meet the needs of your group.

- ☐ For a **SMALL GROUP** setting, use the white boxes below.
- ☐ For a **LARGE GROUP** talk, refer to the grey boxes on the right

		FOR A SMALL GROUP SETTING		FOR A LARGE GROUP TALK
		FACILITATOR'S GUIDE	IN STUDENT GUIDE	<i>*include personal illustrations to make this a powerful talk</i>
LESSON ELEMENTS	OVERVIEW	Read before facilitating	X	Read before facilitating
	OPENING QUESTIONS	Get students thinking and begin conversation (2-3 minutes)	✓	Use these questions as an ice breaker
	WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT	A Bible Study with discussion questions (15-20 minutes)	✓	Main Scripture and teaching
	A SECOND LOOK	Another take on this study with discussion questions (10-15 minutes)	✓	Use as an illustration to bring the topic to life
	LIVE IT OUT	An experiential activity to help students reinforce and internalize the lesson (10-15 minutes)	X	Consider using this as an object lesson
	APPLY IT	A practical application for students to do this week (2-3 minutes)	✓	Use this as a springboard to present students with practical next steps
	THINK ABOUT IT	Challenging quote to consider	✓	Challenging quote to consider
	PRAY	A short focus for a prayer time	X	A short focus for a prayer time
	MEMORY VERSE	Verse to meditate on <i>*text or post the graphic included in your download</i>	✓	Verse to meditate on <i>*text or post the graphic included in your download</i>

OVERVIEW

The past (and even the present) can be tricky. If we aren't careful, we can let obstacles and hardships from the past begin to cloud our vision and write our stories. But if we are careful and look forward, we can rely on the promises of a larger story and a huge God that will be with us through any of the bad stuff going on. As Christ-followers, we have the responsibility to learn from the past, but keep our eyes fixed on the prize. In this lesson, students will learn this from Joseph, who mastered the art of looking forward and leaning on God.

OPENING QUESTIONS

2-3 minutes

- What is one thing in the future that you're super excited about?
- What is one thing in the future that you're anxious about?

FACILITATOR'S NOTE: If your group of students is small enough, you can have each person share their answer. Otherwise, for a larger group, have them pair and share to answer these questions.

WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT

15-20 minutes



Read the following together:

You've probably had things happen in your life that really hurt. Everyone does. Maybe you were called a name, maybe someone who you thought was your friend turned out to actually be pretty mean, or maybe you thought your family was doing well and then it broke apart. And while it hurt to go through those experiences, it can hurt to even think of those times, can't it?

Joseph went through some tough experiences as well. His story is one full of despair and disappointment. But if we look at his whole story, we can see what it can look like to focus on the future that God promises, rather than difficult things in our past or present that can pull our attention away from God.

The story so far: Joseph's 10 older brothers had sold him into slavery and he was living in a foreign country, far from his friends, his family, and familiar way of life. And although he had risen in rank to serve Pharaoh, the highest official in the land, Joseph was still a slave. He probably thought about his family every day, fighting the temptation to feel bitter about what his brothers did to him. To make things worse, Joseph had been wrongfully accused of taking advantage of his place in Pharaoh's house and was sent to the dungeons to rot. Then one day, Pharaoh had an unsettling dream. Ugly, zombie-like cows were eating healthy cows and piles of moldy, rotten wheat were devouring healthy stacks of wheat—the stuff of nightmares. Joseph had a choice: he could have focused on what had happened to him in the past, and stuck it to Pharaoh and the Egyptian people, or he could choose to rely on God and look forward, caring for his captors and their future.

Think about what you might have done if you were in Joseph's situation. Would you have sat in the dungeon and focused on the hurts you experienced in the past? Or would you have trusted in the future that God had for you? One of the marks of a disciple is that no matter what happened in the past or what is happening in the present, a Christ-follower is able to look forward.

Read Genesis 41:15-57 and answer the following questions:

Discuss:

- What was Joseph's response when Pharaoh asked of him if he was able to interpret dreams?
- How would you describe Joseph's attitude when he presented the plan for Egypt's future? Selfish? Bitter? Or prepared?
- How does your attitude, past, or bitterness keep you from looking forward?
- How can looking back keep you from focusing on God's plan?

A SECOND LOOK

10-15 minutes



Read the following together:

Have you ever been the navigator on a car trip? Whether you use a big foldout road map or a Maps app on a smartphone, you have to keep your eyes on what is coming ahead. It wouldn't make any sense to only look at the road you've already driven down. In fact, the app won't even highlight the road you've already traveled, just the route you have yet to travel.

It's the same on our journey with Christ. The road we've already traveled gives us valuable experience, wisdom, and spiritual endurance, but it would be dangerous to only look behind us. Like the app on our phones, the road in front of us is highlighted for a reason. The Apostle Paul says it best when he says: "But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13b-14).

Looking forward doesn't mean that we should treat our past experiences like they never happened or like they were a waste of our time. Both good and bad, these experiences are an important part of our lives. But, we should see them as things the Lord will use to make us into mature disciples and kingdom leaders—people who can look to the future with courage rather than despair.

Don't feel like you have to do this on your own. If you have things in your life that you can't help but feel bitterness for, talk to a leader in your life about how you can process these experiences well. Talk to God and ask him for strength to forgive. God has brought you to where you are now and he will never abandon you, even if you feel like Joseph—in a deep, dark dungeon. Mature disciples look forward with clear eyes, focused on God's plan, with his strength and courage flowing through their veins.

Discuss:

- Describe a time in the past when God led you through a particularly difficult situation.
- When can looking at the past help you rely on God and focus on his future plan?
- When can looking at the past hurt your ability to rely on God and focus on his future plan?
- How can focusing on the past affect the people around you?

LIVE IT OUT: Face-back Friends

10-15 minutes

What you will need: This activity requires one long rope (about 10 feet) per group of 2-4 students, blindfolds for each student, and an open room or area outside. Identify 5 landmarks within the space.

1. Have students get into groups of 2-4 and stand in a line, all of them holding on to the rope.
2. The students face forward and wear blindfolds, except for the student in front who faces backward and does not wear a blindfold.
3. The student in front has one job: take the group to the 5 landmarks you mapped out in the room or outside (e.g. a certain window, tree, a chair) while walking and looking backward at the group.
4. The other students are allowed to talk and offer help, but the student in front can only look backward, never forward (no peeking over the shoulder!).
5. Each group should compete to visit 5 landmarks (in any order). The winners are the first group done.

Debrief:

- What made this activity difficult?
- How did you feel as a leader, not being able to look forward?
- How can a small act like facing forward change everything?
- What ways is God asking you to turn around?

APPLY IT

2-3 minutes

What can you do this week to forgive what is behind you and look forward to what God promises?

Be specific:

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?

FACILITATOR'S NOTE: Whenever students make applications, challenge them to be specific. It's one thing to say, "I'm going to trust God more." The truth is, our students won't really know if they did this, or if they grew in trust over the week. It's another thing to say, "Every morning this week before I eat breakfast, I'm going to tell God that today is His and that I trust Him, and I'm going to ask him to give me the strength to replace worries with trust." So challenge your students to answer the questions under the "Be Specific" section. You can even have them pair and share their applications and ask for accountability from their partner.

THINK ABOUT IT

"Forgiveness allows you to focus on the future without combatting the past." – unknown

PRAY

Spend some time praying with students for the ability to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus and his promise of a future with him.

MEMORIZE/MEDITATE ON THIS VERSE

But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:13b-14 (ESV)