

OUTCAST:
A Four-Week
Student
Discipleship
Journal

This book belongs to:



HELPING YOUTH WORKERS
MAKE DISCIPLES & DEVELOP LEADERS

Outcast: A Four-Week Student Discipleship Journal

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Published by LeaderTreks in the United States of America.

ISBN 13: 978-1-939031-34-1

ISBN-10: 1-939031-34-6

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Published by LeaderTreks
25W560 Geneva Road, Suite 30
Carol Stream, IL 60188

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STARTING NOW

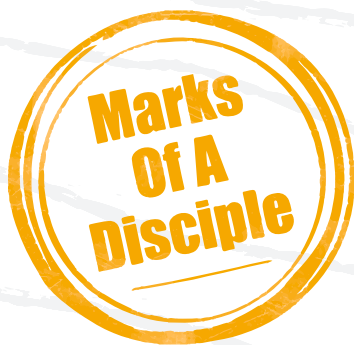
“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy,” (1 Peter 2:9–10).

From the time we are little kids, we learn how to put things in boxes—from toys that separate shapes and colors, to the people we hang out with who share our likes and dislikes. We label the world around us (Star Wars fans, soccer players, musicians) and spend time with people who fit into the same boxes we do. We gravitate toward the boxes that make us comfortable.

But what about the people who don’t fit into our boxes? We don’t share a lot in common with them, we don’t run into them at the same places, and we don’t always feel comfortable talking with them. It’s easy to walk away from outcasts, leaving them to stay in that unfortunate category, but Jesus never did that. Instead, he joined them in their difficulties to bring them the ultimate insider experience: belonging in his family.

HOW IT WORKS

This book has four weeks of journal pages to help you discover what it means to follow Jesus and love the outcast. Each week takes you through seven days of questions to get you thinking, Bible studies to shift your perspective, and challenges to stretch you out of your comfort zone. Then, on the seventh day of the week, you'll get a break to recharge for the next week. It'll help you get into a rhythm of learning, growing, and putting that knowledge into action.



Throughout this journal, you'll also find the **MARKS OF A DISCIPLE**. These are things that Christ-followers are committed to and have in common, like connecting with God through prayer, applying his Word to our lives, serving without personal agendas, managing God's gifts, and many other things.

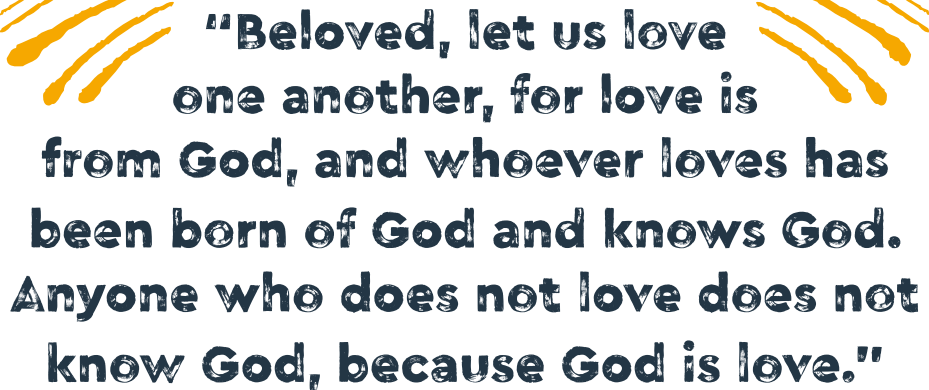
Remember, you'll get out of this book what you put into it. The challenges you'll encounter won't always be easy—they're designed to stretch you! Take a risk and use this journal to run hard toward God. When we make ourselves available to him, he'll transform us and use us in ways that will blow our minds!

week one

ON THE
OUTSIDE

intro

If we're going to become like Jesus, we will have to love the people Jesus loves. Some of them will be like us, with similar interests, backgrounds, and values. Others won't. They will have their own friends and hobbies. Still others will struggle to find any group of people like them. These people stand on the fringes of society and look in, wondering why they aren't allowed to join the masses, wondering if Jesus and his followers could possibly love them.



**"Beloved, let us love
one another, for love is
from God, and whoever loves has
been born of God and knows God.
Anyone who does not love does not
know God, because God is love."**

1 John 4:7, 8

DAY ONE: WHO ARE THE OUTCASTS?

You can't love outcasts if you don't know who they are. And you won't necessarily see them unless you know where to look. Who are the outcasts around you? Stretch your thinking a bit. For example, think of someone you and your friends find incredibly annoying. Isn't it possible they feel like an outcast? Jesus set an example for us to be intentional about building friendships with people who were not like him. Will you let him make you more like him by following his example?

Journal questions:

What causes people to feel like an outcast?

When have you felt like an outsider? Why? How did that feel?

What do you and your friends all have in common?

*Do you think your group of friends is welcoming or closed off?
Why?*

What do you notice about the people you consider outcasts?

*Do you think you've ever made someone feel like an outcast?
If so, when?*

Everybody hates taxes.

Even in Jesus' day, that was true. How do people feel about those who make sure everyone pays a large chunk of their paycheck to the government? They don't win many popularity contests. But tax collectors in Jesus' day were even less popular than those of today. Do you know why the Jewish religious leaders (aka, the Pharisees) thought so poorly of the tax collectors? They viewed them as traitors—fellow Jews who took money from their own people to give to the oppressive Roman Empire. Tax collectors also had a reputation for skimming a little extra off the top for themselves. So imagine the look on the Pharisees' faces when Jesus invited himself over to the house of Levi (a Jewish tax collector) and ate with a whole bunch of other tax collectors, not to mention several other people with bad reputations.

Study the verses in Mark 2:13-17 carefully by using the OPA method for Bible study: Observation, Principles, and Application. Helpful tip: the more effort you put in to making observations, the easier the principles and application will be to see.

Observation:

Compile all the facts found in these passages. Try to make 15–20 observations about what you read.

Principles:

Draw a few principles from the observations you made. What is God trying to teach you in this passage?

Application:

How will you apply these principles to your life? Be specific—a good application will tell who, what, and when.

The challenge of identifying outcasts is doing it without pointing, judging, or thinking you're better than "them." One of the ways Jesus loved people was by acknowledging differences but treating people the same, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, ethnicities, or quirks. He was straightforward without being condescending, honest without being unkind, a servant without being a doormat. He humbled himself to be with us, and as his followers, we should strive to do the same. It starts by seeing outcasts with eyes of compassion.

Find three TV shows, two songs, and one movie that include an outcast in the storyline or lyrics and list them below. Once you've found them, journal your answers to the following questions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

What standards did you use to determine whether the characters were outcasts or not?

What do those standards reveal about you?

What do the outcasts you listed have in common?

How do the writers who created the character want you to feel about them?

How do you think Jesus would interact with them if he met them?

What would you like to know about the lives of these characters that would help you feel like you could understand them better?

What questions would you ask if you could talk to them in person?



Mark of a Disciple:

Disciples of Christ are compassionate.
Matthew 9:36

"God teaches us to love by putting some unlovely people around us. It takes no character to love people who are lovely and loving to you."

Rick Warren¹

If you think of your ability to love as a muscle, you can imagine that it needs to be exercised and stretched to grow stronger. Body builders and athletes don't get stronger by sticking with little bitty weights or five-minute workouts in the gym. They have to push themselves to run farther, to lift heavier weights, and to do harder exercises (that sometimes hurt) in order to develop their muscles. How strong is your ability to love?

Consider the quote above as you answer the following questions:

Who is an easy person for you to love? Why?



Who is a difficult person for you to love? Why?



Who are some of the people in your life that you hope in the back of your head God doesn't call you to love? Why?



The Bible says loving those people is a way to worship and love God (Matt. 25:40).

How does that change your perspective?



How are you like the "unlovely people" in your life? List at least five ways that don't include physical appearance.



Brainstorm some ways to show love to those people. Come up with a list of 10.



DAY FIVE: LOOPHOLES

Do you ever look for loopholes to get around rules you don't particularly like? You know, something like, "Our teacher never said we couldn't work in groups, so we did." Loopholes are our way of doing what we want to do by bending but not actually breaking the rules.

The problem with loopholes is that they reveal something about our hearts. We want to appear to be "good" people (rule follower, teacher's pet, favorite child) without actually doing everything necessary to qualify. We look for shortcuts. Not only was the lawyer in today's passage looking for a shortcut to eternal life, he was also looking for a way to stump Jesus by asking a question he hoped would reveal a loophole.

Read Luke 10:25-37 and use the 5P method of Bible study to dig deeper into this parable. You may have heard it a hundred times, but read it with new eyes today.

Purpose

Why do you think the author wrote this? Why is it important enough to be in the Bible? In a sentence or two, write what you think the overall theme or topic is.

Primary verse

Which verse seems to contain the most important thought in the passage? Which one stands out most to you? Write it out.

Promises

Make a list of any promises you find in this passage.

Problems

If you find anything you don't understand—even if it's just a word—write it down as a question. Then ask someone for the answer or look it up yourself.

Practical application

What do you need to change or work on so that what you have read is real in your life? Be specific—your application should tell who, what, and when.

DAY SIX: HELPING OTHERS SEE

It's hard to actively love people who are not like you—to go out of your way, notice, care for, and invite them in. But you can't stop there. To really make a difference in the lives of outcasts, you'll need to convince other people to see them differently, too. That means you will probably need to have some awkward and uncomfortable conversations with your friends about what God is showing you. Embrace the awkward, because those feelings are actually bits of insecurity the enemy uses to discourage obedience to God.

Have a conversation with at least two other friends (at the same time or separately) in which you mention the following things:

- *A time when you felt like an outcast*
- *Jesus' example of loving outcasts*
- *What you've been learning about how you should treat people who are different than you*
- *Specific people God has placed on your heart*
- *How you hope they'll help you love those people by _____*

Then brainstorm other specific ways you can work together to love people. Write about your experience here:

DAY SEVEN: SABBATH

Have you ever heard someone refer to Sunday as the Sabbath? That means it's our day of rest. So today, that's your challenge. Rest! Reflect on what you've learned so far, the challenges you did, or Bible verses that stuck out to you. Spend some time praying and talking with God. Recharge your batteries and refresh your mind. Then come back tomorrow ready to go deeper.

"And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done."

Genesis 2:2