

i am a
DISCIPLE

== A 40-Day Student Discipleship Journal ==

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THIS BOOK BELONGS TO:

LeaderTrekks
YOUTH MINISTRY



I Am a Disciple: A 40-Day Student Discipleship Journal

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Have you ever noticed that people who do the same thing often look alike? Soccer players spend hours running outside. When they practice, they get weird tan lines from their shin guards, and their legs are powerful from the running and kicking. Swimmers look the same, too. Their shoulders are chiseled, while their hair is often tinted from the chlorine.

The funny thing is, before a swimmer takes swim lessons or a soccer player joins a team, they don't look like those in the group. Their muscles haven't started shaping the same way from all the drills yet. They haven't gotten their farmer's tans from spending hours in the sun. It takes a while before they get in a groove and learn where they need to be on the soccer field, or in what order they should swim the relay. But eventually they start to look alike. They learn their group's slang, start to finish each other's sentences, and laugh at the inside jokes.

It works like this when we follow Christ, too. To be a disciple of Christ means to follow him. We learn from him. We do what he does, go where he goes, and think about what he thinks about. Eventually we start getting on the same page as him, and our communication syncs up. We adopt his rallying cry and mission statement. And the farther we go down the road with Christ, the more we start to look like him. We find ourselves responding to situations the way he would. Our spiritual muscles strengthen as we walk the same terrain that he walked.

HOW IT WORKS:

This book is designed to help you walk the road behind Jesus. It will take you through some of the core things that he taught his 12 disciples when he was walking the earth 2,000 years ago. It's designed to equip you to follow Christ by developing some of the spiritual muscles you'll need to make the journey.

In this journal, you'll encounter challenges, hard questions, and Bible studies, all of which focus on **EIGHT CORE ROOTS OF DISCIPLESHIP**. At the end of each chapter, you'll find a **MENTOR PAGE**. This page is designed for you to use in relationship with an adult who is farther down the discipleship road than you.

(If you don't have a mentor, ask your youth pastor or some other trusted adult the best way to go about finding one.) Each day is different than the last and no two days are the same, so no matter how you're wired there will be something for you!



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.

For he has rescued us from the dominion
of darkness and brought us into the
kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we
have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

— Col. 1:13-14

This is how God showed his love among
us: He sent his one and only Son into
the world that we might live through him.

— 1 John 4:9

Rescue - Chapter 1

DAY 1 - *Lost*

Take a journey back to a time when you were six years old. Imagine you are at a store with your mom. You stop and look at a toy for a moment, and when you look up, she's gone. Your stomach churns and panic sets in: *Where did she go? What if I never find her? I'm lost!*

That terror in a six-year-old heart rings true in our lives today, but on a much larger scale. Not only are we lost; we're also slaves. We're held captive to sin—you know, doing things we know are wrong but just can't stop, like hurting others, hurting ourselves, and hurting God. We need a rescuer to save us from our slavery. There's only one person who can do just that: Jesus. God loved us so much he sent Jesus to rescue us from sin's grasp and bring us freedom. He even invited us to join the mission to show others the way to true freedom as well.

Read Luke 15:1–8, and use the 5P method to study this passage.

PURPOSE

Why do you think Jesus used this parable? 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 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've read is real in your life? Be specific—your application should tell who, what, and when.

DAY 2 - Stockholm Syndrome

In 1973 Janne Olsson, on leave from prison, attempted to rob a bank in Stockholm, Sweden. When two police officers went in, Olsson shot one, and then he took four bank employees hostage. Through negotiations he got his friend to join him, and they held the hostages in a bank vault for six days— threatening to kill them several times.

But during the standoff, the victims became attached to their jailers. At one point, they even rejected help from officials. After they were released, some even defended their captors. Psychologists call this "Stockholm syndrome." Why would people defend someone who imprisoned them? It sounds crazy, right?

Oddly enough, we are just like them. We are slaves to sin, and we can't escape it on our own. But we often act just like those bank employees. We're hurt by sin, but we start to make excuses for it: "It's not that bad. Maybe it won't hurt as much next time." Instead of turning to Jesus, we try to find ways to cope with our imprisonment—success, sports, popularity, relationships, or empty religion—but none of those things bring freedom. The only way to escape this prison is to be rescued.

The following verses walk us through the way to salvation in Christ. Read through them, and then reflect on how Jesus broke into your life and brought you to freedom:

ROMANS 3:23

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

ROMANS 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 5:8

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

ROMANS 10:9–10

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

EPHESIANS 2:8–9

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

WHEN DID YOU FIRST REALIZE THAT BEING A GOOD PERSON WASN'T ENOUGH? HOW DID YOU RECOGNIZE YOU WERE LOST AND IN NEED OF RESCUE?

WHO HAS BEEN INFLUENTIAL IN SHOWING YOU CHRIST AND WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRIST FOLLOWER? HOW DID THEY DO THIS?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO DECLARE, “JESUS IS LORD”? WHAT DOES THAT LOOK LIKE IN YOUR DAILY LIFE? HOW HAVE YOU DONE THAT IN THE PAST?

DAY 3 - *The Weight of Sin*

DEPRESSION, FAMILY DESTRUCTION, **perfectionism**, **BULLYING**, INSECURITIES, **fear of the future**, **EATING DISORDERS**, **rejection**, SELF DESTRUCTIVE HABITS, **disappointment**, **HOPELESSNESS**, LACK OF PURPOSE, feelings of worthlessness, **apathy**, **LONELINESS**, FEELING ABANDONED, **ANXIETY**, selfishness, **pride**, hate, **DESPAIR**, idolatry, **greed**, **GOSSIP**

Today is going to be hard. You're going to take some time to reflect on where you've been and the effect sin has had on your life. The dark places sin takes us can be devastating. Sometimes we make choices that drive us further and further from God. Sometimes our darkest place is the result of someone else's sin, but it sends us into a spiral of our own sin. In order to go forward, we have to know where we've been. God's grace in our lives is seen more clearly and joyously when we remember what we've been saved from. It's like the stars. We can only see them shine in the midst of a dark night.

Step away from all distractions. Turn off your phone. Get away from the TV and computer. If you can, take a walk to get away from the demands around you. Take some time to pray before you get started.

List the top three struggles you have faced from the list above. If you need to, add your own struggles.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

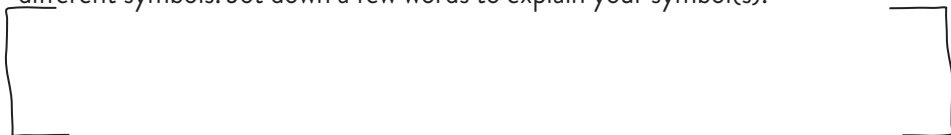
Describe the situations surrounding each of these three struggles.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What emotions did you experience during those times? How did they affect your actions?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Draw a symbol that represents what you were going through in the midst of each of these issues. You may have one symbol that ties all three together or three different symbols. Jot down a few words to explain your symbol(s).



How has Jesus rescued you from these struggles? How is your life different since you encountered Christ?



Draw a symbol or picture of who you now are in Christ. Write a few words to explain your symbol.



Disciples of Christ recognize their
NEED for a Savior. (Romans 3:23)

DAY 4 - Join the Mission

Yesterday was a heavy day. It's often painful to remember the darkness that we lived in before Christ. But it does remind us of the unbelievable grace that is poured out on us. Christ rescued us from the muck of our lives and gave us true freedom. But after that, we shouldn't just stand around doing a happy dance, content because we are so blessed. He invites us to join in his mission. We have the opportunity to point others to the only one who can truly save them. Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), and in John 20:21 he says, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

He calls us to a new life that demonstrates the radical transformation that comes with a relationship with Christ. Our lives are a proclamation of who Jesus is and what he has done. So we live radically because he lived radically. We care about the lost because he cared for them. We love like no other, we serve the servants, and we bind up the brokenhearted. We shout his message of freedom with our lives, and we declare his redemption with our lips. Are you ready to live out the mission?

Read 1 Peter 2:9–17 using the SPECK Bible study method. Think specifically about how this helps you join the great mission that Jesus has called you to on earth.

SINS TO AVOID

Make a list of any sins—wrong actions, attitudes or thoughts—mentioned in the passage.

PROMISES TO CLAIM

Make a list of the promises in this passage. Promises give us confidence when we doubt God or face difficult times.

EXAMPLES TO FOLLOW

What examples do you find in the passage? Is there a right way of thinking or acting described in the passage that you should take as an example for your life?

COMMANDS TO OBEY

Write out all the commands you find. If a passage encourages you to take a certain action, take it as a command and write it down.

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD TO APPLY

What does the passage tell you about God that you can apply to your daily life? God's character shines throughout Scripture.



Disciples of Christ SPREAD THE WORD
of Christ's story with others. (Mark 16:15)

DAY 5 - Shine a Light on Sin

In the book *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Edmund Dantes is betrayed and unjustly imprisoned in the worst dungeon in France, the Château d'If. He spends 14 years sleeping on the cold stone ground of his cell. Edmund escapes and recovers his friend's treasure, elevating him to a life of luxury. He lives in a mansion with a plush bed. One day his servant walks in and finds Edmund sleeping on the floor. Edmund has a lavish bed to sleep in any time he wants, but he keeps going back to his old way of life.

Similarly, Jesus has rescued us from the prison of sin. Yet sometimes the lure of our old life draws us back. It's like we've had the shackles of sin taken off, but we go back and put our wrists in them again because they're familiar.

When those old sins creep back into our lives, it's easy to get discouraged. We can feel frustrated with ourselves and overwhelmed by shame. During those times, we have to go back to the truth that Christ proclaimed when he rescued us: we are children of God. This sin doesn't make us any less God's children, but it does get in the way of our relationship with him. So how do we deal with it?

To escape the quicksand of shame, we have to take time to evaluate our lives regularly, recognize sin that is growing within, and bring it to God. James 5:16 says, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." We're going to do just that.

1. ASK GOD TO REVEAL YOUR SINS TO YOU—THE DEEP, UNDERLYING, SUBTLE SINS THAT OTHERS MIGHT NOT NOTICE. WRITE OUT THE SINS THAT COME TO YOU.

2. HAVE YOU WRONGED SOMEONE? GO TO THEM AND ASK FOR FORGIVENESS. IT'S EASY TO LOSE YOUR RESOLVE, SO DON'T HESITATE.

3. NOW CHOOSE A CHRIST-FOLLOWER YOU RESPECT AND TRUST, SOMEONE YOU CAN SHARE YOUR OTHER STRUGGLES WITH (A CLOSE FRIEND OR MENTOR). CONFESS YOUR SIN TO THAT PERSON AND TO GOD. TAKE SOME TIME TO PRAY WITH THEM FOR HEALING. IT MAY BE DIFFICULT TO LET SOMEONE ELSE SEE YOUR SIN, BUT IT'S AN IMPORTANT STEP IN LEAVING YOUR SIN BEHIND, ONCE AND FOR ALL.

"It is fitting, that by the confession of our own wretchedness, we show forth the goodness and mercy of our God, among ourselves and before the whole world." — John Calvin¹

MENTOR PAGE - *Rescue*

This page is designed for you to use in relationship with a mentor. If you don't have a mentor, skip it for now, but seriously consider finding one. Start by praying, and then ask someone (like a youth worker) to recommend a person who would be a good fit. Or if you know someone with a deep faith and the kind of character traits and faith you want to develop, ask them to mentor you. Most people will be more than thrilled and truly honored to mentor someone.

Questions to go through with your mentor:

1. What's your rescue story? Think through what you wrote on Day 2 about how Jesus became your Savior. What was that process like?
2. How do you deal with sin in your life? After we become Christ-followers, sin doesn't have the power over our lives that it did before we knew Christ, but it's still a daily reality. So how do you deal with it? Or if you aren't at that stage yet, how do you want to deal with it?
3. Take a look at the symbols or drawings you made on Day 3. Explain them to your mentor. Why did you choose those symbols? Is there a difference between the symbols you chose? If so, what changed?
4. On Days 1 and 4 you made some very specific life applications. Share those with your mentor. Did you follow through on them? Do you need someone to keep you accountable?

Until your next meeting:

Take a minute to figure out when you and your mentor will get together next.

My mentor and I will meet: _____ (when) at _____ (where).

Are there any specific ways your mentor can pray for you until then?

Since the children have flesh and blood,
he too shared in their humanity so that
by his death he might break the power of
him who holds the power of death—that
is, the devil—and free those who all their
lives were held in slavery by their fear
of death.

— Heb. 2:14-15

"FOLLOW ME." – JESUS (MATT. 4:19)

This is where discipleship starts—following Jesus. We learn from him. We do what he does, go where he goes, and think about what he thinks about. Eventually we start getting on the same page as him, and our communication syncs up. We adopt his rally cry and mission statement. **And the farther we go down the road with Jesus, the more we start to look like him.** We find ourselves responding to situations the way he would. Our spiritual muscles strengthen as we walk the same terrain he walked.

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I Am A Disciple focuses on eight core roots of discipleship: Each root has several days of *Bible Studies* (and Bible study methods), *challenges*, *thought-provoking experiences*, *hard questions*, and the *Marks of a Disciple*.

- **Rescue:** Seeing God's redemption story
- **Identity:** Knowing who we are in Christ
- **Knowledge:** Discovering who God is
- **Kingdom:** Living out the values of God's Kingdom
- **Outreach:** Owning our mission to serve and make disciples
- **Worship:** Growing a lifestyle of worshipping God
- **Apologetics:** Sharing God's truth through words and actions
- **Community:** Joining the purpose of the church

ALSO INCLUDED:

Spiritual Gifts Assessment • Pages for your Mentor • Marks of a Disciple

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