

disciple — now

CURRICULUM

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A RECONNECT
SUNDAY SCHOOL RESOURCE

Sharing life through the



COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

iDENTITY

disciple — now

CURRICULUM

This Disciple Now curriculum is designed for use with *Identity: Discovering Who You Are in Christ*, a campaign developed by the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma for the formation of new small groups and overall church growth, but may be used independently of this campaign. It is evangelistic in nature and will help seekers find Christ, as well as help students struggling with doubt settle the matter of their salvation once and for all. Students who already know Jesus will learn that, in Christ, they are complete, unique, and blessed. They will be challenged to grow spiritually and reminded to love one another so the world can see the love of Jesus in them.

**THIS CURRICULUM IS DIVIDED INTO THREE SESSIONS.
EACH OF THE THREE SESSIONS INCLUDES:**

- 1. One of the following sermons preached by Ed Newton.**

These sermons relate to one or more aspects of their corresponding lessons. They can be used during large group worship so that you do not have to invite a guest preacher to come in or as introductions to the lessons themselves. Please note that these sermons are supplemental in nature and are not essential to this curriculum. They may be left out if you do not need them or if your schedule does not allow for their use.

 - In “Redemption,” Ed discusses the cross, when Jesus was forsaken, and the price of our costly redemption.
 - In “Righteousness,” Ed discusses the peace and hope that is ours through Jesus Christ as well as our responsibility to use what we have been given to glorify God.
 - In “Sacrifice,” Ed discusses the motivation, mission, mandate, and miracle of worship.
- 2. One of the following lessons,** each of which contains suggestions for activities and/or related testimonials in italics. These lessons are the heart of this curriculum. You may choose to have a guest preacher teach these lessons during your large group time or use them during your small group/in-home teaching times. The group Bible study exercises assume knowledge of this

content and will not make sense to your students if the lessons are not taught as they are written. If you ask a guest preacher to cover this content, make sure that he understands this and follows the lesson guide as closely as possible.

- “Loved and Forgiven” is a clear Gospel presentation that explains the difference between being a creation of God and being a child of God.
 - “Complete and Unique” is a discussion of how God uses the Holy Spirit, our spiritual gifts, personalities, backgrounds, and even our mistakes to further His Kingdom (*This lesson and the Ed Newton sermon that goes with it are significantly longer than the others and may be split into two lessons if your weekend schedule allows for it.*)
 - “A Living Sacrifice” is a reminder that salvation is only the beginning of a believer’s relationship with God, that obedience to Christ is success, and that spiritual growth and brotherly love are an absolute must in the lives of believers.
3. **A group Bible study exercise** over the apostle Paul with open-ended discussion questions to help students apply the Truth of God’s Word to their own lives and encourage open discussion of Scripture amongst peers. These lessons are best suited for small group use.

Session One:

Loved and Forgiven

You may want to use the optional video sermon, "Redemption," by Ed Newton (app. 12 minutes) [here](#).

Lesson:

God gets a lot of press when things are either very good or very bad. Even people who normally misuse His name suddenly say things like, "Praise God," or, "God, help us!" and suggest that we either thank God or get on our knees and beg Him for help. While it does not hurt for them to say and suggest these things, it does hurt for them to say and suggest that we are "all God's children," as they often do. That is simply a lie. Although we are all part of God's creation, we are NOT all His children. What is the difference? Jesus.

1. We are all loved.

Read John 3:16.

Here's the truth. We are all sinners (Romans 3:23). Because of that sin, we all deserve death (Romans 6:23) and eternal separation from God (Isaiah 59:2). We cannot save ourselves and make things right with God on our own, no matter how hard we try.

Fortunately for us, God is love (1 John 4:8) and did for us what we could not do for ourselves. Even though we are sinners—traitors, really—God sent His only Son Jesus to pay the price that we owed for our sin on the cross so that we could live forever in right relationship with Him (Romans 5:8).

Jesus, wanting only to please God and bring Him glory (John 17:1-5), did what His Heavenly Father told Him to do and suffered a heinous death on the cross. Even though He had the power to back out at any time (John 10:17-18), Jesus still obeyed God. Ultimately, He was forsaken so that we could be forgiven (Psalm 5:4, Mark 15:34). He refused rescue for our ransom (Matthew 26:53). Three days later, He rose from the dead, defeating death forever (1 Corinthians 15:55). It is the greatest love story ever told!

2. We all have the opportunity to be forgiven.

Read Ephesians 1:7-8.

God does not want anyone to go to hell (Matthew 18:14). That is why He sent Jesus, the perfect sacrifice (2 Corinthians 5:21), to pay for the sin of the entire world once and for all (Romans 6:10). Through Jesus, we can be forgiven. Through Jesus, our hearts can be made clean, and we can have fellowship with God now and forever, the kind of fellowship that God intended all along.

Then, as if He had not already done enough, God also shows us our need for forgiveness (John 16:7-9),

gives us the faith we need to accept that forgiveness (Ephesians 2:8), and draws us to Himself (John 6:44-45), but it is up to us to accept the forgiveness He offers. It is up to us to do the believing and surrendering.

3. Only those who accept God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ and surrender their lives to follow Jesus Christ are truly Christians.

Read Romans 10:9-10 and Matthew 16:24.

Sooner or later, we all have to decide for ourselves what we are going to do with Jesus. How will we respond to God's offer of forgiveness through Him? Will we take it and be saved or reject it and face separation from God for eternity in hell? It seems obvious, but it is a big decision and not one to be taken lightly. Sure, no one wants to go to hell, but to become a Christian is to make Jesus the boss of your life forever! That is a big commitment.

Some people think that you can say some words, be forgiven for your sin, and then continue living however you want while calling yourself a Christian. That is not true (Matthew 7:21). Words do not save you. Jesus does. Words are just a way to express out loud what we mean inside, but God cannot be fooled. He sees our hearts (1 Samuel 16:7) and knows whether or not we mean what we say.

Treating God like a lucky rabbit's foot and praying churchy words "just in case" will not magically turn you into a Christian or get you to Heaven. To become a

Christian, you must sincerely 1) admit that you are a sinner and cannot save yourself, 2) ask God to forgive you of that sin through Jesus, and 3) surrender control of your life to Him. When you do that, He will forgive you (1 John 1:9), rescue you (Galatians 1:3-5), and adopt you (Romans 8:15). When you do that, He will change your identity forever, and people will be able to tell!

Leader, this is a great place for you to allow students and adults to share their personal testimony of salvation. If you know of someone who prayed an empty prayer at one time and then came to true repentance later, include them for the sake of students who might be struggling with this, but also make sure to include people who knew what they were doing from the start and have been able to overcome doubt and grow strong in their faith. The last thing you want to do is manipulate and/or give the enemy a foothold by stirring doubt where it did not exist before. Leave conviction up to the Holy Spirit. Do make sure that each testimony includes when they realized their need for salvation, how they responded to Jesus, and the difference He has made, things that point to genuine transformation, so that lost students will benefit.

Illustration/Application:

Paul (also known as Saul before his conversion and early in his ministry to the Jews) is one of the most notable characters in the New Testament. A Pharisee (a pious group of Jewish leaders known for their rigid observance of the Law and religious rituals) bent on

persecuting Christians when we first meet him, Paul encounters Jesus unexpectedly and does a complete 180, turning his life upside down to serve Jesus Christ and communicate the Gospel in a way that everyone can understand. As a result, Paul the persecutor becomes Paul the persecuted. Much of the New Testament was written by this man in the form of letters to the early church.

Leader, assign the following passages of Scripture to your students, have them read aloud, and then discuss the following questions as a group.

Part One:

Read Acts 7:59-8:3.

1. What was Paul like before he met Jesus? What words would you use to describe him? Is "ungodly" an appropriate word? How about "sinner"?

Read Romans 5:6-8.

2. Did Jesus die for Paul, too? How do you know? Is this difficult for you to accept? If so, why?

Read James 2:10.

3. Are you a sinner like Paul? Explain. Did Jesus die for you, too?

Part Two:

Read Acts 9:1-9.

4. How did God get Paul's attention? How do you think he felt in that moment? How would you have felt? Explain.
5. How does God get your attention? How do you feel when He confronts you with your sin?
6. Did Paul argue with Jesus? How did he respond? How do you respond?

Part Three:

Read Acts 9:10-20 and Romans 10:9-10.

7. Keeping in mind the fact that Paul wrote the book of Romans, what do you think happened during Paul's seclusion in Damascus? Did Paul accept God's offer of forgiveness and become a follower of Christ? How can you tell?
8. Have you accepted God's offer of forgiveness and become a follower of Christ? How do you know? How can we tell?

Session Two:

Complete and Unique

You may want to use the video sermon, "Righteousness" by Ed Newton (app. 22 minutes) [here](#).

Lesson:

When people make mistakes, they often say, "Nobody's perfect," to make themselves feel better. They are almost correct, but Jesus Christ IS perfect. In Him, we are complete. Yes, we are quirky. Yes, we make mistakes sometimes, but God is big and creative and capable and is continuously shaping us into the image of His Son Jesus. For His own glory, He often uses the very things that we wish we could change about ourselves to bless others and further the Kingdom, making unique a very good thing.

1. Jesus makes us new. In Him, we are complete.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.

God created mankind with every intention of having intimate fellowship with Him, but our sin got in the way and made us enemies of God (Colossians 1:21). Still, the Father loved us and sent Jesus to pay the price for that

sin so that we could be reconciled to God (Colossians 1:22). When we put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ to save us from our sin, God forgives our sin and makes us brand new. He sends the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts (Galatians 4:6), making it possible for us to enjoy the kind of intimate fellowship with Him that He always intended. He makes us complete (1 John 4:16-17).

In Christ, we have the promise of eventual Christ-like perfection in Heaven (Philippians 1:6) even as we work toward Christ-likeness here on earth (Colossians 3:10). The Holy Spirit is the deposit in our hearts that guarantees that future (2 Corinthians 1:22), bringing us peace (John 14:27) and giving us hope (Romans 5:2) even in hard times.

Leader, teenagers struggle with knowing whether or not the voices that they hear in their hearts are theirs, God's, or the devil's because they do not know a lot of Scripture yet and do not know whether what they are hearing matches up with the Bible. They also have not had many opportunities to practice following the Holy Spirit's leading yet and so have not experienced the affirmation/confirmation that comes with obedience. It might help for adults to describe how the Holy Spirit works in their hearts and how they know when it really is God talking. They may also want to talk about the peace and comfort that the Holy Spirit brings.

2. Every Christian is unique, and unique is good.

Read Psalm 139:13-16 and Ephesians 2:10.

Although we serve the same God, share the same calling to follow Jesus Christ, and have the same Holy Spirit living in our hearts, each of us is uniquely designed to carry out the specific, individual tasks that God has prepared in advance for us to do. To wish away a part of ourselves might be to wish ourselves incapable of doing the very things we were designed to do. Because we do not know His plan, we should not ever second-guess God, the Creator. He knows what He is doing.

God was also the one who planted you right where you are, into your family, your circumstances, your community, and your socio-economic situation. Don't waste time wishing you had been planted in a different flower bed. Make yours beautiful!

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20.

Rather than being a problem, our differences actually make us an effective team as we strive toward a common goal, God's glory, and should be celebrated. Although it may seem sometimes that one of us has a more important or glorious job than others do, no individual in the body is any more important than any other individual. Our worth is in Christ, and He is in all of us. Remember, big toes are not glamorous, but we cannot walk without them.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

God does not just give us a job to do and say, “Good luck!” He equips us to do the tasks that He has prepared for us to do. When we accept Jesus as our Savior, the Holy Spirit comes to live in our hearts, and He comes bearing gifts, spiritual gifts, that we can use to carry out the tasks we have been assigned. As we have not gotten a glimpse of God’s master plan, we often discover what kind of tasks God has planned for us by discovering our spiritual gifts. If someone gives you a hammer, they probably want you to hammer something, right? Well, if God gives you the spiritual gift of hospitality, He probably wants you to host and care for people. That is just one example.

Leader, you may want to give your students time during this weekend to complete a spiritual gifts survey and/or ask some adults in your church to share testimonies about how they have used their spiritual gifts to serve.

Your personality is another tool God can use to further His Kingdom, but this is a little trickier than spiritual gifts, as we tend to fixate on our own personality, grooming ourselves into the best us we can be when we are supposed to be decreasing so that Jesus can increase in our lives (John 3:30). Understand your personality type and offer it to God for His use, but do not shine it up and put it on the mantel of your heart. If at any time, you are unwilling to let go of something that you think of as being “so you” when the Holy Spirit asks you to, then you know that you have made an idol of yourself.

Leader, you may want to give your students a personality test as well. www.16personalities.com has a good teenage version that they could take on their phones. Once they know their type, they can get a summary of that type that will help them understand their own strengths and weaknesses. Be careful, though, as this activity has the potential to override everything else. Teenagers love to talk about themselves, and you want this weekend to be about God.

Read Romans 8:28 and Ephesians 1:11.

But what about the bad stuff in our lives, the abuse we have suffered and/or the costly mistakes that we have made? God can use those, too, if we let Him. Don not be ashamed of your brokenness. In our weakness, He is strong (2 Corinthians 12:10). When people see what you have been through and how fragile you are on your own, they will be that much more amazed at what God has done in and through you (2 Corinthians 4:7). They will have to acknowledge His power, grace, mercy, and love, and maybe they will give Him their broken hearts, too. As long as you do not glorify the sin in your life, do not be afraid of transparency.

Leader, this is a great place for a personal testimony of how God has used someone's brokenness and/or past mistakes for His glory. Just make sure that the testimony is not sensationalistic. You want your students to remember the triumph, not the struggle.

Illustration/Application:

For most of his life, Paul (Saul), a Pharisee from a long line of Pharisees, tried to be perfect by observing the Law, but it was not until he surrendered his life to Jesus Christ that he became a brand new man, filled with the Holy Spirit, complete. From that moment on, Paul never looked back, and God used this unique man to encourage and equip the church in a powerful way.

Leader, assign the following passages of Scripture to your students, have them read aloud, and then discuss the following questions as a group.

Part One:

Read John 14:26-27.

1. In this passage, Jesus tells his disciples about the Holy Spirit. According to these verses, what does the Holy Spirit do for believers?

Read Acts 9:21-31.

2. What changed in Paul's life after he became a Christian? What was important to him? How do you know? Did he ever show any desire to go back to his old way of life?

3. What evidence do we see that the Holy Spirit was alive and at work in his heart?
4. What changed in your life after you became a Christian? What is important to you now? Do you have any desire to go back to your old way of living?
5. Is the Holy Spirit at work in your heart? How do you know? How do others know?

Part Two:

Read Acts 9:15.

6. What specific task did God prepare in advance for Paul to do?
7. What spiritual gifts did Paul exhibit almost immediately after becoming a Christian (to see lists of spiritual gifts, read 1 Corinthians 12:7-10 and Ephesians 4:11)? How did Paul use those gifts to reach Jews, Gentiles, and kings with the Gospel?
8. Consider what you can tell about Paul's personality for just a moment. How was it suited to the task he was given?
9. Name one or more specific tasks that you believe God has given you to do. How will your spiritual gifts and/or personality help you complete those tasks?

Read 1 Timothy 1:12-16.

10. In this letter that he wrote to his son in the faith, Timothy, how does Paul describe the man he was before he met Jesus? Do you think Paul was aware of the mistakes he made? How does Paul think that Jesus will use those mistakes to help others accept God's forgiveness and become Christians?

11. How might God use your mistakes to accomplish His purposes? Be as specific as you feel you can be. You do not have to share out loud if you don't want to.

Session Three:

A Living Sacrifice

You may want to use the video sermon, "Sacrifice," by Ed Newton (app. 14 minutes) [here](#).

Lesson:

To choose to follow Jesus is to choose a new way of life, to adopt a new purpose, and to serve a new master forever. It is to make God's glory a priority over everything else, even in the way that we interact with others.

- 1. The goal of every believer is to make much of God, to worship.**

Read Romans 12:1-2.

The ultimate goal of all believers is to make much of God, or worship Him. We forget that sometimes and turn the focus on ourselves. What starts out as worship, letting ourselves be molded into the image of Christ so that He might be glorified and praised by those around us, turns into spiritual primping, making ourselves look like good people so that those around us will be impressed with us. The only way that we can be sure that we are making much of God, not ourselves, and truly worshipping Him is to shut out the world and the

opinions of others and let God do the molding and shaping through His Word. Read, read, read, and when the Holy Spirit pricks our hearts to tell us that something inside us does not match God's will for us, sit still and let Him cut it out (Hebrews 4:12).

Read 2 Corinthians 10:5.

The temptation as we grow spiritually is to become proud of the work that the Holy Spirit is doing as if we had somehow done it ourselves, as if we were even capable of doing it ourselves. We need to get into the mental practice of taking the compliments people give us and laying them at the feet of Jesus where they belong. If we don't, we will become arrogant. We have to catch those arrogant thoughts before they take root and hold them up against the Truth of God's Word, reminding ourselves that we are only sinners saved by grace and that no one should make much of us (Ephesians 2:8).

Leader, if you know any public Christian figure, you might want to ask them to discuss the dangers of Christian fame/recognition and the struggle to stay focused on God over self. You may even want to ask your pastor to share how he guards against spiritual arrogance.

2. We must be transformed.

Read Galatians 5:22-23.

This passage is a good place to start letting God work on us. The fruit of the Spirit is evidence that the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts. We like to focus on some of it, the parts that come naturally to our personality type, and ignore the rest, but it does not work like that. Think of the fruit of the Spirit as being more of a fruit salad than a bowl of individual fruit. It is an all or nothing thing. If the Holy Spirit is in you, it will be there, all of it, even if you need a little work in one or more areas. You would freak out if you looked at your own shadow on the sidewalk and only saw a head and one arm, and you should freak out a little if part of the fruit of the Spirit is missing from your life.

Read 2 Peter 1:3-7.

As you let the Holy Spirit work on your heart and cut out what does not belong, focus on adding Christ-like attributes to your character with God's help as well. This passage lists those attributes in inductive, sequential order. Each one builds on the one before. Consider putting them on a calendar, either one a week or one a day, over and over again to keep the practice in front of you.

3. Obedience is success.

Read Philippians 2:5-8.

We are a results-oriented society. We want proof that something is working before we will continue down a given path, but following Jesus does not work that

way. He does not give you mile markers, bar graphs, or tallies. He expects you to obey even when your own desires do not match up with what is being asked of you. He did (Philippians 2). As you grow spiritually, resist the urge to analyze the results or give yourself a grade for the progress you are making. That is like watching your own feet, and you will hinder the work of God in your life by tripping over your own ego. Instead, watch God. Go where He leads. Don't look back or ask why.

Someday we will see clearly, but not now, not here on earth (1 Corinthians 13:12). In the Christian walk, obedience itself is success. God will bring the results He desires on His own timetable, using whomever He wishes to use at every stage of the process (1 Corinthians 3:7-9), and He may not choose to share those results with us this side of Heaven. We have to be okay with that.

4. We need each other.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:21-26.

Like it or not, we need each other in order to function as God intended. In accepting the love, support, forgiveness, accountability, and correction of others, we practice humility and become more like Christ. It goes against our human nature to cooperate with others this way and is itself an undeniable miracle that we can even do so; evidence that the Holy Spirit is real and alive in our hearts. That is why the devil tries so hard to divide us. He wants to discredit or disprove Jesus' ability to save and make people new so that others will be closed to the Gospel that we profess when they hear it. We cannot let him win.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-7.

If we are truly in this Christianity thing to make much of God, not ourselves, then we will love each other this way. It seems impossible, but with God, all things are possible (Luke 18:27). When we rely on Him, we can get past the selfishness, competition, and criticism and move on to what really matters, winning souls to Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

Leader, this is a great time to have people share testimonies of the influence that brothers and sisters in Christ have had in their lives. Make sure to include testimonies of accountability and correction as well as feel-good encouragement stories to paint an accurate picture of what it means to function as a healthy body.

Illustration/Application:

Paul wasn't perfect. He made mistakes like the rest of us, but he learned from them and kept running his race (Acts 20:24) even when things got way more difficult than he could ever have anticipated they would. Through it all, he kept his eyes on Jesus and showed others how to do the same. It is perfectly acceptable that he would tell us to follow his example (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Leader, assign the following passages of Scripture to your students, have them read aloud, and then discuss the following questions as a group.

Part One:

Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.

1. Paul was the New Testament version of a modern Christian celebrity in many ways. A well-known circuit preacher, he had a dramatic salvation testimony, planted many of the early churches, and, in his own right, was a popular author, his letters eventually making up much of the New Testament. His was a household name. He was discussed by both admirers and adversaries. This passage was written by Paul in a letter to the church at Corinth. Is his attitude in this passage surprising considering all that God was doing through him? Explain.
2. Do you ever struggle with spiritual arrogance? What can we all learn from Paul's attitude?

Part Two:

Read Romans 7:18-19 and 1 Corinthians 9:27.

3. Can you relate to Paul's struggle? How? Did Paul let his mistakes defeat him? What did he do?
4. How does your own struggle to do the right thing keep you humble? Does it give you compassion for the lost and other Christians who are struggling just like you? Explain.

Part Three:

Read 2 Corinthians 11:24-29.

5. Would anyone have blamed Paul if he had chosen to quit living so openly for Jesus? Explain.
6. Do you ever feel like you are worse off than other Christians and have an excuse to quit living for Jesus? Explain.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 and 1 Corinthians 9:23-27.

7. What kept Paul going? What did he focus on?
8. What can you learn from Paul's determination to follow through on the task that God has given him to do?

Part Four:

9. Paul did not have to travel with other people—he was self-sufficient, knowledgeable, a Roman citizen, and an effective speaker—but he traveled with many different people over the course of his life and spent time with his brothers and sisters in Christ in each town he visited. He asked much of these people, but he gave much in return. How might Paul have benefitted from this pattern of behavior? How might his brothers and sisters have benefitted? Are you comfortable with this kind of togetherness with your brothers and sisters in Christ? Explain.

Read Galatians 2:11-14, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, Romans 15:30, Romans 16:1-2, and Philemon 1:22.

10. Life as a member of the church, the body of Christ, is not always easy. It involves give and take, encouragement and correction, blessing and sacrifice. What was Paul's motive in correcting Peter in Galatians 2:11-14? Was it to look better than Peter and make him feel bad, or was it for the sake of the Gospel?

11. What kinds of things did Paul ask of the members of the early church? Were they for his sake or for the sake of the Gospel? What was the ultimate goal of everything that Paul did?

12. What is the difference between leaning on a brother or sister in Christ and manipulating them? How can you keep your motives pure?

13. Is the give and take required of you as a member of the body of Christ worth it if it advances the Gospel?

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