



Vision and Commitment 2018  
**A year to focus on discipleship**

Every day, in  
everything  
&  
everywhere

## Discipleship Series Youth - Letting Go (Sacrificing)

### Key message

Jesus gave his life for ours, and so he knows what he's talking about when he speaks about calling people to give up the things that are most dear to them to follow him. When he asks his disciples to follow him he used the image of carrying the cross because he wanted to describe the level of sacrifice, effort and total commitment that it would take to be one of his disciples. When Jesus calls us today to a life of discipleship he calls us to a life of surrender and self-denial in which we lay aside our own desires and put Jesus first, over everything, in our lives.

### Key Scriptures

Luke 14:25-34, Luke 9:23-24, Luke 18:18-30

### Resources

- Bibles - or print outs of the Scripture passages
- A device on which you can watch YouTube videos
- Card statements about sacrifice (Appendix 1)
- Small silhouette picture of someone carrying a cross - one for each person (Appendix 2)
- Reflective music

### Welcome

Use either of these two activities with your group to begin this session.

1. Have all the group members stand in the centre of the room. Read out the following pairs and assign one side of the room to each answer. Ask group members to move to the side of the room to indicate their choice. Allow some time to discuss why they made those choices if possible.

The question is:

*If you could only have one of each of the following pairs in your life, which would you choose to sacrifice/give up?!*

- Domino's Pizza or McDonald's?
- Snapchat or Instagram?
- Wi-Fi or mobile phone?





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- YouTube or Netflix?
- Tablet or laptop?
- Xbox or PlayStation?
- Music or TV?
- Maths or English?
- The Hunger Games or Harry Potter?
- Haribo or Cadburys?
- Coca Cola or Pepsi?
- Hollister or Superdry?
- H&M or TopShop?
- Make-up or Shampoo?
- Exams or coursework?
- Money or happiness?

## 2. Discuss:

- What is the highest price you have ever paid for something you really wanted?
- Have you ever paid much more than an item was worth for something that you really desired? Why?

## Word 1. Carry your cross

a. Read Luke 14:25-34 (CEV) and Luke 9:23-24 (given below in both the NCV and NIV).

*'Large crowds were walking along with Jesus, when he turned and said: You cannot be my disciple, unless you love me more than you love your father and mother, your wife and children, and your brothers and sisters. You cannot come with me unless you love me more than you love your own life.*

*You cannot be my disciple unless you carry your own cross and come with me.*

*Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. What is the first thing you will do? Won't you sit down and figure out how much it will cost and if you have enough money to pay for it? Otherwise, you will start building the tower, but not be able to finish. Then everyone who sees what is happening will laugh at you. They will say, "You started building, but could not finish the job."*

*What will a king do if he has only ten thousand soldiers to defend himself against a king who is about to attack him with twenty thousand soldiers? Before he goes out to battle, won't he first sit down and decide if he can win? If he thinks he won't be able to defend himself, he will send messengers and ask for peace while the other king is still a long way off. So then, you cannot be my disciple unless you give away everything you own.'*

(Luke 14:25-34 CEV)

*'If people want to follow me, they must give up the things they want. They must be willing to give up their lives daily to follow me. Those who want to save their lives will give up their lives. But those who give up their lives for me will have true life.'*

(Luke 9:23-24 NCV)





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*'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.'* (Luke 9:23-24 NIV)

b. Group discussion.

Show the *Take up your cross* video:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p\\_vJ2x-oDrU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_vJ2x-oDrU)

Ask the group:

- What do you think Jesus means when he says *'You cannot be my disciple unless you carry your own cross and come with me... You cannot come with me unless you love me more than you love your own life'*? (You could write your thoughts around the picture in Appendix 2.)
- Are we literally called to give up our lives when we follow Jesus?
- How can our discipleship be like the builder who doesn't first work out the cost of the building, or the king who goes into battle without first assessing the opposition?

c. Use any of the following thoughts as you find helpful to further unpack these Scriptures with your group.

At the time that Luke wrote his gospel the cross was not a religious icon or symbol of high street fashion as it is today. It was one of the worst instruments of torture ever created by the Romans. Crucifixion was a punishment reserved only for the worst kind of people, such as criminals, robbers, murderers, and for any person who was a threat to Caesar. Seeing someone crucified was a bloody, painful, violent and a very slow way to die. On the day of someone's crucifixion, the person would carry their own cross to the place of their execution as a reminder to people of what would happen if they broke the law or tried to undermine Caesar. To take up your cross literally meant to carry your own cross to the place where you would be killed. And following Jesus in the 1st century was particularly risky. There was literally a strong possibility that you would end up following Jesus to the cross.

So when Jesus talked about the cross he was thinking of it as an instrument of death. Jesus used the image of carrying the cross because he wanted to describe the level of sacrifice, effort and total commitment that it would take to be one of his disciples. It's like Jesus was saying: *'Come follow Jesus, and you may face the loss of friends, family, reputation, career, and possibly even your life'*. It means we put aside all our own desires and needs. It means choosing Jesus' way over our own way. Jesus must come first in our lives, even if that means friends and family turn against us or our future doesn't work out the way we had hoped. Everything we have must be put at risk for the sake of the Kingdom. If we're not ready for this, then we are like the tower builder or the king going into war who hasn't thought through what they are really about and we could end up abandoning our discipleship because we did not count the cost of commitment to Jesus? Jesus met with a man in the Bible who was not prepared to make this level of sacrifice.





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## Word 2. The rich man's question

a. Read Luke 18:18-30:

*'One day one of the local officials asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to deserve eternal life?" Jesus said, "Why are you calling me good? No one is good—only God. You know the commandments, don't you? No illicit sex, no killing, no stealing, no lying, honor your father and mother.'*

*He said, "I've kept them all for as long as I can remember."*

*When Jesus heard that, he said, "Then there's only one thing left to do: Sell everything you own and give it away to the poor. You will have riches in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

*This was the last thing the official expected to hear. He was very rich and became terribly sad. He was holding on tight to a lot of things and not about to let them go. Seeing his reaction, Jesus said, "Do you have any idea how difficult it is for people who have it all to enter God's kingdom? I'd say it's easier to thread a camel through a needle's eye than get a rich person into God's kingdom."*

*"Then who has any chance at all?" the others asked.*

*"No chance at all," Jesus said, "if you think you can pull it off by yourself. Every chance in the world if you trust God to do it."*

*Peter tried to regain some initiative: "We left everything we owned and followed you, didn't we?"*

*"Yes," said Jesus, "and you won't regret it. No one who has sacrificed home, spouse, brothers and sisters, parents, children—whatever—will lose out. It will all come back multiplied many times over in your lifetime. And then the bonus of eternal life!"*

(MSG)

b. Use any of the following thoughts as you find helpful to unpack these Scriptures with your group.

For this rich man, money and possessions were a barrier that came between him and God. The man desperately wanted to follow Jesus but when it came to the crunch he walked away. The reason? *'He was holding on tight to a lot of things and not about to let them go'* (v23). He had things in his life that he loved more than Jesus and he was not prepared to leave it behind and submit his whole life to follow Jesus. Jesus' challenge went right to his heart and he had to decide whether he was willing to give up the things that meant the most to him - wealth, theology, beliefs, identity and status within the community. When Jesus told him to sell everything he owned, he was touching on the very basis of his security and identity. The man did not understand that he would be even more secure if he followed Jesus than he was with all his wealth. When Jesus calls us to a life of discipleship he calls us to a life of surrender and self-denial in which we must give up anything that would take Jesus' place. This may be a relationship, a career, money, possessions, a vision or dream, the need for revenge. It means offering ourselves to him,





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daily laying aside our own desires to follow him, putting all our energy and resources at his disposal and trusting him to guide us.

### c. Group discussion

Print out the statements in Appendix 1 onto strips of card. Place the statement face down in the centre of the group. Ask a group member to pick one statement and read it out to the group. Discuss the statements as a group in relation to the Scripture passage and decide if you feel it is true or false. Listen to everyone outline their point of view - you don't have to all agree. Take a vote after your discussion to see whether the majority of your group agree or disagree. Then continue with a different group member picking up another statement.

## Action

Use any of the following activities as appropriate for your group.

### 1. Watch the following video clip and discuss:

Hope in the Wilderness: The Story of Omar Perez / Stories from the Wilderness  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCj5TeF9xLw>

### 2. Group Discussion

- Many Christians throughout the world are still being persecuted and tortured for their faith, as this video shows. It is unlikely perhaps in this culture that we will be martyred or imprisoned for our decision to follow Jesus. But would we be prepared to?
- What dangerous situations have you been led into through following Jesus?
- Have you ever felt conflicted or sad about doing something God clearly called you to do?
- What in your life would be the hardest for you to give up if God asked you to?
- Is it possible to grow and transform as a disciple without facing hard times?

3. Some of your group members may have watched *I'm A Celebrity - Get Me Out of Here* in which a group of celebrities have to survive life in the jungle, and are subjected to a series of 'bush tucker' trials in order to win food for their campmates. In one of the most stomach churning of these tasks the celebrities are offered the choice between two dishes of food. One will be a beautifully cooked meal, the other a gruesome plate of jungle critters. If they choose, and eat the jungle critters they win food for their camp mates.

In the style of a bush tucker trial (!) present your group members with two choices - and ask them which they will go for! You could do this by taking it in turns to present a group member with the choice, or ask the group all together and discuss.





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- Spending your pocket money on a new game vs putting your pocket money in the collection at church that is going to help people who are homeless.
- Having a Sunday morning lie-in vs getting up and going to church.
- Keeping your streak (on Snapchat) vs putting down your phone for half an hour and going for a walk with Jesus.
- Watching your favourite TV programme vs missing it to help a younger sibling with their homework.
- Keeping 'in' with your group of friends vs standing up for what you believe in.
- Allowing your boy/girl friend to go 'too far' vs saying no and risk losing the relationship.
- Having an extra 20 minutes in bed vs getting up early to read the Bible and pray at the start of your day.
- Going to the cinema with your friends on a Saturday morning vs helping out with your church community project.
- Cheating just a little in your sports match and winning vs playing honestly and losing.

(Feel free to create some of your own choices!)

When the celebrities turned down the offer of a nutritious, satisfying, delicious meal, they were gaining the reward later when they shared a meal with their campmates and knew they had provided something good for their friends.

When we make tough choices in our life, when we choose to sacrifice our own desires, to put Jesus first, Jesus tells us that we will gain 'true life' in return. He said '*No one who has sacrificed home, spouse, brothers and sisters, parents, children—whatever—will lose out. It will all come back multiplied many times over in your lifetime. And then the bonus of eternal life!*' (Luke 18:29-30 MSG.)

## Prayer

Give each group member a small picture of someone carrying a cross (Appendix 2).

Play some reflective music and ask group members to quietly take some time to reflect on the following quote and the words of Jesus, as well as the picture.

*'When God calls us, he invites us to die. And ironically, we'll never be more alive.'*  
(Bill Hull, The Complete Book of Discipleship)

Jesus said: '*No one who has sacrificed home, spouse, brothers and sisters, parents, children—whatever—will lose out. It will all come back multiplied many times over in your lifetime. And then the bonus of eternal life!*'  
(Luke 18:29-30 MSG)





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Ask each person to pray on their own and ask Jesus if there are any areas of their lives that they have not truly surrendered to him. When they are ready, ask them to write their name somewhere on the picture as a sign of their desire to follow Jesus no matter what the cost. Then invite each person to come and stick their picture onto the large picture that you used at the beginning of the session as a public commitment for all to see.

Finally, as the group leader, pray for your group members, for strength and courage to carry their cross and follow Jesus.

Any of the following songs may be suitable for your time of prayer and worship:

I Will Offer Up My Life - Matt Redman

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWXWHdgapjI>

All That I Am - Rend Collective

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lucg\\_fLH68o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lucg_fLH68o)

Lifesong - Casting Crowns

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gnf1xczuOrA>

Lay It Down - Matt Maher

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPoxMOD\\_0n8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPoxMOD_0n8)

The Cost - Rend Collective

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2TxahqbSbU>





Appendix 1

<p><b>It is a sin to be rich.</b></p>
<p><b>God provides everything we have.</b></p>
<p><b>Keeping God's commandments is enough to earn his blessing.</b></p>
<p><b>Riches are always a sign God is pleased with someone.</b></p>
<p><b>Sometimes we place our security in the things around us rather than in God.</b></p>
<p><b>Nothing, not money, possessions or even other people, should take the place of God in our hearts and lives.</b></p>
<p><b>Following Jesus means that we are not allowed any fun.</b></p>
<p><b>The man could have followed Jesus without laying down everything he held dear.</b></p>
<p><b>If we agree that not everyone has to literally sell all their possessions to follow Jesus, in what other ways can we apply this passage to our lives?</b></p>
<p><b>Are there different levels of discipleship commitment?</b></p>





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## Appendix 2

