



Vision and Commitment 2018
A year to focus on discipleship

Every day, in
everything
&
everywhere

Vision and Commitment Sunday - Youth Cell Notes

Resources

- Jenga game(s)
- Bibles, or 2 Peter 1:3-11 printed out in different Bible translations
- A device on which to watch a video clip from YouTube
- Spare Jenga blocks - or other children's building blocks (you can source these from eBay or charity shops - they don't have to be branded Jenga blocks)
- Marker pens, or Jenga-sized cards or stickers
- 'Follow' logo for each group member (Appendix 2)

Welcome

As your group members arrive, encourage them to play a game of Jenga (or Giant Jenga), either in pairs or small groups.

There is also a free version of Jenga on the App store. Surprisingly realistic and also quite tricky!

Word 1. Whole-life discipleship

Read the following extract from *To Serve* to introduce The Salvation Army's 2018 theme of Discipleship: '*Every day, in everything and everywhere.*' Discuss together and ensure that your group understand discipleship. Explain that this year, throughout The Salvation Army, we will be exploring the characteristics of a disciple and what it means to follow Jesus with all our hearts in every area of our lives.

(Extract from *To Serve* - Session Ten)

'A disciple is a follower of Jesus. He has committed himself to Christ, to walking Christ's way, to living Christ's life and to sharing Christ's love and truth with others.'

(David Watson, *Discipleship*)





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Christian discipleship is more than being a believer - it's about being a follower. Discipleship describes the process by which we grow in our relationship with Jesus, get to know him better and begin to become more like him. 'God's goal is for us to become mature adults - to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:13 CEB).

It all started with the calling of the first disciples, which we read about in Matthew:

'As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him' (Matthew 4:18-22 NIV).

In The Message it says: 'I came so that they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of' (John 10:10). The first disciples certainly lived life in all its fullness... because they had the courage to answer the call of Jesus and this changed their lives around forever.

The same call that echoed around the shores of Galilee some 2,000 years ago is still ringing out today. Jesus calls us to be his disciples, to live with him, learn from him and become like him. The call to discipleship is a call to live life in all its fullness, a life of adventure and challenge, a life of being with Jesus and 100 per cent dedication to him. Only in Jesus will we find real life and be able to live it in the way we were created to. Following Jesus is not a boring existence, living life by a restrictive set of rules, but it is about the greatest adventure ever. To be a disciple is to have our vision and imagination enlarged by a liberating encounter with Jesus Christ who transforms our lives, gives us purpose, meaning, identity, hope and a bright future. Of course there will be challenges, but the rewards in our lives, and in the lives of those we come into contact with, will be immense.

'My whole life is the answer to Jesus' call to follow him. He calls and I answer, not just in words, but in the action of the following. When I answer Jesus' call with my whole life, I make myself his disciple at once.'

(Bill Hull, The Complete Book of Discipleship)





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Use any of the following questions as you find useful to enhance your discussion:

- What do you think it was about Jesus that made the disciples leave everything and go with him?
- What do you think the disciples were expecting when they said yes to following Jesus?
- What characteristics/qualities did the disciples demonstrate by saying yes?
- What does Jesus' call - 'Follow me' - mean for us today?

2. Growing as a disciple

a. Read 2 Peter 1:3-11

Recommended in *The Message* translation and in the *Contemporary English Version*.

You could also watch this short video clip on YouTube that describes the context of 2 Peter and uses interesting illustrations to expand on this passage (watch until 1min 40) - www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWLv_ITyKYc

'We have everything we need to live a life that pleases God. It was all given to us by God's own power' (v3 CEV).

Print out the verse (Appendix 1).

Read it aloud together! Read it again! Shout it out!
Allow time for it to sink into your hearts and minds.

This is a key message - *all that we need to live as a disciple can be found in God!*
God promises his power to help us. God promises us that his nature will become part of us.

How?

In the *NIV* translation it says that we have everything we need *'through our knowledge of him who called us'* (v3). In *The Message* it says by getting to know God *'personally and intimately'*.

Discipleship is a relationship - a relationship in which we must grow and develop, be faithful and work hard.

We each have the ability to please God, but it is up to us to utilise his power, through our relationship with him, and live it out. God expects us to be faithful in what he's given us.





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Tell your group to never, at any time, accept the lie that they don't have what it takes to please God and that they can't make it as a disciple.

Encourage them to remember and hold on to this throughout this year when we will be regularly chatting about being a disciple.

Ask your group to share how this makes them feel.

b. Read 2 Peter 1:5-9

In this section Peter writes about how we must grow as a disciple. Peter tells us it's up to us to make sure that we are growing, producing good fruit and becoming more mature as a Christian. (But don't forget, the power to grow doesn't come from within us, but from God.)

Give each group member several Jenga blocks and a different coloured permanent marker pen. (If you don't have Jenga blocks you could use children's building blocks like Duplo or Mega Blocks, and use stickers or attach a rectangular shaped piece of card.)

Read through verses 5 to 9 again and note down characteristics that we should be producing in our lives. Use different Bible translations to inform your discussion. Ask each person to write the characteristics on to their own Jenga blocks. For example:

- What characteristics/qualities did the disciples demonstrate by saying yes?
- Work hard to be and live as a disciple of Jesus
- Build on our faith
- Good character
- Learn knowledge and gain spiritual understanding
- Exercise self-control
- Show perseverance, patience and discipline
- Be devoted to God
- Friendliness and affection
- Love others
- Ensure these good qualities are continually growing in our lives
- Live fruitful, meaningful and useful lives
- Always remember our past sins have been forgiven

Summarise with verses 8 and 9, which underline the importance of putting effort into our own spiritual growth as a disciple - all with the power of God, of course!





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‘With these qualities active and growing in your lives, no grass will grow under your feet, no day will pass without its reward as you mature in your experience of our Master Jesus’ (v 8 MSG). ‘But if you don’t grow, you are like someone who is nearsighted or blind, and you have forgotten that your past sins are forgiven’ (v 9 CEV).

Action

a. Pile all the blocks into the centre of the group. In turn, ask each group member to pick out one block from the pile and read out what is written on it. Then ask the group to think of some practical examples of ways that they can express this quality at school, home, church etc. The emphasis must be on how we demonstrate this quality on a day-to-day basis and how we can continue to grow and develop in this area. Ask each person to consider how easy/difficult they find this. Continue until all the blocks have been selected (it doesn’t matter if you repeat the characteristics) or for a set amount of time. Ensure each group member has a turn selecting a block and contributes to the discussion.

b. Allow each person to gather back their own blocks (hopefully identifiable due to using different coloured marker pens!). Ask each person to build their own wall/tower with their blocks, thinking about which of the qualities that they feel they possess and/or practise in their own lives. Put those that they feel come most naturally to them at the bottom of the tower and those that they find more difficult towards the top. Ask each person to share with the group how they have built their tower and why they have placed the blocks in the order that they have. Before you break up the towers, take a photo of each one, or ask individuals to take their own photo on their phone/tablet if possible.

c. If each person has been able to take a photo, it may be possible to ask them to add some text to their photo using their photo editing app. You could add 2 Peter 1:8

‘With these qualities active and growing in your lives, no grass will grow under your feet, no day will pass without its reward as you mature in your experience of our Master Jesus’ (MSG).

Or maybe 2 Peter 1:12

‘So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have’ (NIV).





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Encourage group members to do something with their photo - maybe set it as their lock screen, post on social media, or print and Blu-tack on to their wall.

Prayer

We started this session looking at the call to follow Jesus with our whole hearts and lives; to be a disciple every day, in everything and everywhere. Everyone today follows something or someone. We follow friends and family, sports teams or celebrities. We follow news stories or philosophies. We have requests from people to follow them and we probably even have our own followers too! But following Jesus is different. It transforms us, our communities and even the world.

At the start of this new year, allow some time for each of your group members to affirm their desire to follow Jesus, to tell him that they are saying yes to his invitation and to his call on their life.

Play some reflective music and read the following Scripture to your group:

'So, friends, confirm God's invitation to you, his choice of you.

Don't put it off; do it now.

Do this, and you'll have your life on a firm footing, the streets paved and the way wide open into the eternal kingdom of our Master and Saviour, Jesus Christ.'

(2 Peter 1:10-11 MSG)

See Appendix 2 for images of social media 'Follow' logos. Personalise one for each of your group members with their name, and then hand them out - perhaps reading each person the Scripture above: *'So, Sarah, confirm God's invitation to you, his choice of you. Don't put it off; do it now...!'*

In an attitude of prayer and reflection, ask each person to consider and respond to their personal invitation from Jesus. Pray together if appropriate.

Pray for each person individually using a slightly paraphrased version of 2 Peter 1, inserting their names, and read out as a prayer/blessing/encouragement over their lives. You could do this by asking each person in turn to stand/sit in the centre of the group and have all the other group members gather around, even placing their hands on the person in the centre if appropriate (ask the individual if they are OK with this first though). For example:





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You, Sarah, have everything you need to live a life that pleases God. It was all given to you by God's own power, and you have now learned that he has invited you to share in his wonderful goodness.

God made you great and marvellous promises, so that his nature would become part of you. Then you could escape your evil desires and the corrupt influences of this world.

So, Sarah, do your best to improve your faith. You can do this by adding goodness, understanding, self-control, patience, devotion to God, concern for others, and love. If you keep growing in this way, it will show that what you know about our Lord Jesus Christ has made your life useful and meaningful. But if you don't grow, you are like someone who is nearsighted or blind, and you have forgotten that your past sins are forgiven.

Sarah, you must do all you can to show that God has really chosen and selected you. If you keep on doing this, you won't stumble and fall. Then our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will give you, Sarah, a glorious welcome into his kingdom that will last forever.

Use either of the following two worship tracks (or choose your own) to finish your time of prayer and response together:

'I Will Follow' by Chris Tomlin

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ohvhmGSfxI

'Never Gonna Stop Singing' by Soul Survivor

www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdnZqrfhwM0

Appendix 1





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*'We have
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It was all given to
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(2 Peter 1:3 CEV)





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Appendix 2

