

### Discuss:

In our everyday lives, we all take turns being both leaders and followers. Share with your group an example of each from your own life.

Then, take a look at these quotations about leadership collected by *Forbes* magazine. Which is closest to your own philosophy when you lead? Which one describes a leader you would be willing to follow?

“I must follow the people. Am I not their leader?” —Benjamin Disraeli

“A great leader takes people where they don’t necessarily want to go, but ought to be.” —Rosalynn Carter

“Lead me, follow me, or get out of my way.” — General George Patton

“It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front, especially when you celebrate victory... You take the front line when there is danger.” —Nelson Mandela

### Learning from the Master

We have all been students. We all have stories of memorable teachers, classmates, and schools. So when we come to the Scriptures, we may bring with us our own assumptions about the relationship between students and teachers. Early in John’s Gospel, we encounter a kind of “schooling” prevalent in the ancient world. The school of discipleship.

The New Testament uses the word “disciple” upwards of 250 times. No matter how common that word may be in our Christian vernacular, it represents a way of learning significantly different from the schools you and I have attended.

In today’s curriculums, we might study half a dozen topics at once. In Judaism, however, discipleship has a singular focus. The Rabbi. His life, his commands, and his interpretation of God’s law.

A school day here in Vermont is usually about seven hours, with an hour or two of homework. For disciples, the hours are harder to define. Discipleship is a vocation. It is a lifestyle. One that requires a level of devotion leaving little time for outside pursuits. All of life is integrated into study with and service to their teacher.

With such a significant investment of time and energy, discipleship meant leaving one’s former way of life behind. The authority that belonged first to a disciple’s mother and father is later granted to the Rabbi. Fellow disciples become like brothers and sisters. Together they become a family that seek to carry out the wisdom and instruction of their Rabbi.

Finally, most our studies may eventually come to an end with graduation ceremonies and diplomas. The call to discipleship is lifelong. True mastery comes only as we begin to emulate and live like our master.

## **A Closer Look:**

- 1) John the Baptist is an important figure in the first three chapters of this Gospel. What do John's words and actions in verses 29-35 communicate to his disciples? What is he imparting to them?
- 2) Throughout this passage, a variety of names and titles are used in reference to Jesus. What are they? What might each of these titles suggest about Jesus and his relationship to these disciples?
- 3) Consider the predicament of John's disciples for a moment. What would have been required for them to transfer their discipleship to a new Rabbi? What were the costs? What were they leaving behind?

## **Making it Personal:**

1. Jesus takes a "come and see" approach to discipleship. How comfortable are you with following God's lead into the unknown (new places, new people, new tasks and opportunities, etc)? What might encourage you to take that step?
2. While John and Jesus did not collect fees for their teaching, that doesn't mean that becoming a disciple was not costly. If you consider yourself a disciple of Jesus, what has it cost you to do so? Are there things you feel hesitant to leave behind?

### **The Passage: John 1:29-41**

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' 31 I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."

32 Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. 33 And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' 34 I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."

35 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. 36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

37 When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. 38 Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?"

They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

39 "Come," he replied, "and you will see."

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. 41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ).