

01 LEADER'S NOTES

Your unwritten
autobiography





The notes for participants start on page 11.

This session is about showing people that, if they're a Christian, they already have everything they need for their life to make an impact that will last for ever. It then challenges

them to consider whether that's what they actually want.

The session is focused around the first part of the parable of the two sons, Luke 15:11–24, which is quoted in full on page 18. The last few verses summarize what we want participants to grasp:

“But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.” (Luke 15:22–24)

The key messages we want participants to take away are:

- God has a superb, outrageously amazing plan for your life.
- You already have everything you need to make it happen if you have become a child of God.
- No one is too messed up to fulfil the plans God has for them.
- It's not about how hard you try but what flows from your relationship with Jesus.
- However, it's by no means inevitable that you'll leave an eternal legacy – and making the choice to do so goes right against the prevailing culture.
- There are things that will hold you back if you let them. But *disciple* will help you work out what they are and how to overcome them – every time.



INTRODUCTION

Introduce yourself (and your team if you have one). Say why you are excited about *disciple*. Are there any testimonies from a previous course that can be shared?

Explain briefly what the session is about (you could have someone read “The Start” on page 10 and “Why?” on page 12 or summarize the opposite page in your own words). Then mention the following:

- This is not a course where you just sit back and listen but a journey that we are going to travel through together.
- There is no pressure to engage in the discussions if you don't want to, but that's often where the real learning takes place so you will be helping everyone else if you do.
- Agree together that anything shared in the group stays in the group and is not discussed elsewhere. This helps people feel at ease and often encourages shyer members to share.
- Recommend that they download the *disciple* app and explain a bit about it (see page 7).

Distractions

If participants constantly feel the need to check their phones, consider introducing the “phone challenge”. Everyone has to silence their phones and put them in a pile in the middle of the room. The first person to check their phone before the end of the session has to do a forfeit: perhaps to buy a drink for everyone later or to bake a cake for the next session!

WORSHIP

Lead a short time of worship to ensure that Jesus is at the centre of your meeting.

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank You for bringing us together to journey through Your word. Thank You that You are already here and receive us with love. We pray that You would pour out Your Holy Spirit and fill us completely. Please show us the amazing plans You have for our lives. Please open our eyes and hearts to the truth of who You are and help us to lay down any preconceived ideas we may have about You.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

STARTER FILM – DVD

The Starter Film raises the question, “What do you want from life?” And this is a great introduction to the course as that is fundamentally the challenge we pose all the way through.

The questions after the film are designed to lead to a discussion that gives people an opportunity to get to know each other. Our suggestion is that you break people into groups of four or five for this.

Remember this part of *disciple* is not about teaching but is primarily to encourage discussion so resist the temptation to leap in and teach.



KEY ONE – DVD

In this session Rob begins to explore the reality that God has plans for your life but you have a choice whether to follow them or not. This can be a real revelation to many, especially to those with a church background who may have come to feel that serving God is a slavish thing we *must* do rather than a choice we have. Too often people will view God with the same lens that they view their earthly father – if their father was stern or demanded obedience they may see God like this and this can hinder their relationship with Him.

Rob then talks about the fact that the millennial generation is the most narcissistic ever because all of our decisions are essentially about us. Obviously this is in direct opposition to the gospel. Many will never have stopped and thought about this before. The result of this attitude is that millennials strive for happiness and things but Rob makes the point that worldly things and achievements will never be enough for us in the end, which sets the scene for an interesting debate.

CHAT TIME ONE – PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

Here is where the learning happens. The Participant's Guide has some key questions to discuss in groups of two to four people.

This first chat is deliberately light and fun. The main aim is to encourage the group to chat freely and openly because the best learning environment is one where participants gel as a group and get to know each other. There are no right or wrong answers – this is about getting people thinking about their life story so far and where they want it to head from this point.

Before you move on, do encourage participants to write down their answers to the questions on page 16. We will be looking back at them in a later session (though there is no need to mention that).

KEY TWO – DVD

Millennials live in a hedonistic society which says you can watch porn, sleep around, do drugs, and drink yourself into oblivion and it's OK. Jess has a life story that begins similarly to so many millennials who haven't known God. It is a modern true life version of the younger son in Luke 15 which is the focus of this session. She makes clear that no one has messed up too badly to make their life count as a disciple of Jesus from this point forward and that the minute you come to faith, you have everything you need to do that.

The likelihood is that some of the group will have a similar background so don't be surprised how much this story resonates with them. They may really struggle to understand that God isn't mad at them for their past mistakes, especially if they come from a heavily church background and have rebelled against it. But once they really grasp God's unconditional love, it will transform them.

CHAT TIME TWO – PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

Encourage participants to reflect in twos and threes on the story they have just heard and how it's changed their view of God. Encourage them to make notes and use the Participant's Guide as their journal as they go through the course. The story is printed on page 18 so they don't need to spend time looking it up if they want to read it again.

KEY THREE – DVD

David looks at the older brother in the story and makes clear that it's not about what you *do*, it's about who you *are* as a child of God. This can really resonate with millennials who have been Christians for a while but have slipped into a theology of works and feeling that they have to earn God's love.

David gives people the opportunity to give their lives to Jesus. Do take a moment to check if anyone would like to do this or indeed has done it during the DVD. It's not uncommon for people to become Christians on Freedom In Christ courses, especially when they are confronted with the grace of God as they are in this session. If they have, then do cover them in prayer over the coming weeks and encourage them to become part of a church.

REFLECT

Have participants spend some time in quiet on their own (you might like to have some instrumental music playing quietly) to consider the questions on page 24 and to write down things they believe may be holding them back.

Take some time to refer them to the “Faulty Thinking Versus What God Says” section on pages 190–191 and encourage them to list there one or two areas from today’s session where they realize that what they have believed about God or themselves is not in line with what God actually says in the Bible. It would be helpful to give them an example and emphasize the importance of this exercise.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Point out the Going Deeper section on page 25 and encourage people to find 20–30 minutes before the next session to go through it.

Remind them to download the app so that they get the daily nuggets of teaching and can watch the Starter Film for the next session beforehand if they want to. Show them how to set up the daily messages by entering the dates of your meetings.

disciple is based on the belief that the Bible is true and is the very word of God Himself. This can be quite a leap for new Christians or non-Christians in the millennial generation who struggle to accept that there is an absolute truth. Recommend that they watch the extra film “**Why Believe The Bible?**” that is accessible via the app, in which Rob shows why it’s perfectly reasonable to accept that the Bible is God’s message to us. In fact this would be good for everyone as it will give more mature Christians pointers on how to discuss this issue with non-believers.

Be sure not to give the impression that people *have to* do any of the above! It’s all entirely optional and if someone doesn’t do any of it, that’s absolutely fine.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank You that You love us more than we can ever imagine. Your thoughts about us are as countless as the grains of sand on the beach, and as a shepherd carries a lamb You carry us close to Your hearts. Thank You that You're not distant, angry, or never satisfied with what we do. You know everything about us: when we get up; when we go to bed; and every thought that goes through our minds. And even though You know everything about us, You delight in us, adore us and love us more than we can imagine. Help us, Father, to know this deep in our being and please give us good safe journeys home and a restful night's sleep.

In Jesus' name. Amen.