

Discipleship #1 – Introduction

What is Discipleship?

Discipleship is not supposed to be complicated. Difficult sometimes, complicated never. Two thousand years ago, it was so simple that a carpenter explained it to uneducated fishermen in one sentence (Matthew 4:19). The fishermen understood it, acted on it, and they changed the world. If modern discipleship is confusing or complicated, it is because we have strayed from the biblical principles that Jesus taught His original disciples.

For Jesus, discipleship was and still is top priority. Yes, He fed the hungry and healed the sick, but He always gave the twelve disciples His prime time. His final word to them before He ascended into heaven was a commission not just to *be* disciples, but also to *make* disciples. Like the original followers of Jesus, we are supposed to be disciples and we are supposed to make disciples. In other words, we are supposed to follow Jesus and we are supposed to help others follow Him.

What is a Disciple? Source: Wikipedia

In Christianity, the term **disciple** primarily refers to dedicated followers of Jesus. This term is found in the New Testament only in the Gospels and Acts. In the ancient world a disciple is a follower or adherent of a teacher. A disciple in the ancient biblical world actively imitated both the life and teaching of the master. It was a deliberate apprenticeship which made the fully formed disciple a living copy of the master.

- A Disciple is a follower of Jesus.
- A Disciple is someone who hears the words of Jesus and puts them into practice. John 8:31
- To Disciple someone is to help them learn to follow Jesus.

DISCIPLESHIP BEGINS IN THE HEART OF GOD

1. God's will is that none should perish.

- "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) (ESV)

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” (II Peter 3:9) (ESV)

2. God’s ways are perfect.

- “As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him.” (Psalm 18:30)

3. God’s plan for salvation was sending His son, Jesus, to die for our sins and to have this good news spread by making disciples.

- “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:19)

UNDERSTANDING DISCIPLESHIP

1. Once we capture God’s heart for the lost, Discipleship must start in our hearts also.

- 1 Thessalonians 2:8 We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us

2. Discipleship begins with the lost, not the found. It begins with engaging lost people.

3. The goal of discipleship is to help others become strong followers of Jesus Christ, which happens through relationship. It’s a way of life, not facts to be memorized. Paul had this attitude when writing to Timothy:

- 2 Timothy 1:13 *What you have heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.*

WHAT IS THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP?

Matthew 4:18-20

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.

1. Discipleship is a call to follow Christ.

- Discipleship is a whole-life submission to Jesus.
2. Discipleship is a call to fish for men.
 3. Discipleship is a call to fellowship with others

THE APOSTOLIC MANDATE

1. Jesus's final mandate to His followers was to "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...*" (Matthew 28:19-20) (ESV)
2. We call this mandate Christ gave us the "Great Commission" or the "The Apostolic Mandate."
 - The Apostolic Mandate is not an activity reserved for a few anointed people. It is a description of the life purpose of every believer. It is the essence of discipleship.

For discussion: Is there anything new you have learned about discipleship? Has your perspective changed in any way about discipleship? If so, how?

HOW DO WE PRACTICALLY DISCIPLE OTHERS?



Engaging the Lost
Establishing Spiritual Foundations
Equipping to minister
Empowering to make disciples

ENGAGE

- Why: Understanding God's heart for lost people
- How: Engage Culture and Community

GOD'S HEART: The 99 and the 1**Luke 15:4-7**

"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

The point of the story is:

1. Do not spend all your time and energy with the ninety-nine. Go after the lost one.
2. Value is determined by the price one is willing to pay. God paid the ultimate price to redeem lost souls. Since God places such a high value on lost people, we must learn to see all people the way He sees them. (John 3:16; Luke 19:10)
3. Showing compassion to people who do not know Christ is a foundational discipleship principle.

Matthew 9:36

When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

HOW: ENGAGE CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

1. Because people are valuable to God, we must intentionally and strategically engage our culture and community.
2. We undergird this process of engaging culture and community with prayer. We should pray for ourselves that God would give us...
 - open doors. (Colossians 4:2-6)
 - wisdom. (Proverbs 11:30)
 - boldness. (Ephesians 6:19-20)
 - miracles. (Acts 4:29-30)

3. We are to pray for unbelievers that...

- God would open their eyes. (II Corinthians 4:4-6)
- They would be convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit. (John 16:8-11)
- Demonic forces would be bound. (Matthew 12:25-29)

EVANGELISM IS A CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP AND DISCIPLESHIP IS A CALL TO EVANGELISM

1. There is an inseparable relationship between following God and reaching the lost.

- Matthew reached out to his friends immediately after he decided to follow Christ. (Matthew 9:9-10)
- Andrew talked with Simon immediately after he decided to follow Christ. (John 1:41-42)
- Philip found Nathaniel immediately after he decided to follow Christ. (John 1:45)
- Paul began to preach immediately after he decided to follow Christ. (Acts 9:20)

2. When Jesus told His followers to make disciples, He was calling them to reach the lost, not to help His followers become better followers.

FIVE BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE LOST

1. An attitude of reconciliation. (II Corinthians 5:18-19)
2. An attitude of an ambassador. (II Corinthians 5:20)
3. An attitude of compassion. (Matthew 9:36-38)
4. An attitude of boldness. (Ephesians 6:19)
5. An attitude of urgency. (Luke 4:43)

For discussion:

- Do you spend more time engaging the 99 or the 1? Why? What action step can you take immediately to begin to increase the amount of time you spend engaging the lost?
- Which of the five biblical attitudes towards the lost that were discussed do you find the most difficult to exude? What is a practical step you can take this week to exercise that attitude towards someone who is lost?

Homework:

1. Pray. Ask God to put one person on your heart to reach out to. Write down a brief plan of action to reach out to that person below.
2. Memorize the Gospel message: The Gospel is the good news that God became man in Jesus Christ. He lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died...in our place. Three days later, he rose from the dead, proving that he is the Son of God and offering the gift of salvation for all who repent and believe in the Gospel.
3. Write out the following promises God gives his children in Scripture:

II Corinthians 5:17

I John 1:9

Romans 10:9-10

Psalms 103:12