

LESSON 19 - DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY

How Do We Make Disciples of Jesus?

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How do we make disciples of Jesus? Some provide an answer requiring academic theologians and complicated strategies. Others answer from personal experiences or preferences. The most simple, more biblical, and Christ-like answer is: Just Do What Jesus Did! Jesus said anyone who wants to be His disciple must believe in Him and be willing to deny themselves, pick up their cross, and follow Him (see Mark 8:34). Following Jesus means: 1) spending time with Jesus in loving community; 2) learning grace and truth from Jesus; and 3) learning to surrender and entrust your entire life to Jesus. Our discipleship processes should help Jesus’s followers grow in these three areas.

1. Spend Time with Jesus, In Loving Community. Jesus’s disciples spent a lot of time with Him. Many had left their jobs, homes, and families to follow Him on His missionary travels throughout Judea. They walked with Him, talked with Him, ate meals with Him, stayed where He stayed, went to religious services with Him, and ministered to people alongside Him. Jesus’s approach wasn’t a class or lecture to attend. He used a group apprenticeship approach. His followers spent time with Him, and watched Him in action, while getting hands-on experience. His discipleship program was an ongoing, active, hands-on process to be a part of in which each disciple was developed and transformed by the experience. It wasn’t just educational, it was *relational*. In John 12:26 He said, “*Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be.*” His followers are *with* Him. In John 10:27 He said, “*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*” Jesus *knows* those who belong to Him; they listen to Him and follow Him. In John 14:21 He said, “*Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.*” So He promises to show Himself to those who love Him. In John 14:13 and 1 John 5:14 Jesus promises to listen to us as well and to do anything we ask for in accordance with God’s will. So there’s a two-way personal relationship. Be always growing in your knowing! Discipleship needs to be centered spending time with Jesus and building our relationship with Him. This includes being in a community of believers walking together alongside Him. In John 13:35 Jesus said, “*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*” Jesus’s disciples are characterized by their love for one another as they follow Him together.

2. Learn Grace and Truth from Jesus. Knowing these are essential to discipleship. While our *relationship* with Jesus is more important than *knowledge* of grace and truth, the two really go hand-in-hand. Without right doctrine and biblical beliefs about God, Jesus, and the Gospel, you can’t personally

know or have a relationship with Jesus, nor objectively verify that you're following the *true* Jesus. Jesus Himself *is* the truth. In John 14:6, "*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*" In John 4:23 Jesus said the Father seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and truth. This means we must be born again, of the same Spirit as God, and one with Him in heart and mind, but this only happens when we know and love who God truly is. As John 14:7 and John 1:18 teach, Jesus makes the truth and heart of the Father known to us, and we need to know Him in order to know the Father. John 1:17 says, "*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*" God's grace is foremost revealed in the Gospel. Galatians 2:21 says, "*I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!*" But God's grace wasn't only shown on the cross. God gives grace in our lifetimes, beginning with our forgiveness, salvation, and adoption. We also receive grace, learn about grace, and grow in grace throughout our daily walk with Jesus. 2 Peter 1:2 says, "*Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*" Colossians 1:10-11 says continued growth in the knowledge of God will strengthen us with all power. Discipleship must include building up our knowledge of, and experience with, truth and grace from Jesus. We need to grow in them through our study of God's Word and our personal walk with Jesus through our life's circumstances.

3. Learn to Surrender and Entrust our Lives to Jesus. Discipleship means not only following but becoming more like Jesus. This happens when our quality time with Jesus, our growing relationship with Jesus, and our knowledge of grace and truth from Jesus, all lead us to surrender and entrust every aspect of our life to Him. Our old self must die and we must change. In loving Christian community we can help one another do this. We can hold each other accountable, examining and encouraging one another to forsake sin, bear good fruit, and glorify God with our lives. We can examine one another's beliefs, visions, dreams, gifts, prophecies, and supernatural experiences and test that everything is biblical and true. We can help one another discover and embrace our unique callings, spiritual gifts, anointing, etc. as we develop and share them for the benefit of others in the Church. Our discipleship must *move* believers to know and surrender their lives to Jesus and become more like Him. Discipleship can't be a short-term class because it's not something you *learn*, it's something you *do*. It's a lifestyle. In Luke 14:26 Jesus said we need to love Him so much that by comparison it's like we hate our parents, children, and even our very own lives. This rarely happens overnight unless we have a divine encounter like Paul on his Damascus road experience in Acts 9. That kind of love and change usually happens slowly and progressively. We must crawl before we walk. We must drink milk before we're ready for solid food. And we must walk with Jesus and learn to know Him and trust Him before we're ready to give Him more of us. Jesus invites us to "Follow Him" for this reason. It's on our journey together with Him that we discover just how amazing, holy, wise, good, and trustworthy He is. As our relationship with Him grows, and our knowledge of His grace and truth grows, our faith and trust in Him and His promises increases, and our *willingness* to give Him our all increases. This is how disciples are made.

Let's pray. Jesus, forgive me. Draw near to me and help me draw near to You. Fill my mind and heart with all grace and truth. Help me trust You and surrender to You everything. In Your name I pray. Amen.