

DISCIPLE

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Take a minute to pray for God to guide you as you study...

Welcome to the first lesson of DISCIPLE, a series of study guides that will teach you how to practice the ways of Jesus. This series will help you grow your faith each day by living as a fully-devoted follower of Jesus...a Disciple. When you make the decision to be baptized or to give your heart to Jesus, you are embarking on a journey of being a disciple. It's a journey that will grow you and develop you as you continually learn about Jesus and watch how He changes your life.

The New Testament has an interesting word to describe someone who is following Jesus. The Greek word is "Mathetes," and it means **Disciple** or **Pupil**. We often, as Christians, use the term Disciple, but a more accurate translation for our modern day wording is the term "apprentice." So think of a Disciple as an Apprentice to Jesus.

Have you ever been an apprentice? When you are an apprentice, your whole job is to watch and learn what your mentor is doing. Essentially, your job is to copy everything they do and mimic who they are. Being a disciple of Jesus is a lot like an apprenticeship. Let's look at some verses that talk about discipleship.

Mark 3:14: "He appointed twelve that they might be _____ him and that he might send them out to preach."

Luke 6:40: "The _____ is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully _____ will be like their teacher."

The main idea around discipleship is to be **with** Jesus in order to become **like** Jesus! And as we spend more time with Him, we become more like Him.

But, how does one go about being with Jesus if He is in heaven and we are here on earth? How can you be with someone that isn't standing right next to you? Well, it's actually not that difficult.

To be with Jesus would mean that we would do the things He did! It means to be His pupil, to follow after Him, to copy Him, to mimic Him and do whatever it takes to be like Him. Being with Jesus means that we do the things that He did. Lets look at some things He did.

JESUS LIVED ON THE WORD OF GOD

Matthew 4:4: "Jesus answered, 'It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Jesus filled His heart with scripture and the things of His Father. Pleasing God was always on His mind, because He had the Word of God buried in His heart.

JESUS SPENT TIME IN PRAYER

Luke 6:12: "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to _____, and spent the night _____ to God."

Luke 11:1: "One day Jesus was _____ in a certain place..."

Mark 1:35: "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he _____."

Jesus was in constant contact with His heavenly Father. He wouldn't go very long without taking some dedicated time to slip away from everything and spend some time in prayer.

JESUS HONORED THE SABBATH

Luke 4:16: "He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his _____."

Jesus made sure to honor the special time each week that God the Father had reserved for Him. It was His custom. That means that He did it regularly and consistently.

JESUS WAS INVOLVED IN MINISTRY

Matthew 4:23: "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, _____ the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people."

Jesus was busy teaching people about His Father, and telling them the good news that there is a way to be saved! He even healed people, and guess what? Sometimes the people that followed Him, the disciples, got to participate as well!

These are some of the things that Jesus did, and His disciples followed his example in everything that He did. Being a disciple of Jesus was a full-time commitment, and sometimes it means radical sacrifice.

Luke 9:23: "Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."

Being a disciple is a full-time, total-life way of living where you live for Jesus in all that you do! It is a daily commitment to being a disciple, to follow Jesus to be more like Him every day.

BASIC POINT

Being a disciple is really about being **with** Jesus to become **like** Jesus.

But sometimes, even though we really want to be an apprentice to Jesus, our bad behaviors prevent us from fully committing. Sometimes we tell ourselves, "I can't be an apprentice until I stop doing this or that." This is unfortunately one of the main reasons why so many struggle to find the joy in following Jesus! Let's look at two disciples and who they were when they were called to follow Jesus.

The first disciples Jesus calls to follow him are Peter and his brother Andrew, and here's how it happened.

Matthew 4:18: "Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.' **Immediately** they left their nets and followed Him."

Have you ever wondered why Peter and Andrew immediately quit their jobs working for the family business, to follow Jesus? The reason for this is because of the Jewish educational system during the time of Jesus. The educational system went like this.

In the Jewish culture of Jesus' day, kids were taught the Torah (first five books of the Bible) in the local Synagogue (church) beginning at the age of six. They had classes five days a week, just like we do today. By the time they were about 10 years old, they had memorized all of those first five books. These classes were called "Bet Sefer" (House of the Book). Anyway, most Jewish kids were pretty well finished with school after this and went home to learn the family trade – like fishing or carpentry or something like that.

Now, the kids who were really the best of the best among them were allowed to continue in school in something called "Bet Talmud (House of Learning)." Here, they studied all of the Hebrew Scriptures (our Old Testament) and memorized all of them between the ages of 10-14. During this time, students also learned the Jewish art of questions and answers. Instead of answering with an answer, they were taught to answer with another question. In this way, students could demonstrate both their knowledge and their great regard for the Scriptures. They were taught to always be curious about the Scriptures.

Look at how Jesus was described as a young boy...

Luke 2:46-47: "After three days, they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers."

Very few of these students ever made it this far. For the few who did, there was still another set of classes called "Bet Midrash (House of Study)." If you were smart enough and knew your scriptures well enough to make it this far, you were given the opportunity to go to a rabbi (teacher) to seek further education. The rabbi would grill you and ask you all kinds of questions, because he was trying to find out if you were good enough to be his student. He wanted to know if you knew enough, but even more importantly, if you could be like him in all areas of your life. If he decided that he didn't think you could do it, then he would tell you to go back to the family business.

It was very rare, but if he thought highly enough of you, he would become your teacher and it would be your goal to become like him in every way. You would agree to take on his "beliefs" and his interpretations of the scriptures. This was called his "yoke" and he would say to you, "come follow me." This was a huge privilege that was offered to very few people. The disciple's (also called "talmudim") job was to become like the rabbi in every way. If the rabbi was hurt and had a limp, you might see his healthy disciples walking behind him (in his footsteps) with a limp.

When Jesus called Peter and Andrew to follow Him, they were working as fishermen. They hadn't made it far enough in the educational system to be considered "good enough" to follow a rabbi. Here, Jesus sees them and calls them to follow Him. He knows they weren't "good enough," yet He still calls.

Even though Jesus knows that we aren't good enough, where we should be, that we have baggage and sin in our life, He STILL calls us to follow Him! He calls us to just leave what we are doing and follow Him. It is through this that we will find the rest, joy, and power to live a life free in His love.

So will you follow Jesus and let Him be your Rabbi?

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

1. What makes being a disciple of Jesus difficult?
 2. What do you feel when you think about Jesus calling you to follow Him even though you aren't perfect?
 3. What is going to be the hardest part about being an "apprentice" of Jesus?
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LESSON 1: BEING A DISCIPLE

