

SCHOOL

OF THE

HOLY SPIRIT

(DISCIPLESHIP)

COURSE: The Basics of Discipleship 1

DEPT: Biblical Studies & Ministry

COURSE CODE: 112

UNIT: 2

TOPIC: DISCIPLESHIP

Note:

It is important for you to:

- 1. OPEN your Bible and**
- 2. READ all the Bible references specified.**

This is your part in this study.

The Holy Spirit's part is to give you the *Rhema* of the word that you read, i.e. He will make the word you read **ALIVE in your heart. This is called **Divine Revelation**. This is important in your Discipleship Study. Without this, you only have head knowledge of the word, not heart knowledge. (2Cor. 3:6).**

Remember, you must “study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2Tim. 2:15).

Also remember that there will be questions/tests on each topic. Please, ask your questions before this time. Shalom!

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1. THE NATURE OF A DISCIPLE

The New Testament suggests that a disciple is a learner, a follower and a reproducer.

A. Learner (Matthew 11:28-30)

Jesus said that people were to 'learn' from him. He used the Greek word *Mathetys* which suggests that disciples are learners. One of the most important characteristic in a disciple is *teachability* as people only learn to the extent that they are open to learn. A key task in discipleship is to teach disciples - to equip and educate them, not simply to entertain them. This involves a process of change - in terms of what the disciple already know, feel and do. The task is not so much informational as transformational.

B. Follower (Mark 2:13-17)

Jesus called people to follow him. A disciple is one who follows or imitates another. The Bible speaks of Moses, John and Jesus having disciples - showing that disciples follow or imitates the life the person they follow. David Watson in his book, *Discipleship* says, "a disciple is a follower of Jesus. He has committed himself to Christ, to walking Christ's way, to living Christ's life and to sharing Christ's love and truth with others. The verb *to disciple* describes the process of encouraging another person to be a follower of Jesus; it includes the methods used to help that person become mature in Christ and to be in a position where they can disciple someone else." It is significant to note in this passage that when Levi followed Jesus he immediately threw a party so that his friends could meet Jesus.

C. Reproducer (Luke 6:40)

Jesus said that when a disciple is fully trained, he will be like his teacher. A disciple reproduces the lifestyle of Jesus Christ. There are three marks of a disciple:

- (1) **Obedience** (John 8:31,32) - a disciple should become more obedient, not just full of knowledge;
- (2) **Love** (John 13:31,32) – a disciple should show that they are disciples of Jesus, not by how much they know, but by how much they love; and
- (3) **Fruit** (John 15:8,16) – a disciple also show that they are disciples by the fruit they produce.

In summary: A disciple is a *learner* who develops through a learning process; a *follower* who provides a significant model for people to follow; and a *reproducer* whose lifestyle is marked by obedience, love and fruitfulness.

2. THE PRACTISE OF DISCIPLESHIP

A. The Words Used

The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology discusses several Greek words under discipleship:

- (1) *akolouthe* (follow), which "denotes the action of a man answering the call of Jesus whose whole life is redirected in obedience";
- (2) *mathetes* (a disciple), "one who has heard the call of Jesus and joins him"; and
- (3) *mimeomai* (imitate), which "emphasizes the nature of a particular kind of behaviour, modelled on someone else."

B. The Early Disciples

David Watson, in *Discipleship*, says: "The general concept of discipleship was by no means new when Jesus called men and women to follow him...In secular Greek, the word meant an apprentice in some trade, a student of some subject or a pupil of some teacher. In the New Testament times we find the same primary meaning with the disciples of Moses, who were students of the Mosaic law; and the disciples of the Pharisees, who were preoccupied with an accurate and detailed knowledge of Jewish tradition as given both in the written Torah (the Old Testament) and in the oral Torah (the traditions of the Fathers). These disciples would submit themselves entirely to their Rabbi, and were not to study the scriptures without the interpretation and guidance of their teacher, although they expected to become teachers themselves after extensive training."

C. The Rabbi's Disciples

In the rabbi-disciple pattern of education the training a disciple received from his master included much more than academic study, and went beyond the classroom. The disciple spent as much time with the teacher as possible, often living with him in the same house. Disciples were expected not only to study the law, but also to acquaint themselves with the specific way of life, which could be done only through constantly watching the master. The rabbis taught as much from example as by word, so the disciple needed to take note of his master's daily conversation and habits, as well as his teaching. Students related to their masters with respect. When accompanying their master, disciples were expected to walk behind them. They also served their master in practical ways ranging from setting up the benches in the room used for instruction to shopping and cooking for them. Helping a master at the bathhouse was a service so commonly associated with discipleship that the saying, "I shall bring his clothes for him to the bathhouse" meant "I shall become his disciple". Despite the subordination and respect that characterized the master-disciple relationship, it was not just a distant or merely formal relationship. The teacher attempted to raise his disciples as sons; he cared for them, provided for them (usually the education was at the Rabbi's expense), and praised or admonished his disciples as he saw fit. The relationship was an intense one based on paternal-filial love.

D. The Ministry of Jesus

Jesus' discipleship revealed a number of differences to the rabbinical approach:

(1) Jesus Called His Disciples to Follow Him

In Rabbinical circles, a disciple choose his own master and voluntarily joined his school. With Jesus, the initiative lay entirely with Him. Simon and Andrew, James and John, Levi, Philip and others - all were personally called by Jesus to follow Him. He laid down for them the conditions that he required (John 15:15). Jesus's disciples saw themselves as personally chosen by Jesus, this altered their whole attitude towards him and motivated them for the work he had given them.

(2) Jesus Called His Disciples to Commit to Him

The Jewish Rabbi expected disciples to commit themselves to a specific teaching or to a definite cause. But the call of Jesus was personal: his disciples were to follow him, to be with him, and to commit themselves totally to him. When Jesus called individuals to be his disciples, he shared his life with them. Although Jesus' relationship with the twelve showed a depth of sharing that was not experienced by everyone, he still gave himself to everyone who responded to his call. Through his incarnation he identified fully with them, and in his love he made himself vulnerable by opening his heart to them, even where this led to disappointment and discouragement. It is said that when Buddha was dying, his disciples asked how they could best remember him. He told them not to bother, because it was his teaching and not his person that counted. However, with Jesus, discipleship means knowing him, loving him, believing in him and being committed to him.

(3) Jesus Called His Disciples to Life-Long Obedience

The disciples of a Jewish Rabbi would submit themselves as slaves to their master until the time came when they left their schooling and become Rabbis themselves. Jesus called his disciples to unconditional obedience for the whole of their lives. To be a disciple of Jesus meant to follow him, to go the way that he went, to accept his plan and will for their lives. There was no assurance of promotion from follower to master - in fact, leaders are encouraged to lead as servants.

(4) Jesus Called His Disciples to Serve

While the disciples were called to be with Jesus they were also commissioned to go and preach and to 'heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast our demons'. When Jesus called Simon and Andrew to follow him, he told them that he would make them fishers of men. Jesus often had to correct his disciples because they fell into two temptations that hindered their service for Him. The first temptation was *ambition*. On several occasions they argued among themselves as to who was the greatest. The second temptation was *self-pity*. While disciples need to be honest and real about their weaknesses and pains, the moment they fall into self-pity they hinder God's working.

(5) Jesus Called His Disciples to a Simple Life

A Rabbi's disciple might have given up most material benefits in order to study the Torah, but he would have known that the sacrifice was for a limited time. At a later stage he would be rewarded

financially for his diligence when he became a Rabbi himself. In contrast, Jesus called his disciples to a life of humility and poverty. They were to sell their possessions, and give alms. They were to take with them 'no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff'. They were to trust their heavenly Father to provide for them.

(6) Jesus Called His Disciples to Suffer

Jesus called his disciples to follow him, they had to be willing to walk his way, which was the way of the cross. If they were to share their lives together, they would share not only their joys but also their pains. Life for the Master ended with rejection, pain and agonizing death. The disciple should never be surprised if following Jesus leads the same way. Jesus had constantly warned his disciples about the physical dangers that lay ahead. Almost everyone suffered mental and emotional pain. Discipleship also involves spiritual grief. Paul once wrote concerning his overwhelming burden for fellow Jews who did not believe in Jesus as their Messiah. Suffering is inescapably woven into the fabric of discipleship. It is in the midst of suffering that God works most profoundly in the lives of disciples.

(7) Jesus Called His Disciples from all Society

The Rabbis accepted disciples who were ceremonially 'clean', who were righteous according to the law, and who had sufficient intelligence to study the Torah with a view to becoming Rabbis themselves. Jesus called to himself a curious cross-section of contemporary society. Some were down-to-earth fishermen; James and John were sons of a Zealot; there was a despised Levi, a traitor to his countrymen; and among the twelve we find Greek and Semitic names, and probably a Judean as well as Galileans. Jesus' group of disciples reflected a microcosm of society at that time. Most amazingly of all, there was Judas who betrayed Jesus. This thoroughly mixed and fallible band of disciples set the pattern for the rest of the Christian church.

(8) Jesus Called His Disciples to Mutual Discipleship

Rabbinic discipleship was based on the assumption that the Rabbi's special knowledge gave him direct access to God and the Torah that was denied to others. Unlike the traditional communities of learning, in Jesus' style of discipleship the Master served and the disciples received. They allowed Jesus to wash their feet, a task usually done by the lowest household slave. They were the guests of Jesus at breakfast where He prepared the fire and cooked the fish (John 21:12). The relationship between the Master and the disciples was a reciprocal one. Jesus called his disciple to share their lives with Him and with one another in love. His statement 'you did not choose me, but I chose you' is followed by his command to 'love one another'. He said that it would be by this love that people would identify them as his disciples.

(9) Jesus Called His Disciples to Become like Him

In neither the Old Testament nor the Rabbinical approach was there a hint of a disciple becoming like God. In the New Testament, discipleship is not to an individual, but to Christ himself. Without overlooking the importance of the believer who invests his life disciplining others, the New Testament knows no such thing as Paul's disciples or Cephas' disciples. The call to discipleship

involves Jesus' unique invitation to become like Him (Luke 6:40) and to be a full participant in His mission. "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" links discipleship with carrying the good news to all (Mark 1:15,17; Luke 5:10), while the occasions on which Jesus sent the twelve or the seventy out in two's (Mark 6:7-13; Luke 10:1-20) show that He expects disciples to be fully involved in service to others.

E. The Disciples of Jesus

The actions of the disciples show what is involved in discipleship:

(1) They Responded

Jesus' disciples responded in several different ways. When John the Baptist announced Jesus' identity by declaring "Behold the Lamb of God", two of his own disciples, one of which was Andrew, left the circle of the Baptist and followed Jesus (John 1:36-39). Disciples also responded to a directed summons from Jesus, as seen when Philip simply followed when Jesus said, "Follow me" (John 1:43). Yet others responded to Jesus when given encouragement to do so by friends or family members. For example, Nathanael responded because of Philip's encouragement. Just as the disciples chose to follow Jesus, they also chose to change their minds. Some of Jesus' disciples also freely chose to leave after choosing to follow. The teaching became too burdensome (John 6:66). Judas betrayed Jesus (John 12:4; 13:26) and Peter denied Him (John 18:17,25,27). Yet those who remained were true disciples (John 8:31).

(2) They Followed

The disciples were always on the move. John's Gospel reveals that they attended a wedding (John 2:2), went to Judea (John 3:22), climbed a mountain (John 6:3), went down to the sea (John 6:16), journeyed to a small wilderness town called Ephraim (John 11:54), and went over to a garden in the Kidron Valley (John 18:1). Peter and another disciple followed Jesus to the high priest for the trial, and the Beloved Disciple followed Jesus all the way to the place of the cross. Joseph of Arimathea followed the body of Jesus to the tomb (John 19:38). The disciples were not only in motion physically, but their life orientation also changed. John tells us that Peter accepted a name change, indicating that he had received a totally new course for his life (John 1:42). The disciples moved from their former individual life-styles to full identification with the master. They accepted identification with Jesus: like Him, they also were questioned and put on trial; they feared for their lives because of this close affiliation with the master teacher (John 20:19) and they hid for several days after his death (John 20:26).

(3) They Observed

They were present when Jesus performed miracles, as when He turned the water into wine at a wedding (John 2). They learnt from what Jesus did, how He lived, and from what He said to them.

(4) They Listened

They listened as Jesus used parables and figures of speech to teach them about his mission and destiny. After His resurrection the full impact of what they heard was realised as the Holy Spirit revealed all that Jesus had taught them.

(5) They Questioned

Sometimes their questions appear to have been for theological instruction (John 9:2). At other times their questions evoked advice and instruction from Jesus. Sometimes their questions were unspoken.

(6) They Remembered

They tried to remember Hebrew Scriptures to make sense of what they were seeing in the life of Jesus (John 2:17), and after His death they continued to remember His own words.

(7) They Participated

They baptized (John 4:2); they performed menial tasks for Him such as buying food (John 4:8) and cleaning up after the meals (John 6:12).

F. The Contrasts of Discipleship

The essence of discipleship is identified by considering these five contrasts:

(1) Discipleship Involves a Process not a Programme

Although discipleship includes materials and methods it is a process that is geared to the individual needs of the people involved, in order to lead them to maturity, as stated clearly in Colossians 1:28,29: "We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me." Paul poured all his energy into one process: working with God to bring people to maturity. This involves time and personal involvement. There is no such thing as instant discipleship. Without spending time, there will be no discipleship as it involves getting involved in the life of the person - the totality of their life, not just their church life but their home and personal life. People cannot be disciple from a distance, nor can preaching do the job of discipleship!

(2) Discipleship Involves Multiple, not Individual Input

Youth leaders do not build into a young persons' life exclusively. God has given to the body people with different gifts who can share involvement in the lives of disciples. They can make contributions that one youth leader can never make, as they complement the limitations of the youth leader.

(3) Discipleship Involves Servanthood not Power

Discipleship is about what leaders can do for youth, not about what youth can do for the organisation, the church or for the leader. It is not power *over* people but power *with* people. People will follow a person who loves and serves them. A question to ask is "Who are you serving?" In Matthew 20:20-28 Jesus says that under no condition should lordship over people characterise ministry.

(4) Discipleship Involves Developing Hearts and Minds

Discipleship is about developing obedience within the young person and not just transferring knowledge to their minds. Matthew 28:20 suggests that discipleship is obedience training. Youth leaders teach youth to obey Christ as He reveals Himself in the Word. According to Lawrence Richards, "discipleship involves the redirection of the Christian's life toward obedience, so that he might become like Jesus." He goes on to state that the mission of the church is not simply to win converts, but to complete the process by making disciples. Making disciples involves bringing people into a personal relationship with Jesus and then, under the personal authority of Jesus, redirecting their whole lives in obedience to Him.

(5) Discipleship involves Trusting God not Gifts

Youth leaders often trust in their giftedness and do not rely on God. When they trust education, experience and giftedness they will fail. The disciples of Jesus failed in their area of specialty - fishing. They fished all night and caught nothing. Effective youth leaders often have to fail in the area of their strengths before they learn to rely on God.

3. THE MOTIVATION FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Youth leaders may engage in discipleship for the wrong reasons, such as growing a youth group to increase their reputation. Motivation for discipleship is based on the love of the Father, the command and example of Jesus, and the ministry of Paul.

A. The Love of the Father

While leaders may be tempted to think that the primary reason for discipling youth is to fulfil the Great Commission, they will miss the person behind the Commission: the Father who loved the world so much that he sent his Son to die for people (John 3:16). Pete Ward says, "An incarnational understanding of youth ministry finds its origins in the love or care of God for his creation...God demonstrated in a concrete way his care for humanity by becoming human. It is this love of God which has taken hold of the youth minister and inspires him or her, in turn, to 'care' for young people" (*Relational Ministry*, Page 30).

B. The Command of Jesus

The Great Commission occurs in each of the gospels and in the book of Acts. These were the last words that Jesus spoke. It is helpful to focus on three details in Matthew 28:18-20:

(1) The Men: here were a group of individuals who had just come off the greatest failure of their lives: they had fled at the arrest of Jesus. He said to this group of failing individuals, "I am going to give you all authority and this is what I want you to do..." Jesus clearly used ordinary people to accomplish the mission.

(2) The Mandate: Jesus did not say, 'go and make decisions', but 'make disciples'. Decisions are easy, but discipleship is hard, for while decisions can be made on the spur of the moment, discipleship is a life-long process. Incidentally, the only verb in this passage is 'make disciples'.

(3) The Method: Jesus presents the following disciple making process by his use of three participles (participles are actions dependent on the action of the main verb):

- (a) *Going* - literally this is 'having gone', or 'when you go'. True discipleship begins with evangelism. Believers are called to penetrate the community by winning a hearing and then confronting people with the truth that God has revealed in Jesus Christ.
- (b) *Baptising* - this is a crisis event, when people come to faith and pass from darkness to light.
- (c) *Teaching* - this involves teaching people to obey, not just to understand. Their life must be transformed, they must become like Jesus Christ.

C. The Example of Jesus

The strategy that Jesus used to reach the world involved disciple-making. While he related to the masses at times, the focus of his ministry was on the selection, training and mobilisation of twelve disciples who were equipped and entrusted with the task of making disciples of all nations. Leaders who seek to be like Christ, should also learn from Him in terms of his emphasis on discipleship.

D. The Ministry of Paul

A key verse for discipleship is found in Paul's advice to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2: "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." The word **reliable** is *pistos*, not faithful in the sense of believing, but in the sense of being trustworthy or reliable. The word **qualified** is *hikanos* which means sufficient, or suitably equipped. The word **commit** is *paratithemi* which means to deposit as a trust. As Paul is preparing Timothy for a ministry of the word of God he says to him, "you are one of many witnesses into whose life I have built my life. Take what you have heard and make a deposit (commit) to a group of individuals in such a way that they will be equipped to teach others, who will in turn teach others. Begin a process that will never end: a ministry of multiplication." In Ephesians 4:11-13 he suggests a similar discipling or equipping process: "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ".

4. THE PRINCIPLES OF DISCIPLESHIP

From the life of Jesus the following principles for effective discipleship have been identified:

A. Incarnation

In John 1 God set the pattern for discipleship - incarnation. God could have used a number of means to communicate with us, but he chose to become flesh, to pitch his tent among us (14). He was full of grace and truth. The following story tries to illustrate the incarnation: a group of ants are involved in trying to move a big object. They all try together, but cannot move it. If a person reached down and said, "little ants, let me help you move that thing." They would scatter. Even if he said, "little ants, I don't want to hurt you, I want to help you!" How could the person communicate with them? He would need to become an ant. But if He became an ant, he would not be able to help them move the object. He would need to be a man-ant: a man with enough strength to help them move the object, but an ant with the ability to communicate with them. Like Christ did, as the God-man, youth leaders must incarnate themselves among the people they are seeking to disciple. This is the first step in making disciples.

B. Selection

Although Jesus spent some time with the crowds, and at least on one occasion he sent out seventy disciples on a specific mission, he spent most of his ministry on this earth with the twelve disciples. And of those twelve, he concentrated especially on three, James, Peter and John. Youth leaders should concentrate their time with a small group of committed youth, twelve probably being the maximum number for effective discipling. In the long run this is far more effective than the much more superficial teaching of a larger group. A number of principles for selecting disciples are seen in Luke 6:12,13: "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles":

- (1) *Pray about who to select* - Jesus spent an entire night in prayer before he chose his disciples.
- (2) *Ensure considerable personal exposure* - it was a year or two into the ministry of Christ before he chose his followers.
- (3) *Go for diversity* - there were among the twelve: extroverts and introverts; conservatives and liberals; people who have much to say and those who never say a word. Leaders tend to chose people who are like them which leads to discrimination. Jesus chose people not on the basis of what they were, but on the basis of what they were to become.
- (4) *Disciple in a group setting* - Jesus used the dynamics of a small group as a key element of his discipleship.

C. Association

"Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve - designating them apostles - that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach" (Mark 3:13;14). This passage emphasizes association before involvement!

Leaders impact people in direct proportion to their personal involvement with them. While people can be impressed from a distance, they are only impacted from close contact. Leaders must ensure that they do not get too far from the people they are trying to impact! The most significant transforming experiences in the lives of the twelve grew out of shared life. This could only happen because of the amount of time spent together.

D. Training

There is an ancient proverb which says: "I hear, I forget; I see, I remember; I do, I understand." When introducing his Gospel, Luke said: "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach" (Acts 1:1). Here the doing came before the teaching. Jesus had no formal curriculum, no planned course of instruction, no classroom syllabus. Instead he called his disciples to be *with him*. Passages, such as John 15:27; Luke 22:25 and John 13:15, show that the disciples watched Jesus work, they worked with him, they asked him questions when they failed or did not understand, they went out in pairs to practice what they had learned, they reported back to him, they asked more questions and they received further instructions. Discipleship is much more than an events - it includes the sharing of lives. In Mark 4 Jesus is involved in training his disciples. The chapter starts with a *parable* section and the subject is faith. Jesus is giving his disciples a lecture. But because faith is best communicated in real life experiences, a *miracle* section follows (Mark 4:35 into chapter 5). The first of the miracles is the miracle of the storm - the disciples are involved. They are being given an exam. A storm hits the boat they are travelling in, and Jesus has to rebuke both the storm and the disciples for their lack of faith. He says, "How come you have no faith - you have heard my lectures, but you still doubt." They failed the hearing test because Jesus had said, "Let's go to the other side of the lake" - not, "let's go to the middle of the lake and drown." Discipleship cannot be handled adequately in the context of a classroom - it must take place in real life situations. The essence of discipling is the "teachable moment" - using an experience as a lab in which truth is experienced. Formal teaching (a pre-planned lesson) goes from Scripture to life. Informal teaching goes from actual life to Scripture and immediately back to life. The interest level is much higher because the learner brings to the discussion emotional involvement and anticipates immediate, accurate application.

As the twelve began to grow, Jesus transferred responsibility to them for ministry. At first it was very simple. Jesus first demonstrated what He wanted done, then gradually involved the twelve in doing it. The flow of responsibility from leader to learner is shown below:

Leader's Role	Learner's Role
Do	Watch

Do	Help
Help	Do
Watch	Do

E. Delegation

In Mark 6:6-13, Jesus' training of the twelve involved sending them out to practice skills. He delegated authority to them to be able to accomplish their task. Jesus began to send the disciples out on their own, standing back whilst they tried for themselves; then gently correcting them, instructing them, until the time came when he could leave them altogether, knowing that his Spirit within them would continue to be their helper and guide. In order to develop youth a process should be used to ensure that they are gradually equipped to handle more and more responsibility:

Phase 1: PHYSICAL

Responsibility: Set up chairs; Prepare equipment; Arrange transport.

Phase 2: PROGRAMME

Responsibility: Lead worship; Give a testimony; Plan programmes

Phase 3: PEOPLE

Responsibility: Co-lead Bible study; Outreach; Care giving

Phase 4: PERSON-TO-PERSON

Responsibility: Follow-up; One-on-one discipleship; Lead a Bible study

F. Reproduction

The twelve were chosen to bear fruit. The Lord invested three years in the apostles and then turned them loose. Their lives were no longer directed by Him personally, but by their commitment to well-learned principles, the Holy Spirit, and their accountability to one another. The final test of discipling s reached when the learner becomes the leader.