

# GOD'S REVIVALIST

January / February 2023

*and Bible Advocate*



NEW SERIES

# Discipleship



Rev. Elmer Farmer

# thinking out loud

## DADDY WAS A DISCIPLER

Daddy represented Christ well—to family, friends, and even strangers whom he would encounter in daily life. It could be during neighborhood canvassing, knocking on doors, talking to those he would meet about Jesus and inviting them to church. At other times it occurred midst the spontaneous conversations he had while waiting for a pizza order. His engaging, affable manner made it easy to interact with others. One specific memory is very clear to me. Hy-Vee had just opened a supermarket in our area. Daddy strode into the beautiful new store and joked with one of the managers that he really liked the store so much that he might want to buy it. “Well, everything has a price,” was the reply. Daddy quickly responded, “No, not everything. Many years ago, I gave my life to Jesus, and it is NOT for sale.” He had managed to take a frivolous comment and turn it toward his mission—to proclaim Christ. He was good at doing that!

He was also a good disciple-making leader. During several stints as a district superintendent, his character and actions were a model for fellow ministers, especially the younger ones. He would personally take some under his wing and give them the special attention they needed. Although his life pointed directly to Christ, he understood that in order to make disciples, he must first be a disciple himself and authentically live out the character and conduct of Christ. He had to be careful to model what he wanted others to follow.

Thankfully, Daddy passed some of this on to his children. No, I didn’t pick up his easy-going flair for personal evangelism. However, I did pick up the necessity for building up and empowering others to get things accomplished more effectively. I recall how other colleges paid outside consultants to complete institutional self-studies and how other chief academic officers lamented that they practically had to do such reports on their own. I smiled. Why? Because my experience at GBS was that those were robust group efforts involving even the younger and less experienced faculty and staff. Those of us in senior positions modeled the right things to fulfill the mission of GBS; others followed. In addition to the work of the school, something equally important was taking place. We were building and leading disciples—the next generation of followers of Christ who are dedicated to His mission, especially as it is accomplished through GBS! —KF ■

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COVER PHOTO: Emily Albertson currently is actively discipling high school student Alexa Arrender. Photo by Kevin Moser.

# Introduction to Discipleship

by Nathan Brown

When our kids were small, we would have them listen to Bible stories and then create something from the story using Lego blocks. One day my wife asked them to illustrate Jesus' famous call, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt 11:28-30 ESV). After spending a few minutes in his room, our son Alex came out and proudly presented his creation: it was a little Lego man holding an egg yolk. **This is a great illustration of what can happen when we're given orders but we don't really understand what to do!**

One of the last things Jesus did during his earthly ministry was give his disciples this command: "Go and make disciples" (Matt. 28:19). All of us would agree that this command is fundamental to our mission as the people of God. But what is a disciple? How do you go about making a disciple? And what exactly is discipleship? If we are to be effective in our obedience to Christ's command, we must know and understand the answers to these questions.

The theme for this *God's Revivalist* series is discipleship, and, over the next several issues, we'll be discussing this topic in-depth. We'll begin by looking at what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, and we'll gain an understanding of discipleship, both as a picture to visualize and a definition to consider. Then we'll talk about how to put this into practice personally, for **each of us must be a disciple ourselves before we can make disciples of others.** Along with this, I'll give you a set of tools that will help you do the daily activities that are vital to being a disciple. Then we'll look at the disciple-making home and talk about how to disciple your family effectively. Last, we'll discuss how the Great Commission relates to the Church and how the Church can fulfill its mission of making disciples.

Now, before we dive into what discipleship is, let's first pause and spend a moment talking about **WHAT DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT.** This is important because it's easy to confuse the various pieces and parts of discipleship for the whole. Discipleship is...

- **Not just a series of study guides or lessons.** When many people think of discipleship, they think of the *Design for Discipleship* series by NavPress or the *Truth-Seed* series by Victor Books. While these resources are helpful and play an important role in discipleship, they are only tools. Discipleship is not a curriculum. It's not like we work through some lessons and then we're discipled.

- **Not just a small group meeting.** Small groups are great venues for discipleship, but having small groups doesn't automatically mean that discipleship is taking place. First, the small group leader may not lead very well. Second, people can attend a small group and never really connect with others or grow spiritually. And third, some people simply will not attend a small group for a variety of reasons. Also, it's not like you can say, "Well, I went to a small group meeting for six months, and so I'm done with discipleship."

- **Not just a program.** Some churches have a program called "Discipleship." That's great, and it can be a very positive experience, but discipleship is not an event. It's not like we go through a program and come out saying, "Well, I can put a checkmark on discipleship." Discipleship is not something that we stop doing. Discipleship never ends!

- **Not only for new converts.** Many people think of new converts when they think about discipleship. And yes, new converts need to be discipled, but don't think that discipleship is just for new converts. Discipleship is for everyone!





# Letters

## TO THE EDITOR

Letters should be emailed to [revivalist@gbs.edu](mailto:revivalist@gbs.edu) or addressed to the Editorial Office, 1810 Young Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202. Letters reprinted here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editor of *God's Revivalist* nor those of the administration of God's Bible School. Names and locations of writers will be withheld at their specific request or at the discretion of the editor. We reserve the right to edit and condense.

Greetings from Alabama! Ruth and I continue to enjoy *God's Revivalist* and, additionally, feel that it keeps us connected to our great GBS family. Blessings on the editor, my dear friend; his ministry; and family.

DR. & MRS. MICHAEL WILLIAMS  
Seale, AL

Our grandfather, Charles H. Cox, worked at the GBS print shop way back in the early 1900s. We love *God's Revivalist*. It is a joy!

GAIL B. COX  
Sellersburg, IN

I really enjoyed the alumni news section about Irene Maurer—and the photos, too. Thank you, and blessings to your family, Kevin [Moser], for producing such wonderful believers!

MICHELLE ULE  
author, biographer of Mrs. Oswald Chambers  
Santa Rosa, CA

I so appreciate *God's Revivalist*. It is an encouragement, inspiring, and great teacher of God's Word. May you all be blessed and encouraged as you work in His fields.

CHERI BENFIELD  
Independence, KS

I do enjoy *God's Revivalist* and what GBS stands for! My prayers are for the college each day.

WALTER COOK  
Preston Hollow, NY

We enjoy the beautiful magazine. Thank you very much.

MR. & MRS. BILL J. CASE  
Colorado Springs, CO

- **Not done only by pastors.** While pastors are called to disciple those under their care, discipleship is not an exclusive activity which can only be carried out by elders or pastors or church leaders. Indeed, parents are charged by God to disciple their children.
- **Not only about evangelism.** Evangelism is the first step in making disciples, but it's only the beginning of the journey. We should never lead someone to Christ and then walk away thinking we've done our job. We must also make sure they are rooted and grounded in the faith, and this involves time and effort.

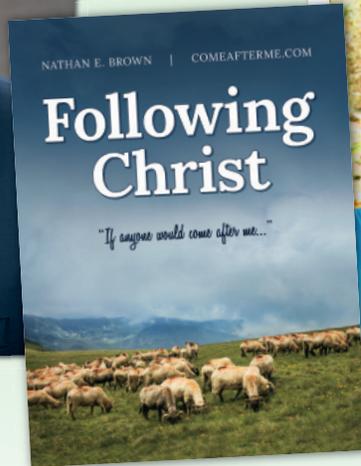
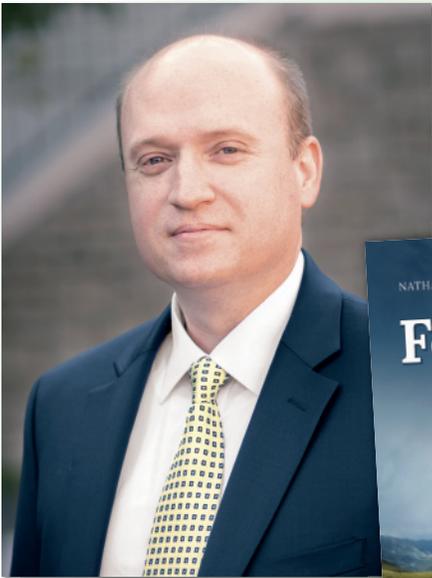
We've spent some time looking at what discipleship *is not*, and over the next several issues, we'll be looking in-depth at what discipleship *is*. But let me give you a brief summary of **WHAT DISCIPLESHIP IS ALL ABOUT**. Discipleship is about...

- **Becoming like Jesus.** As children of God, our goal is to become more and more like Him. We need to learn to think like Jesus, believe like Jesus, value like Jesus, have attitudes like Jesus, react like Jesus, behave like Jesus—in short, be like Jesus! We need to ask ourselves every day: What would Jesus do? What would Jesus think? How would Jesus react? What would Jesus believe?
- **Developing relationships and becoming part of a community of disciples.** We are not Lone Ranger disciples; rather, we're part of a living, growing body of disciples called the church. We help each other apply God's Word to our lives so that our minds and hearts and hands are transformed into the image of Christ. We coach each other, showing each other how to be like Jesus. This is where lessons and Bible studies and programs and small groups play such an important role.
- **Persuading others to follow Jesus.** We all have a responsibility to reach out to others with the good news of Jesus. We need to be godly examples to our families, our friends, our coworkers, our neighbors, and others we encounter in daily life. We need to be looking for opportunities to share our testimonies and explain how Jesus transformed us. We need to be active in our churches and communities. We need to be involved in global missions, praying for our fellow workers in other parts of the world.

Discipleship is a lifetime journey in which we live each day as disciples of Jesus within a community of disciples, the local church. Discipleship is the daily process of being transformed into the image of Christ and helping others to do the same. Discipleship is the great task of calling a lost and dying world to become disciples of Christ and then establishing those new believers as mature, healthy disciples who make disciples. Discipleship is for all, and discipleship never ends. Join us as we explore the exciting journey of discipleship! ■



# About Nathan Brown



**The Revivalist Press welcomes Nathan Brown, the main contributor for this five-part series on “Discipleship.” The following background information on Nathan explains how his discipleship ministry developed.**

In May 1992, Nathan Brown, the son of Drs. Allan and Nadine Brown, graduated from Hobe Sound Bible Academy, having attended kindergarten through 12th grade. He then enrolled at Hobe Sound Bible College and signed up for all of his father’s courses that he could (e.g., Pentateuch, Christian Beliefs, Romans, etc.). This special course load was basically designed for him, as the Brown Family was preparing to move to Alabama in the summer of 1993.

Following the move, Nathan attended the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, graduating in May 1998 with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. One month later, he was hired by Southern Company Services, Birmingham, Alabama, a leading producer of clean, safe, reliable, and affordable energy. He currently serves as a senior engineer in the Resource Planning department. In this position, he runs a generation forecasting model which helps the company estimate how much coal, oil, and gas the generating fleet will need to meet the demands of its customers (e.g., Alabama Power, Georgia Power, Mississippi Power) for up to 35 years into the future. This data is used by the Fuel Services department to procure and transport the needed fuel to the generation plants.

This very complex technical work might raise a few questions. “How did this interest come about?” “When did Nathan realize he wanted to be an engineer?” “Were there any expectations on him to be a teacher or preacher?” Nathan gives the following insight.

*My dad was a Bible teacher, but my mom was a science teacher, so science was an important part of my world growing up. We also lived in southern Florida, and, from an early age, I was fascinated by NASA; the space program was located only two hours north of us at the Kennedy Space Center on Cape Canaveral. I actually wanted to be an aerospace engineer and build spacecraft like the space shuttles and the Apollo 11 lunar module. However, when I started university, I was told by my advisors that NASA was on a hiring freeze and that I should major in something more generic in order for it to be easier to find a job when I graduated. So I ended up in mechanical engineering. Yes, a lot of people did expect me to follow in my dad’s footsteps, but my mom provided enough “cover” so that I could point to her, and my choice made sense to people.*

Following the Browns’ move to Alabama, Nathan met Charity Frederick at the Bible Methodist Youth Camp in Pell City. After dating for several years, they were married April 7, 2001. They live in Trussville, Alabama, and have two children: Kathryn (17) and Alex (15). Charity works remotely as a bilingual production editor for Classical Conversations MultiMedia, which produces classical Christian curriculum and ancillary products for an increasingly global homeschool community. Her remote work allows her to stay involved in her own children’s home education. She also is involved in working for Nathan’s website. [ComeAfterMe.com](http://ComeAfterMe.com)’s Spanish materials are the

result of her work alongside that of native editors. You can see this by clicking on the Español link at the top right of the website. The Browns attend the Pell City Bible Methodist Church. Charity is currently helping out by facilitating an adult Sunday school class.

How Nathan became so involved in discipling and developing discipleship materials relates to his affiliation with the Bible Methodist Connection...and a specific event. Nathan explains:

*My dad was ordained with the Bible Methodists around 1970. When we moved to Alabama in 1993 to pastor East Lake Bible Methodist in Birmingham, I formally became a member that year. I've done a variety of things in various Bible Methodist churches: adult Sunday school teacher, fill-in preacher, and worship leader. However, it was when Greg Makcen, the former pastor of Tuscaloosa Bible Methodist Church, died in 2003, that we had two couples saved as a result of his death. I immediately started a discipleship ministry with them in their homes. Charity and I would take turns with them in hosting the group meeting each week, and I started teaching them the basics of what it means to be a Christian. We did this until we moved to Birmingham in 2006.*

*Later, in 2009, my friend Brian Miller, who was pastoring the Fairview Wesleyan Church, Cottondale, Alabama, asked me to start a discipleship class on Sunday evenings at his church. That was when I started writing up all my material and began the website (it was originally called *Discipling New Converts*). The site started with just a few lessons (basically just one page). I continued to add material over time until it is what you see today. I moved to the [comeafterme.com](http://comeafterme.com) domain in May 2015.*

In 2015, Nathan was elected as the Bible Methodist Discipleship Director. All of the core discipleship materials and Bible-Prayer system were created after that. Since then, Nathan has been the Bible teacher at camps and has spoken about discipleship at many churches around the conferences. He does admit, however, that most of his time is spent working on material for the website.

Although Nathan will get into more detail of the discipleship tools on his website, for right now he would simply say this:

*I want people to think of my website as a platform for personal, family, and church discipleship. Personal discipleship in the sense that it can help you build and grow your relationship with God on a daily basis. Family discipleship in the sense that it has the tools to help you disciple your children as well as foster a devotional time in which families can discuss and learn about God and the Bible. Church discipleship in the sense that it has material which can be used to train people in how to be disciples who can in turn train other disciples.*

Enjoy this series! —KF ■

# Being Jesus'

In his book *Following the Master*, Michael Wilkins relates that when he speaks on discipleship, he asks people, "How many can say with confidence that you're a true disciple of Jesus?" When he asks this question, many people are hesitant or confused and don't raise their hand. But when he asks, "How many can say with confidence that you're a true Christian?" most immediately raise their hand. No hesitation, no doubt. Isn't that interesting?

The Great Commission is the mission statement of the Church, yet many don't understand what it means to be a disciple. How can we "go and make disciples" if we don't know what a disciple is? How can we be an example to others if we're not sure about what we're doing ourselves? So that's where we're going to start in this series. We're going to start by answering this question—What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

While there are many good ways to answer this question, I'm going to try to capture the essence of discipleship using five verbs, and the first one is *commit*. Being a disciple of Jesus means committing to Him alone.

## COMMIT

When Jesus began His earthly ministry, He faithfully preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Mark tells us that Jesus was saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15\*). Jesus eagerly welcomed all who believed, but when large crowds began to follow Him, He turned to them and urged them to consider what they were doing. Let me give you two examples.

One of them took place in the villages of Caesarea Philippi, after Peter confessed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God. Mark tells us, "And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it'" (Mark 8:34–35).

Another happened at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, just a few months before his death. Jesus was in Perea, an area on the east side of the Jordan River, and Luke tells us, "Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple'" (Luke 14:25–27, 33).

# Disciple

by Nathan Brown

Imagine a politician or leader today turning to his followers and saying something like this. It would never happen! Yet Jesus consistently urged the crowds to consider seriously what it meant to follow Him. This shows us that being Jesus' disciple is different from being anyone else's disciple. We can see this in the following ways.

**Being Jesus' disciple involves a commitment.** When Jesus talked about hating father and mother, He meant that we must love God more than we love anyone else (not that we must literally "hate" or despise our family). Our loyalty to Jesus must come before our loyalty to our country, our church, our family, our spouse, and our children. Are we willing to love God more than anyone else?

**Being Jesus' disciple involves a cross.** In those days, the cross was an instrument of humiliation and death. If we want to follow Christ, we have to die to ourselves. This means we have to give up the right to control our own fate and choose our own way.

There was a song back in 1969 that was made popular by Frank Sinatra. It was called, "My Way," and here are

some of the lyrics: *I've lived a life that's full / I've traveled each and every highway / And more, much more than this / I did it my way.* The song goes on to say: *For what is man, what has he got? / If not himself, then he has naught / To say the things he truly feels / And not the words of one who kneels / The record shows, I took the blows / And did it my way.* This song is played, if you can imagine, at funerals across the country, to summarize how persons lived their lives! This is what Jesus was talking about—if we want to be His disciple, we have to give up being the master of our fates and the captain of our souls.

**Being Jesus' disciple involves a cost.** Jesus warned that those who didn't consider the true cost of their endeavors would find themselves unable to complete them (Luke 14:28–32). He did this by telling the story of a man who tried to build a tower and then was unable to finish. Recently, I heard the story of a building that was being constructed in Tianjin, China. At the time, it was going to be the fifth tallest skyscraper ever built. By 2015, the structure made it to 1,959 feet, and then, the project was put



on hold due to a lack of money. Today, it sits there empty, a skeleton against the sky, and they call it a ghost-scraper. If we want to be Jesus' disciple, we have to consider carefully the cost of following Him.

The first verb we've looked at is commit, and we've seen that to be Jesus' disciple, we must make the serious commitment of loving Him more than we love anything else. The next verb I'm going to use to capture the essence of discipleship is *follow*. Being a disciple of Jesus means following Him.

## **FOLLOW**

Throughout the Gospels and Acts, the word "disciple" referred to those who followed after a rabbi or teacher in order to learn from him. John the Baptist had disciples (e.g., Matt. 9:14), Jesus had disciples (e.g., Matt. 5:1; 8:23; 11:1), and even the Pharisees had disciples (Mark 2:18). Being a disciple meant entering into a relationship with the one you were following. You committed to follow him, learn from him, and obey him.

Many people, when they hear the word "follow," think of Facebook. When you follow people on Facebook, their posts float to the top of your news feed. Whenever they put up something new, you're immediately going to see it. But I could follow you on Facebook and never have a relationship with you. You might not even know I follow you! And so that's not what it means to follow Jesus.

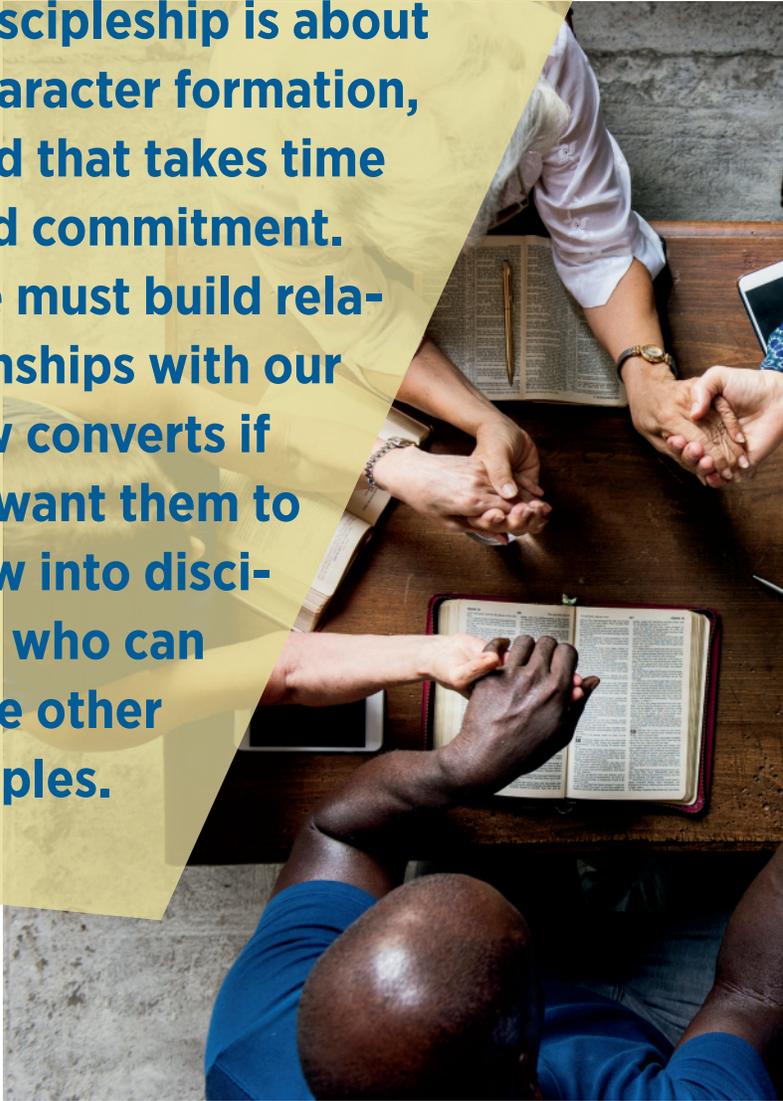
When we're saved, we enter into a master-disciple relationship with Jesus. Our calling as Jesus' disciple is to follow Him, learn from Him, and obey Him. We see an example of this in the upper room. Jesus told His disciples, "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (John 13:13–15).

The master-disciple relationship sounds a little strange to us today. Perhaps a modern equivalent with which we can better identify is the coach-player relationship. In Paul's day, the Roman world was consumed with sports and athletic activities, and Paul often used sporting metaphors to get his point across. He talked about running a race, fighting the good fight, receiving the prize, and he told the Corinthians that every athlete exercises self-control in all things in order to win (1 Cor. 9:25).

American culture is also very sports oriented, and so I think it's appropriate to use the coach-player illustration when it comes to discipleship. When you join a sports team, you become a "disciple" of your coach. You place yourself under his authority and agree to do whatever he

tells you. Your goal is to learn to think about the game like your coach. You are subject to his correction and discipline, and you work hard to earn his praise and respect.

Here in Alabama, where I live, people are very interested in a sport called football. You may have even heard of the Alabama Crimson Tide, the official football program of the University of Alabama.



**Discipleship is about character formation, and that takes time and commitment. We must build relationships with our new converts if we want them to grow into disciples who can make other disciples.**

The coach of this program is a man by the name of Nick Saban. Saban has something he calls "the system," and it's all about training his players to be the best. Nick Saban is the master of that football program. When he says to do something, you do it! All the players are his disciples. They've come to Alabama and deliberately sought out Nick Saban so that he can train them to think and act and respond like they should so they can compete at the highest level. They want to learn all they can from him.

That's what it's like to follow Jesus. When we become a disciple, we place ourselves under His authority and do whatever He tells us. Our goal is to learn to think about life and living the way He does. We welcome His correction and discipline, and we long for His approval.

The second verb we've looked at is follow, and we've seen that being Jesus' disciple means having a relationship with Him in which He is our Master and Lord. The next verb I'm going to use to capture the essence of discipleship is *imitate*. Being a disciple of Jesus

the New Testament. This word does a great job of expressing the heart of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus—being like Him. As Jesus told His disciples, “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40). Let's take a look at several examples of how this word is used.

**First, Paul told the Ephesians,** “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children” (Eph. 5:1). Children naturally imitate their parents. They watch us with fascination, and whatever we're doing, they want to do it, too. In the same way, we must imitate God. We need to have our eyes fixed on Jesus, watching Him work and then joining with Him through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Second, Paul told the Corinthians,** “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). This means that we are called, not only to imitate Christ, but also to imitate those who faithfully follow Christ. Now, you might think that only someone like the apostle Paul could say something like this, but that's not true, as this next example shows.

**Third, Paul told the Philippians,** “Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us” (Phil. 3:17). Let's think that only apostles qualify to be imitated, Paul calls us to imitate all who walk according to his godly example. Have you ever been in a service and heard people testify about an answer to prayer or what God had been doing in their lives, and thought, “I want to be like that!” Or, “That encourages me!” I remember a friend who used to stand up and testify about how grateful he was for the Holy Spirit being faithful to correct him. Such people are worthy of being imitated.

**Fourth, Paul told the Thessalonians,** “For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate” (2 Thess. 3:7–9). This is an example of how Paul limited his liberty in order to set an example for the Thessalonians. This illustrates what kind of behavior we should imitate, as well as what kind of example we should be for others.

**Fifth, Paul also told the Thessalonians,** “You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia” (1 Thess. 1:5b–7). As we imitate godly men and women, we, in turn, become examples for others. This is how discipleship should work within the Church.

**Sixth, the author of Hebrews said,** “And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may



© Stock: Rawpixel

means imitating Him and those who follow His example.

## IMITATE

While the word “disciple” is used in the Gospels and Acts, the word “imitator” is used throughout the rest of

not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:11-12). The Bible is filled with people whose faith and righteousness stands as an example to us today. It doesn't matter when the person lived—we can imitate the faith of Noah, Job, Daniel, and many others.

**Last, the author of Hebrews said,** "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7). Our spiritual leaders should be obeyed and imitated, for they watch over our souls (3 John 1:9-12).

Now, the good news is—we don't have to be perfect to be worthy of imitation. Aren't you glad of this? King David committed adultery and then lied and murdered to cover it up, yet we still imitate his sincere repentance and many of his other good qualities. Solomon appears to have ended his life in idolatry, but we still read Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon, and we can imitate much of the good that Solomon did.

The third verb we've looked at is imitate, and we've seen that being Jesus' disciple means imitating Him and those who follow His example. The next verb I'm going to use to capture the essence of discipleship is *coach*. Being a disciple of Jesus means coaching others in how to follow Him.

## COACH

There are four key aspects to coaching others—**invest, teach, show, and exhort**. First, we must **INVEST** in the lives of fellow believers. All too often disciple-making has been understood as merely preaching the gospel, leading the lost to Christ, or making a compelling case for faith. While disciple-making includes these things, its true goal is Christian maturity. Discipleship is about character formation, and that takes time and commitment. We must build relationships with our new converts if we want them to grow into disciples who can make other disciples.

Second, we must **TEACH** others what it means to be a disciple. Jesus said, "Make disciples...teaching them to observe all I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). While some are called to the office of teacher, Jesus wants all of us to be able to explain the basics of how to follow Him. Paul left an example of obedience to this command. When he was in Corinth, "he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them" (Acts 18:11; cf. 2 Tim. 1:13). People won't know how to follow Christ if we don't teach them. I'll never forget, one of the first converts I discipled told me, "Now I don't know much, but I do know that God led His people around in a forest for 40 years." Clearly, he needed to know a little more about the Bible!

Third, we must **SHOW** others how to be a disciple. Sound teaching is essential to discipleship, but our personal example is the foundation on which disciple-making is built. Paul taught his new converts to follow Christ,

and then he showed them how to be disciples by the example he lived before them (e.g., the example of hard work that he gave the Thessalonians). If we aren't living a life that can be imitated by others, our efforts to make disciples will fail.

Last, we must **EXHORT** others to grow in discipleship. Paul told the Corinthians, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Once we've taught others how to follow Jesus and showed them by example, we must urge them to take action and live it themselves. As they put into practice what they've learned, we can then encourage them and help them grow. Nick Saban, in post-game interviews, will often say something like this: "We didn't do a good job of executing. We're just not doing the basics, the fundamentals." What is he talking about? He's saying that he can spend time with the players, he can teach them all he knows, he can even demonstrate what he's talking about, but unless they actually do what he says, they won't become better players (better disciples). We must encourage and exhort others to be disciples of Christ.

The fourth verb we've looked at is coach, and we've seen that being Jesus' disciple means coaching others in how to follow Him. The next verb I'm going to use to capture the essence of discipleship is *persuade*. Being a disciple of Jesus means persuading others to follow Him.

## PERSUADE

When most people think of discipleship, they think of evangelism, outreach, bus routes, knocking on doors, passing out tracts, witnessing in the park, VBS, and inviting people to church. All these things are definitely part of discipleship, but I deliberately put this part last. Why? Because if we don't have everything else first—if we don't have the right foundation in our lives and families and churches—then when others are persuaded to follow Jesus, they won't have the right environment in which to grow and develop in Christian maturity. Let's look at three examples of persuading others to follow Jesus.

The first example is found in John 1—Jesus is calling His first disciples (Peter, Andrew, and John are already following Him), and the next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. "He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow Me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.'" (John 1:43-46). Did you notice what happened? Jesus called Philip, and then what did Philip do? He went and found his friend Nathanael and said, "Come and see." When we're saved, what's the most natural thing to do? Tell others! This is the core of what it means to persuade others to follow Christ. We must be saying to those around us, "Come and see!"

The second example is found in Acts 17—Paul is on his second missionary journey, and he’s in Athens waiting on Silas and Timothy. “Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there” (Acts 17:16–17). Paul’s example in Athens challenges us to become “fishers of men” (Matt. 4:18–19). If we can get people to come to church—to come to us—that’s great, but we must also go to where they are. For those with unsaved loved ones, this may mean going no farther than their house. For those with unsaved friends and co-workers, this may mean going to the ballfield or park or mall. If we’re willing to go around the world as

missionaries, then we should certainly be willing to go across town to persuade others.

This third example is found in 1 Corinthians 9—Paul is talking to his new converts in Corinth, and he tells them, “For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its

blessings” (1 Cor. 9:19–23). What’s this all about? Not only did Paul “go and make disciples,” but he also lived in such a way as to persuade as many as he could to follow Christ. Are we living out our witness each day? Do we conduct ourselves in a manner which calls others to follow Jesus?

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let’s summarize what we’ve learned about discipleship. Being a disciple of Jesus means we must:

- **Commit.** We must die to ourselves, dedicate ourselves to Christ, and live committed to Him each day.
- **Follow.** We must cultivate a relationship with God, learn all we can of His Word (Jesus is the Word), and obey what He commands.
- **Imitate.** We must imitate the example of Christ, and we should follow the example of other godly men and women.
- **Coach.** We must show others how to be disciples by teaching them and setting an example for them to follow.
- **Persuade.** We must call the lost to repentance and faith in Christ, and then nurture them and help them become disciples who can make disciples.

At the beginning of the article, we mentioned that the goal of this series is to give you a solid understanding of what discipleship is, both as a picture you can visualize, and as a definition on which you can meditate. On the left is that picture and definition, and, hopefully, it will help discipleship come alive for you. ■

