

## Go and Make Disciples – Teacher’s Guide

### Part One: Being Jesus’ Disciple

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All **authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore **go** and make **disciples** of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching** them to **obey** everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt 28:18–20 NIV).

#### 1) What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

A) Being a disciple of Jesus means **committing** to Him alone.

- (1) Jesus faithfully preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and He eagerly **welcomed** all who believed. However, when large **crowds** began to follow Him, He turned to them and urged them to consider what they were doing:
  - (a) “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).
  - (b) “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).
- (2) This shows us that being Jesus’ disciple is **different** from being someone else’s disciple. Being a disciple of Jesus involves:
  - (a) 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” 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?
  - (b) A **cross**. The cross was an instrument of humiliation and death. If we want to follow Christ, we have to die to ourselves. This means we must renounce our right to control our own fate and choose our own way. Are we willing to give up being our own master and obey the will of Christ?
  - (c) 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). Are we willing to do whatever it takes to be Jesus’ disciple?

B) Being a disciple of Jesus means **following** Him.

- (1) The word “disciple” (*mathētēs*) means “learner, pupil, follower.”<sup>1</sup> Throughout the Gospels and Acts, it refers to those who followed after a rabbi or teacher (John 13:13–15).<sup>2</sup> Being a disciple means entering into a **relationship** with the one you are following. You commit to **follow** them, **learn** from them, and **obey** them.
- (2) When we’re saved, we enter into a **master-disciple** relationship with Jesus. Baptism is our first act of **obedience** and a public **testimony** that we have decided to become a follower of Christ. Our calling as Jesus’ disciple is to follow Him, learn from Him, and obey Him.
- (3) The master-disciple relationship sounds a little strange today. Perhaps a modern equivalent we can identify with is the **coach-player** relationship. 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.

C) Being a disciple of Jesus means **imitating** Him and those who follow His **example**.

- (1) While the word “disciple” is used in the Gospels and Acts, the word “**imitator**” (*mimētēs*) is used throughout the rest of the NT.<sup>3</sup> This word does a great job of expressing the heart of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus—being **like** Him (cf. Luke 6:40).
  - (a) “Therefore be **imitators** of God, as beloved children” (Eph 5:1). Children naturally imitate their parents. In the same way, we must imitate God.
  - (b) “Be **imitators** of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). We are called, not only to imitate Christ, but also to imitate those who faithfully follow Christ.
  - (c) “Brothers, join in **imitating** me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the **example** you have in us” (Phil 3:17). Lest we think that only apostles qualify to be imitated, Paul calls us to imitate *all* who walk according to his godly example.
  - (d) “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). Here is a specific 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.

<sup>1</sup> L&N §36.38; Thayer 3285.

<sup>2</sup> It was used to refer to the followers of John the Baptist (e.g., Matt 9:14), the followers of Jesus (e.g., Matt 5:1; 8:23; 11:1), and the followers of the Pharisees (Mark 2:18).

<sup>3</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, “Imitate, Imitators,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, citing W. Michaelis, s.v. “mimomai,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 4 (1967): 673.

- (e) “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.
- (f) “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 not be sluggish, but **imitators** of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb 6:12). The Bible is filled with people whose faith and righteousness stands as an example to us today.
- (g) “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.<sup>4</sup>
- D) Being a disciple of Jesus means **coaching** others in how to follow Him.
- (1) **Invest.** 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**.
  - (2) **Explain.** Jesus said, “Make disciples...**teaching** them to observe all I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19–20). People won’t know how to follow Christ if we don’t teach them. 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). We must teach others how to be disciples.
  - (3) **Show.** 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. If we aren’t living a life that can be imitated by others, our efforts to make disciples will **fail**.
  - (4) **Exhort.** 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 Christ and showed them by example, we must urge them to take **action** and **live** it themselves. Once they put into practice what they’ve learned, we can **encourage** them and help them grow.
- E) Being a disciple of Jesus means **persuading** others to follow Him.
- (1) “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

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<sup>4</sup> See also 3 John 1:9–12.

- 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).
- (2) “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).
- (3) “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). Not only did Paul “go and make disciples,” he also lived in such a way as to persuade as many as he could to follow Christ.
- F) In conclusion, let’s summarize what we’ve learned about discipleship. Being a disciple of Jesus means we must:
- (1) **Commit.** We must die to ourselves, dedicate ourselves to Christ, and live committed to Him each day.
  - (2) **Follow.** We must cultivate a relationship with God, learn all we can of His Word (Jesus is the Word), and obey what He commands.
  - (3) **Imitate.** We must imitate the example of Christ, and we should follow the example of other godly men and women.
    - Imitation is *not* **impersonation**.
    - Imitate the **example**; don’t try to duplicate the **results**.
  - (4) **Coach.** We must show others how to be disciples by teaching them and setting an example for them to follow.
  - (5) **Persuade.** We must call the lost to repentance and faith in Christ, and then nurture them and help them become disciples.

# BEING JESUS' DISCIPLE

