

Go and Make Disciples – Teacher’s Guide

Part Two: I Follow Jesus

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) How do I personally follow Christ?

A) Commit – resolving each day to be a disciple.

- (1) Cultivate your **identity**. If someone asked you about your spirituality, what would you say? Most of us would probably respond with, “I’m a Christian,” and, of course, the disciples of Christ were indeed called Christians (Acts 11:26). Yet the word “Christian” has become a loaded word in our culture. It can mean different things to different people. I encourage you to think of yourself, and describe yourself to others like this: “I’m a **disciple**, a follower of Jesus.” The more you come to think of yourself in these terms, the more your heart and mind will resonate with this truth, and the more often you will ask, “How can I become more like Jesus?”
- (2) Commit **daily**. Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross **daily** and follow me” (Luke 9:23). The key to discipleship is self-denial. We must die to ourselves daily (give up the right to have our own way), and we must obey the Spirit, even to the point of death. That’s the example Jesus left us, and we must follow in His steps (1 Pet 2:21). I suggest you add this prayer to your daily conversation with God: “Father, thank you for your grace, which gives me the desire and power to do your will. Today, I **consecrate** myself to you. Help me to resist temptation and to say ‘Yes’ to the Holy Spirit. Help me to live each moment under His influence.”
- (3) Be **accountable**. We all need fellow believers to whom we can be accountable. We need to humble ourselves and confess our faults to them (Prov 28:13; James 5:16), and then ask them to enter into a commitment of accountability. We are not meant to live the Christian life apart from the **help** and **encouragement** of the church. That’s why accountability to other believers is so important (cf. Heb 3:12–14; 10:23–25; 1 Thess 5:11; Gal 6:1–2).

B) Follow – fostering a relationship with Jesus.

- (1) Take **time**. The essence of eternal life is to **know** the Father through the Son (John 17:3). When we repented of our sins and believed in Jesus as our Savior, we began a relationship with God. As we all know, relationships take time. If we don’t take time for personal discipleship, it won’t happen. Jesus left us an example—He regularly left His disciples, went off by Himself, and spent time

alone with God (Matt 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). We need to do the same. We need to find a place each day where we can be alone with the Father. We should eliminate as many distractions as possible and focus our minds on God.

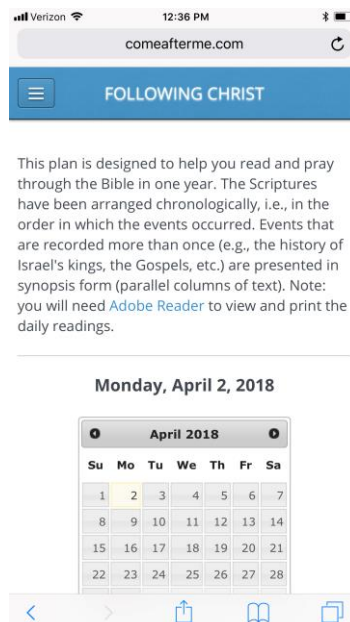
(2) **Listen** to God. Jesus said, “If you **abide** in my word, you are truly my disciples” (John 8:31). If we want to “abide in” (know and obey) Jesus’ word, we must soak ourselves in Scripture. I like the phrase, ‘listening to God,’ because it emphasizes that when we read the Bible, God is **speaking** directly to us (cf. 2 Tim 3:15–16; 1 Cor 9:9–10; 10:11; Rom 4:23–24; 15:4; John 1:45; 5:39; Luke 24:25–27; Gal 5:14). Most of us think of reading as a solitary activity, but when we read God’s Word, *we have just entered into a **conversation** with our heavenly Father!*

(a) How much of what God has said should we be interesting in hearing? Suppose I told you that Paul’s letter to the church in Laodicea had been discovered in a dig in Turkey, and I said to you, “They divided the letter into ten chapters. How many chapters would you like to read?” All of them, of course! Do you have that attitude toward the entire Bible? We need to have our minds regularly exposed to **all** of God’s word. This ensures that we:

- Get to **know** the Bible. God’s people ought to have a basic knowledge of His Word. If we aren’t familiar with the entirety of Scripture, we will overlook something God wants us to know (e.g., the feast of booths in Nehemiah 8:13–14).
- Give God the **respect** he deserves. When we read the entire Bible, we show God that we honor everything He said, not just those parts we feel are particularly relevant or applicable to us. When Ezra read the law to the remnant in Jerusalem (Neh 9:3), they stood up for “a fourth part of the day.” Why? They were showing God how much they respected Him and His Word.
- Gain a **balanced** understanding of the character of God. If we don’t regularly fill our minds with everything God has revealed about Himself, our understanding of Him will become unbalanced. For example, if we only spend time reading about God’s love, we’ll be horrified when God tells us how He killed Uzzah for touching the ark (2 Sam 6:1–7). If we only spend time reading about God’s wrath and judgment on sin, we’ll be astounded when God tells us how He restored Manasseh to the throne after he repented (2 Chr 33).
- Know where things are with **respect** to other things. Think about geography. If we know where the seven continents are on the globe, we can quickly find the part of the world we’re looking for. When we read the Bible all the way through, we gain a bird’s-eye view of Scripture that allows us to quickly locate various sections of interest. For example, we need to know where to find: what happened after the exile, the history of the early church, the law, etc.
- See the **connections** between various parts of Scripture. Stephen’s speech in Acts 7 is a good example of this. He started with Abraham and ended with the people who crucified Jesus, and he had it all connected.

The Bible is like a tree. It's a growing revelation that starts with the roots in Genesis and ends with the fullness of the Son's revelation in the NT.

- (b) In what order should we read the books of the Bible? I suggest that reading the Bible in **chronological** order is an excellent way to maximize your learning experience.
- Reading the Bible in chronological order gives us a better sense of the overall **flow** of biblical history from beginning to end. When we read chronologically, we are carried along by the unfolding story of redemption, and we gain insight into how God was working through history to bring about the salvation of men and the establishment of the Kingdom of His Son.
 - Reading the Bible in chronological order helps us put each passage of scripture in its proper historic and theological **context**. For example, the first sermon in the book of Haggai (Hag 1:1–13) should be read against the backdrop of the construction of the temple as recorded in Ezra 4–5 (construction started in 536 BC, but stopped after opposition by local enemies, and it did not begin again until the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah in the late summer and fall of 520 BC). Also, David's psalm of praise to God (Ps 34) is connected to the story of his escape from the Philistines in Gath where he pretended to be insane (1 Sam 21).
- (c) How can we read the Bible in chronological order? I've personally tried several different chronological reading plans, and I also created one of my own. You can use it by clicking the "Bible" menu on the website. The plan is designed to take you through the Bible in a year, and you can read the Bible in several different versions (NASB, KJV, LEB, and NET). If you enjoy listening to the Bible, you can have it read to you in the English Standard Version (ESV), courtesy of esvbible.org. The availability of this plan on the internet facilitates groups of people reading the same passage of Scripture each day.



(3) **Talk** to God. All of us have struggled with what to say to God when we pray, and I'm sure we've all thought, "It would be so much easier to pray if God would just speak to me." Well, the good news is...He has! As I said earlier, when we read the Bible, God is speaking directly to us (cf. Heb 12:5a). All we have to do is **respond** to what He has said. Think about what this means for prayer: (1) It means we don't have to think up something to pray about each day. We can simply talk to God about what He just said. (2) It means we can have a *conversation* with our heavenly Father. He loves to talk to us and then hear what we've learned from His Word. (3) It means prayer can become more than just bringing a list of names and concerns to God. Prayer can be the most uplifting and exciting part of our daily walk with Christ!

(a) How do we pray about what we just read? This can be difficult to do at first, and so I've written a prayer for each day of the Bible reading plan. The prayers are designed to help you **praise** God, learn **lessons** from His Word, **reflect** on how Scripture applies to your life, **ask** God for grace and strength to live for Him throughout the day, and **thank** God for all that He's done for you. You can pray these prayers as your own, or you can print out the "Daily Prayer Template" and write your own prayers. The goal is for your Bible reading and prayer time to be a conversation with God that challenges you and enriches your life.

C) Imitate – following the example of Jesus and others.

(1) Imitate **Christ**. If we look at the highlights of Jesus' life, several things stand out that are worthy of imitation:

- **Love** God with all your heart, soul, and mind (Matt 22:37).
- **Love** your neighbor as yourself (Matt 22:39).
- Pursue **wisdom** and a knowledge of God's Word (Luke 2:40).
- Be **obedient** to your parents and to all your authorities (Luke 2:51).
- **Seek** God's will and then do it with all your heart (John 6:38).
- **Serve** others and strive to build them up in the faith (John 13:12–16).

(2) Imitate the **godly**. We are called to imitate "those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb 6:12). Here are a few examples:

- Paul—give God **praise** no matter the circumstances (Acts 16:25).
- Peter—have a **teachable** spirit (Gal 2:11–15; Acts 15:6–11).
- David—never raise a hand against your **authority** (1 Sam 24).
- Martin Luther—stand **firm** for the truth.
- Hudson Taylor—seek and **save** those who are lost.
- My dad—"Buy the **truth**, and sell it not" (Prov 23:23 KJV).

(3) Invest in a local **church**. If you're going to imitate the godly, you need to be with the godly! I have an entire lesson on this called "Participating in Church." In that lesson, I say: "Everyone who is born again is given a spiritual gift by the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:7; 1 Cor 12:7). You are commanded to use your gift to help the body of Christ grow and flourish (1 Pet 4:10; Eph 4:15–16). It's important for you to understand that you go to church to *give* as well as receive."

D) Coach – showing others how to be disciples.

- (1) **Informal** coaching. All of us are coaching others **all** the time. How so? By living an **example** that others can follow. That is coaching! Every time you ask someone how they're doing spiritually, you're coaching. Every time you testify and joyfully worship God in church, you're coaching. Every time you speak a kind word, you're coaching. Every time you encourage another believer, you're coaching. Every time someone sees you reading the Bible or praying or singing a hymn or reading a spiritual book, you're coaching. Every time someone sees you serve others, give sacrificially, apologize for a wrong, be teachable when rebuked, be gracious when scorned, you're coaching.
- (2) **Intentional** coaching. While the example we live in front of others is essential, all of us are **commanded** to do intentional coaching. God told Israel to teach their children His laws, explain His commands, tell them about His works, and instill His ways in their hearts (Deut 4:9; 6:7; Exod 12:24–27). Jesus echoed this command when He told us to “make disciples...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:18–20). We must take time and diligently, deliberately, intentionally coach others in how to be disciples of Christ. How do we do this? We invest, explain, show, and exhort. I'll give you a **template** to follow and the **tools** to implement it later on in this series.

E) Persuade – calling others to repentance and faith in Christ.

- (1) **Share** the gospel. Like Paul, we should be looking for opportunities to tell others about Christ. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing our **testimony**—the story of how we became a disciple of Jesus. The lesson titled “Witnessing” has much more on how to do this.
- (2) **Live** the gospel. It's easy to say that we're disciples of Jesus, but it's hard to actually live a consistent, holy life. The greatest witness we can have to the truth of God's transforming power is to live a **transformed** life in front of others.

BEING JESUS' DISCIPLE

