

Introduction to Discipleship

1) What is discipleship?

A) In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave us an example of how to pray. But before He did, He spent some time talking about how *not* to pray (Matt 6:5–15). Let's use that same approach when it comes to discipleship. Before we talk about what discipleship is, let's start with what it is **not**. Discipleship is...

- Not a series of study **guides** or **lessons**. Discipleship is not a curriculum. It's not like we work through some books and then we're discipled. Lessons and guides are simply tools which are used in discipleship.
- Not a small **group** meeting. Small groups are great venues for discipleship, but having small groups does not 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've been discipled."
- Not a church **membership** class. A membership class is a great way to acquaint people with a group or denomination, and it can even contain very helpful information, but it's only a small piece of discipleship.
- Not a Bible **study**. Bible study is certainly part of discipleship, but don't confuse the activity with the lifetime journey that is discipleship.
 - Not a **program**. Some churches have a program in their church called 'Discipleship.' That's great and it can be a very positive experience, but discipleship is not an event that a person goes through. It's not something that we stop doing. Discipleship never ends!
- Not only for new **converts**. Obviously, new converts need to be discipled, but don't think that discipleship is just for new converts. Discipleship is for everyone!
- Not only for **leaders**. Leaders need discipleship, of course, but don't think that discipleship is some advanced thing that's reserved for the super spiritual or pastors or church leaders. Discipleship is for everyone!
- Not led only by **pastors**. While pastors are called to disciple those under their care, discipleship is not some 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 the same as **evangelism**. Evangelism is the process of persuading someone to become a disciple, but that's just the beginning of a lifetime of discipleship. We can't lead someone to Christ and then walk away thinking we've done our

job. Are we really explaining to people what salvation is? Are we making sure they understand that they are deciding to become a disciple of Jesus?

- Not **optional**. Discipleship is not something we can neglect. It's a lifestyle, a state of being, and living as a disciple every day is something Jesus commands us to do.

B) OK, so what is discipleship? Discipleship is about...

- Being a **follower** of Jesus. Look at the picture called "Being Jesus' Disciple." This is the commit, follow and imitate section between the individual and Christ. This is the conversation where God is talking to us and we're listening carefully to what He says. This is where we're responding to Him and talking to Him about what we've learned. It's all about the relationship we have with God. This is where we're learning to think like Jesus, believe like Jesus, value like Jesus, have attitudes like Jesus, react like Jesus, act like Jesus...be like Jesus! What would Jesus do? What would Jesus think? How would Jesus react? What would Jesus believe?
- Developing **relationships** and being part of a **community**. This is where imitating and coaching come in (both in the family and the community/church). This is where interpersonal modeling comes in. This is where we help others apply God's Word to their lives so that their minds and hearts and hands are transformed into the image of Christ. This is where others are coaching us, showing us how to be like Jesus. This is where the tools and venues come in.
- Making **followers** of Jesus. This is the persuade section between believers and the lost. This is where we're living a godly example in front of our family, our friends, our coworkers, our neighbors, and others we encounter in daily life. This is where we're looking for opportunities to share our testimony and explain how Jesus transformed us. This is where we're active in our churches and our communities. This is where we're involved in global missions, praying for our fellow workers in other parts of the world.

C) 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!

BEING JESUS' DISCIPLE

