

Introduction to Discipleship

1) What is a disciple?

- A) A disciple is a person who desires to learn from and follow after someone else. For Christians, that “someone else” is Jesus. Your goal as a disciple of Jesus is to learn His teachings, model His way of living and become like Him in your thoughts, attitudes, actions and words.
- B) The master-disciple relationship is something that sounds a little strange to us today. Perhaps the best modern equivalent we can understand and relate to is the coach-player relationship. When you are accepted onto a sports team, you are effectively 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: to model his attitudes and actions and follow his direction. You are subject to his correction and discipline, and you work hard to earn his praise and respect.
- C) Being a member of a professional sports team is not a part-time endeavor. It affects every area of your life. It’s the same way with being a disciple of Jesus. It is a life-long commitment that will require you to give 100% in order to be successful.

2) How do I learn how to disciple others?

- A) The best way to learn how to disciple others is through the experience of being disciplined yourself. That is the example Jesus gave us.
 - (1) During His earthly ministry, Jesus chose twelve men to whom He gave special attention and instruction (Luke 6:12-13). He spent around three years living with them, teaching them and developing personal relationships with them. After His resurrection, Jesus commissioned them to go and make disciples just as He had done with them (Matthew 28:18-20). Their years as disciples of Jesus directly affected their ability to carry out His command (2 Peter 1:16-18; 1 John 1:1-3).
- B) These lessons are designed to be a discipleship experience for you. The goal is for you to be able to take this material and go out and disciple others.

3) Can you give me some practical suggestions for discipling new believers?

- A) Begin immediately. The devil isn’t going to wait a few weeks before attacking your new converts. You need to be there as soon as possible after conversion.
- B) Friendship discipling. Most new believers are converted through the witness of a family member or friend. Because of that relationship, you will be the one they turn to for guidance. It will be much easier for them to share and be open with you than with a stranger. That’s why it’s important for you to be able to disciple them.
 - (1) I understand that not everyone has the gift of teaching or is comfortable with the role of discipling someone else. In such cases, the best solution may be for you to act as host for a discipleship class between your new convert and a teacher from your local church. In this way, you will gain the skills and confidence needed to one day do it on your own.

- C) **Setting.** If possible, conduct the training in the homes of your new converts. This will make sharing and accountability much easier, since people are most comfortable in their own environment. You can also invite them to your home and take turns with hosting the lessons.
- D) **Size.** If you have several new converts being disciplined together, try to keep the group size small. If the group is too large, some of the more shy and quiet personalities may be smothered.
- E) **Format.** Most discipleship training takes place on a weekly basis (my experience is that monthly meetings are simply not often enough). Try to set aside a specific time each week that you meet.
- (1) Start by having a snack and sharing your week. Be prepared to address issues that come up during this time. Sometimes a problem will be brought up that should take precedence over the intended lesson. Be sensitive to what your new converts want to talk about. Also, be transparent. Let them know that you struggle with things just like they do.
 - (2) Always begin with prayer. Ask God to open your hearts and minds to His truth. You cannot disciple others without the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit.
 - (3) Cover the material for that week's lesson. If questions come up during the lesson that you can't answer, be honest and tell your new converts that you don't know. Write them down and take them to your pastor. Then share the answers with the group the next week.
 - (4) Conclude with prayer asking God for help throughout the upcoming week.
- F) **Material.** This is one of the hardest parts of discipling new converts: What do you teach them? My hope and prayer is that these lessons will be the answer. The material at <http://comeafterme.com> is designed to take a new convert from baptism to the first stages of growth and maturity in Christ.
- (1) Not everyone grows at the same rate. Take your time and work on any areas that they may struggle with.
 - (2) Never teach new converts your own personal convictions. Keep the focus on God's Word and let Him worry about other issues.
- G) **Outside the classroom.** Teaching the material in these lessons is only a small part of what it means to disciple someone. You need to be as involved as possible in the life of your new converts. Be available when they need help. Make sure they know you can be called anytime for support and encouragement. Whenever you can, integrate them into your own life and activities (e.g., hunting, fishing, recreation, etc.).
- H) **Take the responsibility seriously.** Your attitudes and actions are now an example for your new converts. They will look up to you and imitate your approach to living the Christian life.