

What is Discipleship?

Discipleship is the lifelong journey of believing in Jesus Christ for salvation and loving and following Him in obedience to his Word. **Matthew 28:18-20** explains it this way:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

1. What is a "disciple"?

- According to the words of Jesus, a disciple is one who has been baptized *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit* and has been taught to *observe all that he has commanded*. . . Quite simply, this means that a disciple is someone who has heard and embraced the gospel message that he/she is a sinner in desperate need of forgiveness and redemption (**Romans 3:23-34, Romans 10:9, John 3:16**). The only one who can save sinners from the penalty of their sin is Jesus (**Ephesians 2:4-5, John 14:6**). So loving Jesus enough to make a public statement of faith in him by baptism in his name is the first step in discipleship. (**Romans 6:4, Romans 1:16**).
- But a disciple is not only one who has embraced the gospel, but one who loves Jesus so deeply that he/she pursues that love for Christ throughout a lifetime of learning to obey the Word of God (the Bible). This is why Jesus tells us to first *baptize* disciples, and then *teach them to observe all that I have commanded you*. So trusting Christ for salvation and continually trusting Christ through faithful obedience to His Word is the definition of a disciple. (**John 8:31, John 13:35, 1 John 5:2**)

2. What is discipleship?

- If a disciple is one who has been baptized having publicly professed Christ as Lord, and one who is being taught the Word of God, then it makes sense to view discipleship as the work of the Christian church to proclaim the gospel so others may hear and respond to the gospel and then take care of those disciples by teaching them the truths and precepts of God's Word. This includes prayer, biblical doctrine, Christian living, worship, service, and humility. The process of becoming and being a disciple ("Christian growth") is in the hands and under the sovereign will of God Almighty (**1 Corinthians 3:6-7**). But God, in his divine sovereignty has chosen to use people to lead others in this pursuit of discipleship. Discipleship is learning to love and obey Jesus and his Word, and then teaching that love to others. (**Romans 10:10-14, Acts 2:42**)
- Discipleship is purpose of the church. It is the very reason why Jesus left the church here on earth to await his return (**Matthew 28:18-20**). With that task set before us, we are to be first of all passionately pursuing a deeper love for Christ Jesus in our own lives as his disciples. But to stop there would be disobedient to God's Word. The natural result of a life lived for the glory of Christ is one that is given over to the task of making more disciples in the name of Jesus.

3. How do we make disciples? (or what's the process to see discipleship happen?)

We can find the answer to this question by taking a look into how the first generation of Christian believers formed their churches for the purpose of following Jesus. Luke writes in **Acts 2:42 - *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.***

If you are wondering HOW discipleship is done, the Bible's answer challenges us to:

1. Devote ourselves to "*the Apostles teaching*", which means learning and loving the Bible, as the central and infallible source of truth and instruction for all Christian believers. The Bible is our direct connection to God's desire for his people.
(2 Timothy 3:14-17, 2 Peter 1:16-21)
2. Devote ourselves to "*the fellowship*", meaning we are to love and care for one another deeply in the name of Jesus in real physical and spiritual ways just as Jesus did when He walked this earth. This means that we must spend time with one another and take a personal and vested interest in the lives of others, which is rooted in Christian love. It's a love unlike any other on earth.
(Acts 2:42-49, John 13:35, James 2:14-26, 1 John 1:7)
3. Devote ourselves to the "*breaking of bread*", meaning joining the body of believers at the communion table, where we gather to celebrate the gospel of Jesus Christ as our atoning substitute for sin, together as one body for the glory of God. The sacrifice of Christ Jesus on the cross and our faith in him for salvation by that sacrifice is what binds the church together as one body. We celebrate this union under the headship of Jesus by remembering him through communion. (Matthew 26:26-29, Luke 22:14-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-29)
4. Devote ourselves to the "*prayers*", meaning that the church and disciples of Jesus Christ are called to be praying people, wholly dependent upon God and his provision for their lives and the strength required to carry out his will. Prayer is our communication with God and His communication with us. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Acts 1:12-14, Psalm 66:19-20)

This is who we desire to be as a church family at FBC. By no means have we figured it all out, and trust us when we say that we have our share of problems along the way. But it is our desire and our pursuit as one body to know and love Jesus Christ. Our prayer is that God will help us to be the people He has graciously called us and equipped us to be for the exaltation of Christ Jesus and to the glory of God's name now and forevermore.