

Discipling: Teaching and Equipping

Prayer

Lord, place in us hearts that seek the lost. We pray for guidance, wisdom, and courage as we share Your love with others. We thank You for the privilege of being Your disciples who tell others about the life-saving Gospel. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Theme Verse: *"If you abide in My Word, you are truly My disciples"* (John 8:31b).

Being Disciples

In speaking to His disciples, Jesus said, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me"* (Matthew 28:18). With that authority, Jesus tells us, *"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"* (verses 19-20). In these two verses, Jesus gives His mission to the Church. On His authority, we are to *"go and make disciples."* Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we carry out this responsibility. In order for the Holy Spirit to work through us, we need to cooperate. In this very important work, we must follow the leading of the Holy Spirit



A disciple is a follower, and a Christian disciple is a follower of Jesus. When Jesus said to Peter and Andrew, *"Follow Me,"* they did. Scripture tells us, *"Immediately they left their nets and followed Him"* (Matthew 4:19, 20). Jesus chose them and He chooses us today to be His disciples. By God's grace, Peter and Andrew were able to leave everything behind and follow Jesus. Their lives were changed forever. Jesus became the most important person in their lives. The same grace that changed the lives of the first twelve disciples changes ours today.

In order to be His disciples, we must follow Jesus and be devoted to Him. In addition to following Him, Jesus informed His disciples that there are other requirements to being a disciple. In Mark 8:34 we read, *"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.'"* John the Baptist said, *"He must increase, but I must decrease"* (John 3:30). By teaching us that we must deny ourselves, Jesus has prepared us to carry our crosses. Disciples keep their eyes on Christ, without thinking of themselves, and *"count it all joy..."* (James 1:2) to face trials and testing of their faith.

1. What is a disciple? (Matthew 4:18-22, 10:24-25; John 8:31; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 John 2:3-6).
2. How did Jesus describe discipleship? (Luke 14:27-33)
3. What enables your discipleship? (John 15:5; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:28-30; Galatians 2:20)

Discipleship

Christian discipleship is the process by which we as disciples grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and are equipped by the Holy Spirit, who resides in the hearts of His disciples, to become more and more Christ-like. Through the reading and studying of God's Word and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, disciples seek to live their lives in

faithfulness and obedience. Disciples look at life from the lens of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection as they disciple others to follow Him. As disciples, we should always be ready to give a personal testimony and bear witness to the truth of the Gospel. *"In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect"* (1 Peter 3:15). God calls for a gentle witness to the truth.

While on earth, Jesus guided, taught, and trained His disciples. Jesus equipped His disciples not only "to be" disciples, He prepared them "to do" acts of discipleship. He said to His disciples, *"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest"* (Matthew 9:37-38). Jesus used this agricultural metaphor to help people understand that many people need to hear the Gospel. Initially, the disciples would go only to the Jews. Later, they would go to the whole world. Just as the disciples were called, so are we called to be witnesses to all people.

Go tell the world Jesus died for all!



Disciples in Ministry

God wants His disciples to be equipped *"for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ"* (Ephesians 4:12). What is the work of the ministry? It includes, but is much more than, vacuuming the church's carpets, changing the light bulbs, and cutting the church's grass. The work of the ministry should be primarily about telling others about Jesus as Savior of the world who came to earth to take away our sins, die on the cross, and be raised from the dead. We are to share the Good News that we don't have to, indeed we cannot, earn our way into heaven because Jesus has accomplished this for us. This news can be shared with our families, neighbors, co-workers, and all people.



One step in building up the body of Christ is to identify our spiritual gifts. A spiritual gift is a God-given ability or skill which we do not deserve, cannot earn, and cannot achieve through our own efforts. We come to God empty-handed, and He fills us with His love and gifts. Because of God's tremendous love, He gives each of us at least one gift, and we are responsible to use it in service to Him through the church (1 Corinthians 12:7). It is the Holy Spirit Who gives these gifts and develops them in the believer. Spiritual gifts are needed by the church to carry out God's purpose in the world. As Christian stewards gifted by the Holy Spirit, we are to work together to accomplish God's plan. Each of us has a special role to play in extending God's kingdom through the church. God calls us to be participants, not spectators. At Cypress Chapel, we may sing in the band,

lead kid's DNA, make coffee, host Home Gatherings, serve as a Community Director or help set-up and take-down each week (among other responsibilities). *"Whatever [we] do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men"* (Colossians 3:23). If we choose not to use God's spiritual gift, we are spurning God's gift, robbing the Church, and forcing other members of the Body of Christ to carry our loads. Knowing our gifts, we can serve in effective ways. As we are equipped through Jesus' wisdom and strength, we can be the disciples He wants us to be.

4. How does the culture, lifestyle choices, and striving to have your own identity affect your view of discipleship?
5. How did Paul become a disciple? How do you become a disciple? (John 15:16; Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 3:7-8; 1 Timothy 1:12-14)

6. After Jesus chose and called the twelve to be His disciples, what did they do? (Matthew 4:18-22, 9:9; Luke 5:10b-11)

7. What does it mean to deny yourself and take up your cross? (Mark 8:34-38; Matthew 11:28-30)

8. How does God's Word shape you (2 Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:22-25; 1 Peter 2:1-2)?

9. Disciples follow Jesus and devote their lives to Him. As a disciple, you live in submission to Him. Because of your unswerving dedication, you follow Him where He leads. Answer the following regarding Jesus' leadership of your life:
 - a. According to Romans 14:7-8, how did Paul live? How are you to live?

 - b. Because of faith, you hear God's Word, and you _____ it (Luke 11:28). *"If you love Me, you will _____ what I command"* (John 14:15).
 - c. What does living a life of submission and obedience to Jesus imply? (1 John 2:1-3)

 - d. How do you know that you are in Jesus and that He lives in you? (1 John 3:24)

10. Through the Holy Spirit, God changes people's lives and makes them believers. In response to Peter's preaching of the Word (Acts 2:38-41), 3000 people repented and came to faith. What did they do after their conversion (verses 42-47)?

11. How does suffering enhance your discipleship? (Romans 5:3-5; 1 Peter 1:3-9)

12. How does the shepherd/sheep image characterize the Jesus/disciple relationship as well? (John 10:1-18)

Prayer

Lord, help us to see each person as a brother or sister for whom You died. We pray that we will let Your love for us flow through us to others. Help us to love as You love. In Your name we pray. Amen.