

- What are some of the ways that we can make sure that we are good soil that allows the Word of God to produce good fruit in our lives?

The Commitment of Jesus' Followers

Read Luke 9:23-25

²³ Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. ²⁵ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?"

- What does it mean to deny self?
- What does it mean to lose one's life in order to save one's life?
- What does it mean to take up the cross daily?

Read Luke 14:25-27

²⁵ Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

- What do you think Jesus meant by hating one's father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and life?

Read Matthew 10:37—³⁷ *"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

- How does this parallel passage of Jesus explain Luke 14:25-27?

The Reward for Jesus' Followers

Read Matthew 16:27

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.

Read Revelation 22:12

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

- How would you describe the rewards of being a disciple of Jesus?
- Do you understand the costs and rewards of following Jesus?

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Seeking God

Searching for truth and meaning in the Bible

Study #8: Following Jesus

Read Acts 11:26

²⁶ *and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*

- What are some of the names given to people who follow Jesus?
- How are the names Christian and disciple similar and different?
- Do you think there is any significance in the fact that the word “Christian” is used in the Bible 3 times, but the word “disciple” is used over 300 times?

Read Luke 6:40

⁴⁰ *The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.*

- What do we learn from this passage about what should be the goal and hope of everyone who follows Jesus?

The Traits of Jesus’ Followers

Trait #1 - A Disciple Obeys God’s Word

Read John 8:31-32

³¹ *To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

- Why would holding to Jesus’ teachings make them real disciples?
- How are disciples set free by the truth of Jesus’ teaching?

Read 1 John 2:3-6

³ *We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. ⁴ Whoever says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. ⁵ But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: ⁶ Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.*

- What do these verses reveal about determining whether a person is truly a follower of Jesus?
- What should we think about someone who says they follow Jesus, but doesn’t follow His commands?

Trait #2 - A Disciple Loves Others

Read John 13:34-35

³⁴ *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

- What does it mean to love one another as Jesus has loved us?
- Why does loving one another cause others to know that we are disciples of Jesus?

Read 1 John 3:16-18

¹⁶ *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.*

- What does it mean to you to love with actions rather than words?
- What would laying down our lives for others look like?

Trait #3 - A Disciple Bears Fruit

Read John 15:5-8

⁵ *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

- Why does bearing fruit show that a person is a disciple?
- Why is remaining connected to Jesus a key to bearing fruit?
- What kind of fruit should a disciple bear?

Read Matthew 13:18-23

¹⁸ *“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹ When any one hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. ²² The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. ²³ But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”*