

LESSON FIVE: Discipleship

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someone.

The Way of Discipleship Tutorials **by Robert Cox**

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5. [Repentance & Rebirth](#) (41:40)

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STUDY #5 – WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

Study Goals

- To help the student understand what a disciple is (Acts 11:26, Luke 6:40).
- To help the student understand what a disciple does (John 12:47-50, John 13:34, 35, John 15:1-9).
- To show them how the first Christians modeled these traits (Acts 2:38-47).
- To help the student grasp the depth and seriousness of the commitment that Christ calls the disciple to (Luke 14).

? Give your understanding of following words...

- Christian?
- Disciple?
- Saved person?

NOTE: The concept that most people (not all) have is that a *Christian* is someone who is a member of the Christian religion (as opposed to Muslim, Hindu, or other religions), and that a *disciple* is simply a more committed, “practicing” Christian. A *saved person* is anyone who believes in God and lives a good life. After your student gives their definition of each word let the student know that these terms were all used to describe the same people in the New Testament. If any person claims to be one of the above, they are claiming to be all of the above.

READ:

[Acts 11:25-26](#)

²⁵ “Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 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.”

? How could this verse change ones perception of what it means to be a Christian or saved?

- In this verse we see the words “disciple” and “Christian” are used interchangeably to describe the same person/people.

NOTE: Explain that disciple/Christian/saved are all descriptions of followers of Christ. When we study about the expectations or characteristics of a disciple we are studying the expectations or characteristics of a Christian or saved person regardless of which words are used. Explain that in this study we will be looking at Jesus' expectation for someone who claims to be saved/Christian/disciple. We will look at Jesus' favorite word when it came to describing his followers - the word *disciple*.

? How many times do you think the Bible calls followers of Christ, Christians?

- Only 3 times.

? How many times do you think the Bible calls followers of Christ, Disciples?

- Over 120 times! If you include variations of the word, close to 270 times!

WHAT A DISCIPLE IS:

? Do you know what the definition of “disciple” is?

- A **student** or **learner** who is endeavoring to be like their teacher.
- A non–religious word (used by most of the trade unions) that clearly conveys the meaning is **apprentice**.

NOTE: The word disciple was not originally a religious word. In Greek culture all great teachers (Socrates, Plato, etc.) had “*students trying to become like them.*” It is the specific word that Jesus chose to help us clearly understand our relationship to him.

READ:

Luke 6:40

⁴⁰ “A **student** is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.”

NOTE: The word Luke uses for student (GREEK: *mathetes*) is the same word that is used in each passage we will study (John 8:31, 13:35, 15:8, Luke 14:26). It is normally translated *disciple* even though it's translated *student* in Luke 6:40. The point is that it's the same word with the same meaning in all the passages we will look at. A disciple of Jesus is “*a student or learner committed to becoming like Jesus.*”

? Do you consider yourself a student of Jesus? Why or why not?

? What happens when you are a good student in a school?

- Learn, become productive, enhance your future.

? What happens when you are a good student of Jesus?

- Learn, become productive, and become like Jesus.

? What are some things that a good teacher does to help his/her student grow and develop?

- Encourages, corrects, models...

? How does this apply to your being a student of Christ?

NOTE: Jesus will encourage and correct me through his word and through campusministryunited.com

other people. The student must anticipate Christ's correction as a part of the learning process. It is a natural part of being a student in any area of life. Correction is designed to help your (and you) student fulfill their goal of becoming more like the teacher. It is not punishment.

Three Characteristics of a Disciple

NOTE: Jesus revealed 3 specific marks/traits of His disciples. He clearly stated that anyone claiming to be His disciple should possess these traits. These aren't the only marks/proof of a disciple but they are the most prominent and easily identifiable marks. They are the major "marks of the Master" that a real Christ-imitator cannot ignore or minimize.

Explain the traits are not those of "old" disciples or "mature" disciples, but of any disciple. These characteristics should become more clearly visible with age and growth, but they should be present in a brand new disciple too. This idea will be supported as you look at the "baby disciples" in Acts 2. They'd only just committed to follow Christ, yet all the traits were present.

The next verse we'll look at reveals the first trait that God is calls us to have.

Trait 1

READ:

[John 8:31](#)

³¹ "If you [hold to my teaching](#) you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth with set you free"

? In this verse Jesus identifies what as mark of a disciple of His?

- Trait #1 – Disciples "hold" to Jesus' teaching.

? What does it mean to "hold to His teaching?"

- To **study** and keep **obeying** his teachings.

? What do the following verses have to do with this trait and your becoming a disciple?

NOTE: During the discipleship study Acts 2 will be used to show that the first century followers displayed the 3 major traits of a disciple of Christ. Reiterate that these people were “baby Christians” yet devotion to God’s word was already one of their identifying traits. Devotion to God’s word was and is a part of the disciples basic DNA.

READ:

[Acts 2:42a](#)

^{42a} "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching..."

- Notice that these brand-new Christians were devoted to the apostles' teaching. The apostles were simply passing on the teachings of Christ (keep your bookmark here as Acts 2:42-47 will be used to illustrate each trait).

Trait 2

READ:

[John 13:34-35](#)

³⁴ “And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples.”

? What does this verse say is a proof that one is a student of Jesus

- Trait #2 – disciples “love one another”

NOTE: This is a command specifically instructing disciples to love other disciples – that’s why Jesus says it’s a “new” command in John 13 (Jesus had already given the

command to love God and love the world in general in Matthew 22:34-40 and related passages).

- This “new command” is a *specific* command from Jesus to have meaningful, loving relationships with other people in the church. That doesn’t mean we aren’t called to love the world in general – we are – but Jesus teaches the relationships we are to have within the church with the other disciples are special.

? When you love someone how does it show up?

- If I love the other disciples (members of the church) I will...
 1. Spend time with them.
 2. Sacrifice for them.
 3. Try to help them when they are in trouble.
 4. Encourage them.
 5. Correct them if needed.
 6. Listen to them.

NOTE: Explain that before moving to the next trait of a disciple, you are going to look at a couple of verses to make the “*love one another*” point as specific and applicable as possible.

READ:

[Hebrews 10:24-25](#)

²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

? What do you think this passage has to do with the “*loving one another*” trait of a disciple?

- As a disciple, **being part of the church & church activities** is a priority. It's where you can spur others on to Christ-likeness and be spurred on yourself.

READ:

1 John 3:16-17

¹⁶ "This is how we know what love is; Jesus laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 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?"

? What does this verse say about the kind of love disciples have?

- Love involves **sacrifice**. Disciples willing to sacrifice to help the other followers of Christ.

NOTE: Remember/reinforce Acts 2 connection. From the moment of the disciples birth a disciple is to actively love other disciples.

READ:

Acts 2:44-47

⁴⁴ "All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together...."

? From this verse what evidence do you see of this kind of love in these first century baby followers?

Trait 3

READ:

John 15:1-6, 8

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken

to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

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 ... ⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you **bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**”

? **What trait of a real student of Christ does this verse reveal?**

- Trait #3 – disciples “bear much fruit”

? **What do you think Jesus meant by “bearing fruit?”**

NOTE: Most people you study with will have no idea what Jesus meant. Explain that there are two types of “fruit” mentioned in scripture.

FRUIT #1 - The Fruit of the Spirit

READ:

Galatians 5:22-23

²² “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

? **What would it mean for you to bear this type of fruit?**

- Disciples will have change in their **lives & attitudes.**

FRUIT #2 - The Fruit of Other Disciples

READ:

Philippians 1:22-25

²² “If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will

continue with all of [you for your progress and joy in the faith...](#)

? **What would it mean for you to bear this type of fruit?**

- It would mean **producing other Christians and helping them mature.**

NOTE: Explain that like apples reproduce apples, peaches... peaches, grapes... grapes, and **Christians produce Christians.**

? **What do the following verses have to do with being a follower of Christ and bearing fruit?**

READ:

[Mark 1:16-18](#)

¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

- One of the reasons Jesus calls me to follow him is that he **wants** me to learn to **"catch" people.**

READ:

[Matthew 28:18-20](#)

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

- Jesus wants me to “make disciples” – that is, to teach others to follow Him too.
- This is the greatest purpose I can have in my life because it’s the only one with eternal significance!

READ:

[Luke 19:10](#)

¹⁰ “For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost.”

- Being a disciple means becoming like Jesus. **Being like Jesus means adopting Jesus purpose of “seeking and saving”.**

NOTE: Remember/reinforce the Acts 2 connection. From the moment of the disciple were saved they were reaching out to save.

READ:

[Acts 2:46-47](#)

“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And [the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.](#)”

NOTE: Once again we see the traits of a disciple in the first century baby Christians. The sharing of ones faith begins as soon as one makes a commitment to be a follower, a student of Christ. Again it is a part of the disciples spiritual DNA. Remove it and one ceases to be a *“student endeavoring to become lie the teacher.”*

THE LEVEL OF COMMITMENT JESUS EXPECTS FROM HIS DISCIPLES

READ:

[Luke 14:25-33](#)

²⁵ “Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹ “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming

against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. ³³ In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”

? **What do you think Jesus is trying to say in verses 25, 26?**

- That He has to be **first** above everything else.

? **Of Jesus list which “challenger to the throne” could most threaten Jesus position of control in your life?**

? **What do you think Jesus meant when he said you will have to carry your cross to be a disciple?**

- Jesus meant that it will be hard to be a Christian sometimes. Discipleship is not always a 100 level subject. However you (we) must “**deny yourself**” and keep learning and following and becoming even when its difficult.

? **What did Jesus want you to understand from the “building” and “king” stories?**

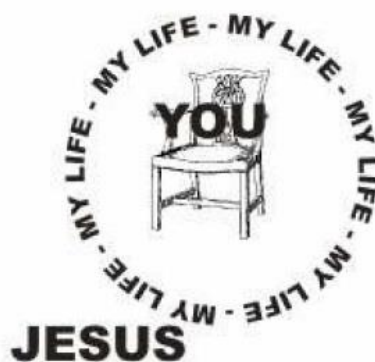
- Jesus wants me to be **serious** about becoming his follower.
- He wants his followers to be committed enough **finish** not just start.

ILLUSTRATE:

#1

#2

#3



Draw the above circles on a piece of paper and ask:

? Which of these best represents the commitment level a true disciple/Christian/saved person is to have - #1, #2, or #3?

Each circle represents a person's life. The chair in the middle represents the throne of their heart - whoever or whatever occupies that seat is in control of their lives.

Circle #1 represents a total unbeliever - Jesus is completely outside of their lives. Chances are if a person is willing to study the Bible with you that circle does not represent them (it might, but most of the time probably will not).

Circle #2 represents a person who has Jesus in their life, but have not given control over to him. In essence, they *like* Jesus, but they don't *love* Jesus enough to submit to him as their master. This person may go to pray, read their Bible, or even be part of a church, but if they're completely honest they are lukewarm believers at best. Most of people you study with will probably align themselves with this profile.

Circle #3 represents a true disciple of Jesus. They've given control to Christ and have followed (and are following) the biblical teaching regarding how to surrender their lives. They are not perfect, but they are fully committed, and their level of commitment and sacrifice is what separates them from circle #2.

? Which circle best represents your current commitment level?

? What do you need to do?

CLOSE

Commitment - "Will you commit to making following and becoming like Jesus your #1 priority?"

Challenge - Start loving the other disciples by deepening your relationship with them and by consistently attending all the church activities for your age group.