

Introduction

We are doing a short series on “What Is the Church,” and we began by looking at 1 Corinthians 1:2. While the dictionary may say that the church is a facility, a service, an organization, or the clergy, the Greek word, *ekklesia*, means those who have been called out. The church is made up of those who have been called out of darkness, out of the world, and into God’s kingdom of light. Those who have been called out are sanctified, which means to be made holy; therefore, they are called saints, which means holy ones. We are made righteous by placing our faith in Christ and we are forgiven and cleansed from our sins by the blood of Christ. Saints are not just called saints; they are exhorted to purify themselves and live holy lives.

We also saw that there is a local church, and there is a universal church. The local church is “a covenant family of believers united to Christ and committed to one another for worship, discipleship, mutual care, accountability, ministry, and the advance of the gospel under biblical shepherds.” The local church is where all the one-another commands are carried out. The local church is where people are cared for, fed, and watched over by the elders or pastors.

We saw that the universal church is the entire body of Christ, consisting of all believers who have been united to Jesus Christ and to one another, across all places and generations. The local church is part of the universal church. The Christian life is fleshed out in the local church, but the church is much bigger than any one local church. Local churches need to be involved in the Great Commission, where God tells us to make disciples of all the nations.

In Acts 11, Barnabas had been sent out from the church in Jerusalem to find out what was going on in Antioch. They were not just concerned about the local church; they had been given a commission to be witnesses to the ends of the earth, so they sent Barnabas to Antioch.

(Ac 11:22) “The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.”

When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, he witnessed the grace of God and considerable numbers were being brought to the Lord. He knew that these new believers needed to be instructed in the ways of the Lord. He was a prophet, and could teach, but this new church in Antioch needed a gifted teacher. He went to Tarsus and brought him back with him to Antioch. For the next year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. Notice that two terms are used here for the people in the church at Antioch. First, they are called disciples. In the New Testament, that is the primary way that believers are identified. Christians are called disciples 239 times. The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. The term, Christians, is only used three times, so it was not the primary way that believers were identified. Christian means a follower of Christ. If you are a follower of Christ, you are a disciple. That is not an option; that is who we are.

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| 1. | Disciples (239 X) |
| 2. | Brethren (190 X) |
| 3. | Church (77 X) |
| 4. | Saints (59 X) |
| 5. | Body (36 X) |
| 6. | Members (25 X) |
| 7. | Elect (23 X) |
| 8. | Believers (12 X) |

(Ac 11:23–26) “Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and *began* to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain *true* to the Lord; {24} for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. {25} And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; {26} and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”

The church is made up of those who have been sanctified, or saints, and the primary way that saints are identified in the New Testament is disciples. What does it mean to be a disciple? Today, we are going to look at the definition disciple, the requirements of a disciple, the characteristics of a disciple, and the commission to make disciples.

What Is a Disciple?

1. Definition of disciple
2. Requirements of a disciple
3. Characteristics of a disciple
4. Commission to make disciples

1. Definition of Disciple

The word disciple is used 271 times in the Bible, twice in the Old Testament in the book of Isaiah, and 269 times in the New Testament. The word Christian is used only three times in all of Scripture. The word in the Old Testament is limmuwd, which comes from the root word, lamad. Lamad means to goad or prod. Limmuwd means one who is taught or learned. There is clearly a sense of being prodded during the learning process.

Strong's H3928. limmuwd, lim-mood'; or limmud, lim-mood'; from H3925; instructed:--accustomed, disciple, learned, taught, used.

The Greek word used in the New Testament is mathetes, which means a learner or pupil. It comes from the root word manthano, which means to learn or to understand. A disciple was one who became like his teacher. He learned to walk and live like the one who disciplined him.

Strong's G3101. mathetes, math-ay-tes'; from G3129; a learner, i.e. pupil:--disciple.

(Mt 10:24-25) ""A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. {25} "It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher, and the slave as his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!"

Sometimes disciples were of people who were living and sometimes they referred to someone in the past that the person was following. For example, the Pharisees considered themselves disciples of Moses, so he was not there to mentor them. They were learning and following the Law that he had given to them from God. John the Baptist had disciples who were following him and learning from him.

(Jn 9:27-29) "He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?" {28} And they reviled him, and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. {29} "We know that God has spoken to Moses; but as for this man, we do not know where He is from."

(Mk 2:18) "And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came^ and said^ to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?""

2. Requirements of a Disciple

Often, we do everything we can to persuade people to pray the sinner's prayer and become a Christian. Jesus, on the other hand, put forth very difficult demands on anyone who would become His disciple. In Luke 14:25-35, Jesus gave several very challenging demands for anyone wishing to be His disciple.

A. We must love God more than anyone else.

The first requirement that Jesus tells the multitudes that were following Him was that they needed to love God more than anyone else. In Luke 14, we see that great multitudes were going along with Him. He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Jesus is not telling people to hate their family members. That would be misinterpreting what He is saying and what the balance of Scripture says about loving our family members.

(Lk 14:25-26) "Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, {26} "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."

We are told in the ten commandments that we are to love our parents. We are to love and honor them. Paul reminded the Ephesians of that command in Ephesians 6:1-2.

(Eph 6:1-3) "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. {2} HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), {3} SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH."

In the movie, God is not dead, the Arab girl named Alysha made a decision to follow Christ. Her Moslem father struck her twice and threw her out of their home. She made a decision to put God before her parents. It was a brave and courageous act, and it is what God is requiring to be His disciple. We must love and put God before our parents.

The Scriptures teach us to love our wives. Paul tells the Ephesians that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Paul tells us how to love our wives. Husbands are to lay their lives down for their wives. That is what Christ did. He loved us sacrificially. Husbands are to cleanse their wives with the word of God. Husbands are to nourish and cherish their wives. Jesus is not telling us to hate our wives. He would not tell us to do something that contradicts Scripture.

(Eph 5:25) "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,"

In the movie, God is Not Dead, Josh Wheaton loses his girlfriend because he put God before her. He would not deny Christ before Professor Radisson. The professor threatened to fail him and to ruin his chances of getting into law school. His girlfriend gave him a choice. If he chose to defend Christ in the classroom, she would leave. He chose to obey God over his girlfriend of six years.

Sometimes, we have to learn to take a back seat in our relationships. I want Karen to love me. She wants me to love her, and we do love each other. But I must encourage Karen to seek the Lord first. I am not first in her life. God is first. Karen is not first in my life; God is first in my life. Sometimes couples have to work through the reality of this priority. Karen and I encourage one another in our relationship with the Lord. I pray for her to grow in her relationship. I pray for her to walk in her calling in the Lord. Karen prays for my relationship and my ministry. We have both come to the place where we recognize it is all about Him, not us.

Recently, I spoke with a man who had been offended at the church leadership. He thought they should do a bus outreach rather than spend money remodeling the sanctuary. He left the church and would not attend any church, not just the one he left. His wife begged him for months to go back to church, and then she finally stopped asking. Neither of them has been to church in twenty years. I invited them many times after hearing that. If his wife was a true disciple, she would have gone back to church without her husband. She would have put her relationship with Christ over her relationship with her husband. Is it easy? No, it is very difficult, but a disciple puts God first in their life.

Our relationship with Christ must come before our mother, father, brother, sister, children, and wife. There is nothing so challenging as putting Christ above our family, and particularly your wife. Paul made this clear when he speaks about remaining single as he was so that people could be unrestrained in their devotion to Christ. He was asking people to count the cost. This was not an easy requirement, and so people had to decide if they were willing to put Christ first over every relationship in their life.

B. We must love God more than our own life.

Jesus also says that we must hate our own life. Again, this is a comparison to the love that we have for God. We must put God first in our own life. In the Great Command, Jesus tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves. We are to love others as we love ourselves. The problem with most of us is not that we don't love ourselves; we do that naturally. Our problem is that we do not love others as we love ourselves.

(Lk 14:26) "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."

How does that look? We may choose to fast and minister to the Lord rather than feeding ourselves. We may set our alarm clock a little earlier and spend extra time praying or studying God's word, rather than getting more sleep. Sometimes the things that God calls us to do require us to love Him more than ourselves.

C. We must put God before our possessions.

The third requirement of disciples is that we must be willing to give up all of our possessions. The Greek word that is used is *apotasso*, which means to say goodbye to. *Apo* means away from, and *tasso* means proper order and arrangement. We are to go away from our proper order, which would be our home. Home is a place that you are to have peace and order. It is to be a refuge. A church should also be an orderly place. When we leave home, we are saying goodbye. Jesus is saying that we must say goodbye to our possessions.

(Lk 14:33) "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."

Jesus does not literally take away our possessions. When we come to Christ, we surrender our lives to Him, and everything we have. He is the owner, and we are the steward. We are the steward of our gifts, abilities, talents, money, and everything else. He is the Lord of all. When we become a disciple of Christ, we must say goodbye to our ownership of all things.

In the Shadow of the Almighty, which is a biography of Jim Elliot written by his wife, Elizabeth Elliot, he is quoted as saying, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." Jim Elliott is correct. We cannot take our wealth with us. We are not foolish to give up that which we cannot keep to gain what we cannot lose. We saw a few weeks ago that we are not to lay up treasures here on earth. Instead, we are to lay up treasures in heaven, where thieves cannot break in and steal. Our heart is where our treasure is, so we must make sure that the Kingdom of God is our treasure, not the things that are on the earth. We must be willing to give up our possessions.

In our materialistic society, giving up our treasures is not an easy thing to do. We are taught to accumulate as much as we can for ourselves. But Jesus called the man a fool who built bigger barns to store his earthly treasures, and who did not store up treasures in heaven. Christians have a difficult time with this concept. The average church member gives between two and two and a half percent. The Scriptures teach us to give tithes and offerings. Tithes are ten percent of our income and offerings are that which we give above and beyond our tithes. We are taught to be cheerful and generous givers. Yet, the majority of Christians do not tithe, or give offerings above their tithes. We have to ask ourselves if we have given up our possessions as God requires of His disciples.

To become a disciple means that we have to put Christ before all of our possessions that we are entrusted with. John said that you cannot love God and love money. We cannot love the world and the things in the world. If we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us. That is a strong statement. If we are going to become a disciple of Christ, we must be willing to give up all of our possessions and follow Him.

(1 Jn 2:15-16) "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. {16} For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."

In Matthew 19, a wealthy young man came to Jesus and asked Him what he needed to do to obtain eternal life. Jesus told Him to keep the commandments. "The young man said to Him, 'all these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?' Jesus said to him, 'if you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property." This young man was not willing to become Jesus' disciple. He was not willing to give up all His possessions and follow Christ.

(Mt 19:16-22) "And someone came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" {17} And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments....{20} The young man *said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am

I still lacking?" {21} Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." {22} But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property."

Another example is found in Luke 19. There was a tax collector named Zaccheus, and he was rich. As Jesus approached Jericho, he climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus. Luke tells us that he was small in stature, and he couldn't see over the crowd.

(Lk 19:1-4) "He entered Jericho and was passing through. {2} And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. {3} Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. {4} So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way."

Jesus looked up and said to him, "hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." Zaccheus hurried and came down and received Him gladly. Then, Zaccheus made this statement, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."

(Lk 19:5-8) "When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." {6} And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. {7} When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." {8} Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."

Zaccheus was willing to give up all his possessions and follow Jesus. He was willing to put God before all his possessions. Zaccheus became a disciple of Jesus on that day. Notice how Jesus responds to Zaccheus. "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham."

(Lk 19:9-10) "And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. {10} For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

In Matthew 19, Jesus said it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. We have looked at two examples of rich man. One went away grieved, because he would not choose to give up all his possessions and follow Jesus. The other rich man went through the eye of the needle.

(Mt 19:24) "Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

How do we know if we have given up our possessions and are following Him? One of the best ways to check a person's priorities is to look at his check book. How do we spend our money? Do we tithe? Do we give offerings above and beyond the tithe? Does our giving reflect a generous heart or a stingy heart? Do we freely give to those in need? Do we worry and fret over finances or do we trust God with our finances? Have we put God above all of our possessions?

D. We must carry our own cross.

The fourth requirement that Jesus tells this multitude is that to be His disciple, we must carry our own cross. The cross stood for death. It was not just any death, but it meant the most cruel and agonizing death possible. It is the most painful death ever invented by man. The Persians invented crucifixion about 300 BC, and the custom was adopted by the Romans and other groups. Crucifixion was reserved primarily for the most vicious of male criminals. The term crucifixion means “fixed to a cross,” but it was so painful that the term “excruciating” was derived from crucifixion.

(Lk 14:27) “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”

Jesus tells us that we cannot be His disciples if we are not willing to take up our own cross. We must be willing to carry or drag our three-hundred-pound cross to death. In Galatians 2:20, Paul writes that he has been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer him who lives, but Christ who lives in him. Paul identifies with the crucifixion of Christ. What does he mean by saying he has been crucified with Christ? We must be willing to put our flesh to death.

(Ga 2:20) “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

Paul wrote in Romans that those of us who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized in His death. In baptism, we are immersed in water, which represents being buried with Christ. We are raised up out of the water which represents being raised up with Him in the likeness of His resurrection. What is the purpose of this? Paul writes that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with. Paul’s comment about being crucified with Christ is about crucifying his fleshly desires and sin.

(Ro 6:3-7) “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? {4} Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. {5} For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, {6} knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; {7} for he who has died is freed from sin.”

This is confirmed in Galatians 5:24. Paul says that “those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

(Ga 5:24) “Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

In Colossians 3:1-5, Paul speaks again about the death of our earthly members. He says that if we have been raised up with Christ, we are to seek the things above. For us to be raised up with Him, we must have also died with Him. In verse three he says, “for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God...therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

(Col 3:1-5) "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. {2} Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. {3} For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. {4} When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. {5} Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry."

In Luke 9:23, Jesus had made a similar statement. He said, "if anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." What is Christ saying when He says that we cannot be His disciple unless we deny ourselves and carry our cross? He is saying that we must die to sin and fleshly desires. We must die to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed. These things amount to idolatry.

(Lk 9:23) "And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

E. We must follow God.

We have to be willing to stop going our own way, and to begin to follow Jesus, wherever He may leave. Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

(Lk 9:23) "And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

If we are following Christ, we must seek His will and do His will at all times. Even Jesus, when praying, let the Father know His desires, but then He said, "but not My will, but Thy will be done." Just as Jesus always did the will of the Father, we must always do God's will.

(Mt 26:39) "And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."

When the Lord spoke to me about laying down my career as a professional golfer and to plant churches, it was not as hard as some have thought it would be. I was already following God's will, so if His will was to plant a church, that is what I was going to do. I did not look back, but set my heart on doing what God had called me to do, and to do it with all my heart.

3. Characteristics of a Disciple

A. Disciples are made, not born.

Jesus said, "Go and make disciples." When people receive Christ, they are often called disciples, but they have never been discipled. When a person receives Christ, those that led him to Christ should begin to mentor him.

(Mt 28:18-20) "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. {19} "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, {20} teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.""

When Barnabas and Paul were on their first apostolic trip, they preached the gospel in each city, and then they made disciples. They stayed in an area for a while before moving to the next city. What were they doing? They continued preaching the gospel, and they were also teaching the new believers. They were busy mentoring and pouring into these new believers.

(Ac 14:21-22) "And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, {22} strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.""

We see this in Colossians, where Paul wrote, "And we proclaim Him." That means they were preaching the gospel; they were preaching Jesus and His resurrection. Then, they were "admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that they could present every man complete in Christ." There is much teaching, admonishing, and exhorting in making disciple. Then, Paul made a statement about how hard they worked to make these disciples. They labored, "striving according to His power, which mightily" worked within them.

(Col 1:28-29) "And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. {29} And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me."

B. Disciples do the will of the Father.

When Jesus is told that His mother and brothers are there to see Him, He says to His DISCIPLES, he who does the will of the Father is My mother and father and sister and brother. The family of disciples is made up of those who do the will of the Father. Obedience to the Lord is a third characteristic of a disciple of Christ.

(Mt 12:47-50) "And someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You." {48} But He answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" {49} And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold, My mother and My brothers! {50} "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.""

C. Disciples abide in God's word.

We must live and abide in His word. We must spend time in His word. If we want to grow in our faith, we must drink of the pure milk of the word. If we want to mature, we have to study God's word and train our senses.

(Jn 8:31-32) "Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; {32} and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.""

D. Disciples bear much fruit.

Jesus said that apart from Him we can do nothing, but if we abide in Him we will bear much fruit. He said that if we bear much fruit we will prove that we are truly His disciples. The context of bearing fruit is a vineyard. It talks about abiding and also about pruning. The more that you

and I are pruned, the more fruit that we bear. Sometimes you and I wonder why we are going through these tough times, but it is because God wants to produce even more fruit in our lives. As disciples, we will bear much fruit.

(Jn 15:8) "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."

E. Disciples love one another.

Disciples have received God's love and love God with all their heart. The book of 1 John gives a number of ways to know if you are loving God. It speaks about loving your neighbor and loving those who are needy. John also says in John 14:21 that if we love God, we will keep His commandments.

(Jn 13:34-35) ""A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. {35} "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.""

(1 Jn 4:7-8) "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. {8} The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

(1 Jn 4:19-5:3) "We love, because He first loved us. {20} If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. {21} And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. {5:1} Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. {2} By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. {3} For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."

(Jn 14:21) ""He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him.""

4. Commission to make disciples

Jesus spent three years pouring into His disciples. After He had risen from the dead, he met with His disciples in Galilee. Then, He spoke to them saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. The disciples understood what it meant to make disciples because they had been discipled by Jesus. Just as Jesus had poured into them, they were to pour into other people and make disciples.

(Mt 28:19–20) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, {20} teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Mark gives a parallel account of the Great Commission, but his focus is slightly different. He records Jesus saying, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” Mark focuses on preaching the gospel while Matthew’s account focuses on making disciples. The Great Commission is not just preaching the gospel, but it is also making disciples.

(Mk 16:15–16) “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. {16} He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”

Paul understood this; he saw the big picture. In Colossians 1:28-29, he wrote, “We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching every man with all wisdom that we may present every man complete...” The proclamation of Him is the gospel, and the admonishing and teaching is the making of disciples. If we are going to present every believer as complete and mature, we must do more than preach the gospel; we must intentionally make disciples.

(Col 1:28) “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.”

One of the problems for us is that many in the church have never been discipled. So, when they are asked to do something that they have never been taught or experienced, they are very hesitant to do it. A lack of confidence in doing what they feel ill-prepared and equipped to do is not a good recipe for getting any work done. It creates guilt and frustration in people.

When I managed a training company, I developed my instructors. We gave them training, putting them through classes, and sending them to other schools. We also let them teach with another instructor there to help them. When they had become proficient, we then approved them to teach on their own. Sometimes this process would take a couple of months, and sometimes it was a couple of years. We trained them before we assigned them to do something that they were not able to do, which prevented them from being frustrated or discouraged.

When gave the commission to go and make disciples, they knew the process of making disciples. Jesus had trained them, and then sent them out. When they returned, He gave them feedback, and continued to train them. Therefore, they knew what Jesus had taught them, and what they were to teach others. This was not a frustrating assignment for them; it was something that they had been trained to do, and they could do it. That does not make it an easy assignment; discipleship is hard work, but it is something they could do.

We need to train disciples how to lead people to Christ by sharing their testimonies. We need to train disciples how to present the gospel. We need to train believers how to follow up with new believers, teaching them to read their Bibles and spend time in prayer. When I was in prison ministry, I allocated 70% of my time to discipleship and 30% to evangelism. In my last year as a prison chaplain, roughly 2,000 men made commitments to Christ, so there was plenty of follow up with the new believers that needed to be done. We need to train and equip believers so that they can carry out the Great Commission.

Conclusion and Applications

We have looked at the definition of a disciple. He is foremost a learner, and is becoming like his teacher. We saw that Jesus gave a number of requirements to become a disciple. He said that anyone wanting to be His disciple had to hate their mother, father, brother, sister, and even their own life. He was not saying to hate others; He was saying that God had to be above every other

relationship. He said that anyone being His disciple had to give up his possessions. He said anyone wanting to be His disciple had to pick up his own cross, deny himself, and then follow Him. These were not easy requirements.

The first application today is to receive Christ into your life and become a disciple. If you have never received Christ, but you would like to do that, I encourage you to receive Christ today. Paul wrote that if you believe in your heart that Jesus was raised from the dead, and you confess Him as Lord, you will be saved. Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He came and died for your sins? Do you believe that He was raised from the dead? If you believe and want to receive Christ, I encourage you to pray something like this.

Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God and that You died for our sins and were raised from the dead. I ask You to come into my life and to forgive me of my sins. I submit my life to You, and confess You as my Lord. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

God has also given us some characteristics of disciples. They are made disciples, not born disciples. They are obedient and do God's will. They abide in God's word, and bear much fruit. They love one another, and this is how people know that they are His disciples.

Our second application is about making disciples. Have you been discipled? If you would like for someone to disciple you, ask a leader or mature believer to take you under their wings and disciple you. If there are specific areas that you want to be trained in, let them know that. The third application is to make disciples. Are you pouring your life into others? All of us are called to make disciples. We find that the older women were to teach the younger women to love their husbands. That is discipleship. Ask God to give you someone to disciple.

Closing Prayer

Father, we love You. Jesus, thank You for pouring Your life into Your disciples. I pray this morning that You will help us to be discipled and to make disciples. Show us and give us the people that we are to pour into. Give us wisdom about the things that we are to share with them. May we be like the apostle Paul, who worked hard to present every man complete. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- When you became a believer, did someone disciple you? If yes, what were the things that they initially taught you? If not, how did you learn to grow in your faith?
- Why did Jesus give various requirements for people to consider before becoming a disciple? What does this say about the character and nature of God?
- Why was it difficult for the rich young ruler to become Jesus' disciple?
- Which of the requirements of becoming a disciple of Jesus is most challenging to you?
- How would you rate the church at large for making disciples? What are the reasons for your rating?
- What are some ways that churches can emphasize making disciples?
- Are there specific areas that you would like to receive training in?
- Our society today tends to be extremely busy, especially for families with all the activities and sports that they participate in. What are some ways to overcome these obstacles?

What Is a Disciple

Introduction (1 Cor 1:2, Ac 11:22-26)

1. Definition of Disciple (Mt 10:24-25, Jn 9:27-29, Mk 2:18)

2. Requirements of a Disciple

- A. We must love God more than anyone else. (Lk 14:25-26, Eph 6:1-3, 5:25)
- B. We must love God more than our own life. (Lk 14:26)
- C. We must put God before our possessions. (Lk 14:33, 1 Jn 2:15-16, Mt 19:16-22, Lk 19:1-10, Mt 19:24)
- D. We must carry our own cross God. (Lk 14:27, Ga 2:20, Ro 6:3-7, Ga 5:24, Col 3:1-5, Lk 9:23)
- E. We must follow God. Luke 9:23, Mt 26:39)

3. Characteristics of a Disciple

- A. Disciples are made, not born. (Mt 28:18-20, Ac 14:21-22, Col 1:28-29)
- B. Disciples do the will of the Father. (Mt 12:47-50)
- C. Disciples abide in God's word. (Jn 8:31-32)
- D. Disciples bear much fruit. (Jn 15:8)
- E. Disciples love one another. (Jn 13:34-35, 1 Jn 4:7-8, 4:19-5:3, Jn 14:21)

4. Commission to make disciples (Mt 28:19–20, Mk 16:15–16, Col 1:28)

Conclusion and Applications

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.