

Further Steps – Week 4 – Being a Disciple

Connect and review

Spend some time exploring how people's weeks have been – aim for gentle encouragement, and to help anyone who feels frustrated with themselves – this is a lifelong journey!

Last week we explored how we live out the four basics of our Christian faith - Bible reading, Fellowship, Communion and Prayer. How has this impacted you this week?

This week we are exploring what it means to be a disciple! Those who respond to the invitation of Jesus to follow Him are called 'disciples.' The four fishermen and the tax collector were not His only disciples – Jesus had many. He still has. If you have accepted Jesus, you are one of them. Today we cannot literally follow Jesus as he travelled around Israel, but there are other ways we can follow Him. In this session we shall be looking at some of those ways.

Let's read [Matthew 4 verses 20-22 and Matthew 9 verse 9](#).

Inspire and engage

There are a lot of points in this section – it's important to cover them all, so consider timing and pacing – aim for quick discussions of the questions, that can lead to a more in-depth discussion at the end of the session.

Scriptures also follow at the end of the notes.

Question 1: 'Disciple' and 'Discipline' are very similar words. What does this suggest to you?

1. Ways in which disciples can 'follow' Jesus

a) Learning

Reading: [Luke 11 verse 1](#).

Comment: Whenever He could get Himself free of the crowds, Jesus took His disciples to one side to answer their questions and teach them deeper truths. Thereby they were able to learn more than the general populace.

Question 2: Through what means can we learn from Jesus today?

b) Obedying

Reading: [John 14 verse 15](#).

Comment: Disciples are to put into practice what they learn., thus 'following' Jesus by following His teaching.

c) Serving

Comment: The twelve disciples who accompanied Jesus on His travels undertook practical tasks as needed, such as organising the crowd of 5,000 and distributing bread and fishes (John 6 verses 10-12), collecting a donkey for His ride into Jerusalem on Psalm Sunday (Mark 11 verses 1-4) and arranging His last supper (Luke 22 verses 8-13).

Exercise: Which of the following are practical ways of serving Jesus today?

- (a) Testimony (telling others what Jesus has done for you).
- (b) Preaching.
- (c) Car-park stewarding.
- (d) Helping others (see Matthew 25 verse 40).
- (e) Complaining about the poor service of other Christians.
- (f) Manning the p.a.

d) Representing

Comment: Jesus sent ahead of him first 12 disciples and then 70 to preach and heal in the towns and villages He was yet to visit. (Mark 6 verses 7 and 12-13).

Question 3: What will make us good representatives of Jesus?

e) Multiplying

Reading: [Matthew 28 verses 19-20](#).

Comment: This was the last instruction Jesus gave to His close band of disciples before He went back to heaven. It is often called *The Great Commission*. It is now down to us present-day disciples to continue the commission of making the message of Jesus known to all nations.

f) Emulating (Definition: Striving to equal or match.)

Reading: [Romans 8 verse 29 and 2 Corinthians 3 verse 18](#).

Comment: Discipleship was not unique to Jesus in the First Century. Jewish teachers and Greek philosophers of the day had their disciples too. The ambition of most dedicated disciples was to become like their master, in practice as well as in teaching.

Explore and apply

Again in this session we want to be aware of the risk of self-condemnation, and gently challenge or move away from that, instead focusing on the power of the Holy Spirit to help us with these elements of the Christian life.

Explore:
2. The cost of discipleship

Reading: [Luke 14 verses 28-30](#).

Comment: Our salvation is without any cost on our part, i.e. there is nothing we need do to earn our salvation. However, if we are serious about following Jesus there are commitments on our part, some of which will involve a level of personal sacrifice.

a) Loving fellow disciples.

Reading: [John 13 verse 35](#).

Comment: To 'love' in the Christian sense is an act of the will rather than an emotion. It counts others of at least equal importance to oneself, unconditionally desires their well-being and serves their best interests even if it involves personal cost. There was such an evidence of love between disciples in the 2nd Century that pagans were saying of them "See how they love one another."

Thought: What a good example for Christ would us present-day disciples be if people were able to say the same of us.

(b) Bearing one's cross.

Reading: [Luke 14 verse 27](#).

Comment: This is a graphic expression by Jesus to warn that following Him without compromise can place personal demands that can be hard to bear, as society is often antagonistic toward Christians.

(c) Christ above all.

Reading: [Philippians 3 verse 8](#).

Comment: Nothing or no one must be allowed to get in the way of following Christ.

Apply: Discussion:

1. In what ways can we become like Jesus?
2. what sort of personal sacrifices might we be required to give? Is this something you have noticed in your own life?

Reflect and review

Perhaps be prepared with a testimony of your experience of giving something up, and seeing God's goodness through it.

Personal reflection: What am I willing to do or to give up if Jesus asks me to do it?

Suggested activity: spend some time praying this week. What is God revealing to you about your discipleship journey? What is your next step as a disciplined learner, and a loving follower of Jesus?

SCRIPTURES for Session 4

Matthew 4:20-22. As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. (NIV)

Matthew 9:9. As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. (NIV)

Luke 11:1. Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

John 14:15. "If you love me, obey my commandments."

Luke 14:28-30. "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? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' (NIV)

John 13:35. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

Luke 14:27. "If you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple."

Matthew 28:19-20. go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (NIV)

Romans 8:29. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

2 Cor 3:18. The Lord — who is the Spirit — makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

Philippians 3:8. Everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ.

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