

Now What?

LEARNING TO WALK WITH
JESUS AS A NEW DISCIPLE

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This resource is a 12-week discipleship curriculum designed to help new believers discover foundational biblical truths of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The goal of these lessons is to equip them in taking the next few steps to practically live out those truths.



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Introduction

I wasn't much of an athlete growing up. But one day, I had this bright idea to get into weightlifting. I decided to join a gym for the first time, and an employee gave me a tour while telling me about every piece of equipment. Despite his detailed explanation, I had no clue how most of the machines worked. Then, he left me to workout. On my own. Alone.

What was I supposed to do? Where was I to begin? What if I needed help? I had no clue what I was doing, and I didn't even have a plan or fitness goals. I was so lost.

Much like my gym experience, my spiritual journey with God began with me stumbling around, unsure of what to do. Although I had been in church all my life — every Sunday, Wednesday and Friday when the church doors were open — I didn't give my life to Christ until I was 16 years old.

I heard the preacher tell us that Jesus was going to return one day and we better get right with God, or we'd go to hell. He said that Jesus died for our sins. The problem was, I didn't think of myself as a sinner. In fact, sin wasn't really clear to me — I didn't understand what it was. But I knew I didn't want to go to hell as the preacher mentioned, so I decided to give my life to Christ.

As I stood up during the altar call and made my way out of the pew, I felt all kinds of emotions. *What is this going to be like? What will happen when I get saved?* It seemed like all eyes were on me as I nervously walked down the aisle, meeting the preacher at the altar. He whispered in my ear, asking why I had come down front. I responded, "I want to give my life to God." After he repeated that out loud to the congregation, he prayed and invited me to the fellowship hall after service.

There, the preacher walked me through the sinner's prayer and told me that I was now saved. The end...

But I was clueless about what it means to follow Jesus. *What is a Christian? How do I pray? How do I even understand the Bible? What is the Bible again?* I had so many questions.

Throughout my 13 years of ministry, I have sadly found many others who share this same story. After they prayed to follow Jesus Christ, they wondered *now what?* Many of them did not fully understand the gospel. Others lacked the necessary knowledge to follow Jesus. And some had never been discipled.

It is impossible for us to obey the commands in Mark 1:17 or Matthew 28:18-20 if we don't know what a disciple of Jesus is.

“AND JESUS SAID TO THEM, ‘FOLLOW ME, AND I WILL MAKE YOU BECOME FISHERS OF MEN.’”

Mark 1:17 (ESV)

“ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME. 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.”

Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)

My prayer is that “Now What” will help with your new or existing journey with Christ. Through this curriculum, I pray you would know God more, what it means to be a disciple of Christ, and seek to live out those implications.



Getting Started

“ALL THE BELIEVERS DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO THE APOSTLES' TEACHING, AND TO FELLOWSHIP, AND TO SHARING IN MEALS (INCLUDING THE LORD'S SUPPER), AND TO PRAYER.”

Acts 2:42 (NLT)

This discipleship curriculum is designed to be done in community, not apart from it. I believe the most biblically accurate and effective way to grow in your walk with Christ is to live out your faith alongside other believers. This concept is consistent with the early church according to Acts 2, and I believe it to be God's design for spiritual growth. My personal conviction is that we grow deeper in Christ when we are connected to His body — the body of believers also known as the church.

As you go through this curriculum, I encourage you to grab a few friends to participate with you. This could be an in-home Bible study, a Sunday School class, small group, or with your family or friends. Regardless of whom you choose, just do it with others. After completing this study, you may want to try a few lessons with someone who isn't following Jesus but desires to learn more about Christianity.

The curriculum starts with an overview of the grand narrative, helping readers understand the Bible isn't a fragmented book of information. In fact, it is one story, one Author — God — pointing us to one Man — Jesus — and His salvific plan for the world. The curriculum moves into a short overview and lesson of the gospel, the foundation of Christianity. It focuses on what a disciple is, and concludes with how we ought to live as a result of following Jesus.

Throughout this study, I'd highly recommend the following:

- 1 PRAY BEFORE EACH LESSON.**
- 2 DO ONE LESSON PER WEEK.**
- 3 DO THE LESSON BY YOURSELF, FILLING IN THE BLANKS BEFORE YOU MEET WITH YOUR GROUP.**
- 4 WRITE DOWN ANY QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE AND WANT TO DISCUSS.**
- 5 SPEND THOUGHTFUL TIME ON THE REFLECTION AND APPLICATION COMPONENT.**
- 6 AS A GROUP, WORK THROUGH THE QUESTIONS TOGETHER.**
- 7 HOLD EACH OTHER ACCOUNTABLE TO THE REFLECTION AND APPLICATION COMPONENT.**
- 8 ENJOY!**

THE BIG STORY

Part One

Before we can move forward to what life as a follower of Jesus looks like, we must go back — to the beginning where it all began. This section will take a look at the grand narrative of Scripture so you can understand the Bible as a whole story and not in segments.

Week 1: Creation

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ... Then God said, ‘Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us.’ ... Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ... All things have been created through him and for him.”

Genesis 1:1, 1:26; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16 (TNIV)

The Bible isn't some random book composed of arbitrary stories; rather, it's 66 books that come together to tell one big story.

Guess who this one big story is all about? Not me or you — but Jesus! The Bible is an incredible overarching narrative about God's love for us. Scripture tells how God has pursued what was lost in the Garden of Eden — intimacy with His creation — and bridged the gap of sin through His Son, Jesus.

Genesis reveals to us that God created all things for His glory and praise. Before the foundations of the universe, God formed something out of nothing by the power of His word. Once He created everything, He looked at His creation and pronounced it good. The word “good” used in Genesis 1:4 is translated to “pleasing.” Everything God created was made perfectly and without flaw, and it was pleasing to His sight.

God created mankind in the image of the Trinity — God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. To be created in the image of God means that mankind was made both physically and spiritually in some sense like his Maker. Consequently, mankind had the ability to fully please God and was without sin, which means failure, error, or missing the mark.¹

¹ Piper, John. *The Image of God*. March 1, 1971 Retrieved November 26, 2016 from <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-image-of-god>

Adam and Eve were the first people to ever walk the earth, and they knew no sin until they disobeyed God’s command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17). Their act of disobedience was a fatal decision that affected all of human history and caused sin to enter the earth. Sin would then be passed down from generation to generation (Psalm 51). Without God’s help, the power of evil and darkness would prevail.

God was not surprised by Adam and Eve’s disobedience. In fact, He was aware of it from the very beginning of time. He had a plan that would unfold hundreds of years later.

READ GENESIS 1-2.

1. What was God’s creation like in the beginning? (1:2)

2. How did God create the first humans, Adam and Eve? (2:7)

3. "God said, 'Let us create man in our image'" (1:26-28). What does it mean to be created in His image?

4. What command did God give Adam and Eve? Why? (2:17)

5. What was the purpose of God's command to them? What did He desire?

Reflection and Application

What do the first two chapters of Genesis reveal to you about God? How can you apply this to your life?

Week 2: The Fall

“Now the serpent was craftier than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, “You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?”’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, “You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.”’ But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.”

Genesis 3:1-7

Every January in high school, I made a New Year’s resolution that I would stop doing bad things in order to get closer to God. I rehearsed how I was not going to sin the way I had the previous year. My 16-year-old brain thought I could actually stop sinning to make God love me. Weeks went by and I would do well.

But that didn't last long. Before I knew it, I was in the same old patterns. I would get angry with myself, thinking I was a failure. *I mean, how hard is it to stop doing bad things? Isn't it just mind over matter?*

The truth is, there are times we think we have enough self-control to be a morally good person. The harsh reality is that we don't. There is nothing in us that can create enough good behavior to earn God's love, nor is there any level of self-control we can obtain to stop sinning.

We were born sinners (Psalm 51) and inherited a sinful nature that does not please God (Romans 5:12). This is a result of the fall in Genesis 3. God had a standard for living in the Garden of Eden to not eat from a certain tree, and Adam and Eve disobeyed that rule, making them sinners. As a result, sin entered the entire cosmos and affected everything. This means you and I are sinful people. We wake up with sinful thoughts and go to bed with them.

READ GENESIS 3.

1. How did Adam and Eve respond to God's command from the last chapter to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? (Genesis 3:6)

2. Do you think you would have responded any differently?

3. Why do you think Adam and Eve disobeyed God?

4. As a result of Adam and Eve's disobedience, what happened to them? (Genesis 3:23)
Do you think mankind is also affected by their disobedience? (Psalm 51:5)

5. What is the penalty for disobeying God? (Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23)

6. In Genesis 2:17, is the death God refers to spiritual or physical, or both? What do you think God meant when He said they would “surely die”?

7. How has your own sin affected your life? What are some of your ongoing sin struggles? How has sin shaped the way you think or feel?

Reflection and Application

Take a deep look into your heart and think about the areas in your life where you're missing the mark. Do you enjoy those sins? Do you take them seriously? What do you think you deserve for your sin?

Week 3: Redemption

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ... Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us — for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.’”

Ephesians 1:7; Galatians 3:13 (ESV)

As a result of the fall, sin entered the world and made everyone incapable of living a life that is pleasing to God (Romans 3:23). Due to our sins against a holy God, we deserve a penalty of death — eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23). We saw this separation begin when Adam and Eve were kicked out of the garden (Genesis 3:22).

Every time someone sins, they are storing up a debt against God. This debt has to be paid, no matter how big or small the sin seems. In other words, if you do the crime, you do the time.

The Old Testament shares how the price of sin was paid by the shedding of blood. In Leviticus 17:11, God said, *“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”* The word “atonement” means to cover something up. God said the only way sin can be covered is by the shedding of blood. Throughout Leviticus 1-7, God instructs His people to do this by bringing animals without blemish or stain to the altar. God wanted a perfect sacrifice to atone for sins.

As you read through the Bible and arrive in the New Testament, you’ll discover God had a bigger plan than the shedding of blood from animals. God Himself was going to allow His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, to be killed so His blood would enable mankind to be forgiven and freed from the punishment of their sins (John 3:16). This is what we call “redemption” — Christ bringing us back into a relationship with God. As Luke 19:10 says, “For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.”

Read Colossians 1:21-23 and Ephesians 2:1-9.

1. How does Paul describe a life of sin? (Ephesians 2:3; Colossians 1:21)

2. What did God do on your behalf as a result of sin? (Ephesians 2:4-5; Colossians 1:22)

3. Because Jesus died for you, how do you stand before God now? (Colossians 1:22)

4. What do you think Paul meant when he said you have been saved by grace?
(Ephesians 2:8)

Reflection and Application

Take a moment and reflect on your salvation experience. How has your life been different since? What has God been doing in your life?

Week 4: Restoration

“Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death” or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Revelation 21:1-4 (NIV)

In my daily life, I am constantly facing this inner battle of my flesh vs. God’s Spirit. As Paul would say in Romans 7, the good I desire to do, I cannot do; and the bad I desire not to do, I keep on doing. Not only is the Holy Spirit and my flesh at war within me, I have problems and circumstances that cause pain and suffering in my life. *Why is the Christian life so hard? Why do my flesh and the Spirit battle against each other? Why do I still sin? Why do I experience pain and suffering?* Millions of Christians around the world have these same questions—and you probably do, too.

As followers of Jesus, we find our hope in the truth that Christ Jesus came to redeem sinners and restore that which is broken. However, there’s still one more piece remaining — restoration. God has promised to renew the whole world and make all things new (Revelation 21:5). I take great hope in knowing that God provides us with answers to many of our questions through the Bible, which also gives us a glimpse into what the new world will look like.

The Bible specifically shares two things that will occur at Christ's return.

1. He will judge sin and evil (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10)
2. God will purge this world of evil once and for all (Revelation 21:22-27)

On this final day, all things are promised to be made perfect. What Adam and Eve destroyed in the Garden of Eden, God will restore. There will be no more sin or need for repentance. Pain, suffering, sadness, evil and chaos will no longer exist. Instead, there will be only beauty, wholeness, enjoyment, joy, peace and love. We will experience the Lord's Prayer, "*Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*" in its fullness (Matthew 6:10). We will enjoy Christ, the Father and the Holy Spirit with all the other believers forever. But for some — those who denied Christ — this will be a dreadful day (Revelation 21:8).

READ REVELATION 21:1-8.

1. In Revelation, we are introduced to Jesus as the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. What will happen when Jesus returns? What will He do? (21:5-8)

2. Revelation 21 speaks of Jesus' return to restore all things with a new heaven and earth. What is going to happen to those who have not repented of their sin and trusted in Jesus? (21:8)

3. Whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life? (21:6-7)

4. What happens to those who do not believe on Judgment Day? How do you feel about this? (21:8)

5. People who don't follow Jesus aren't written in the Lamb's Book of Life and will suffer eternal damnation. Do you have a responsibility to share the gospel with them? (21:7)

6. Who comes to mind that you need to tell about Jesus?

Reflection and Application

How are you living your life in light of the return of Jesus? Are you actively pursuing holiness? Are you sharing your faith? Are you fighting to live according to God's Word? What do you need to confess and repent of?

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

Part Two

The good news is Christ has come and done everything necessary for us to have a relationship with God. The gospel is about what has been done for us and not what we must do to receive salvation. It's the greatest news ever!

Week 5: Jesus in my Place

“For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.”

Romans 3:23-24 (NLT)

Imagine having large amounts of debt that would take years to pay off, and then receiving a phone call that an anonymous person paid all your debt in full. How would you respond? What emotions would you have? How would that impact the decisions you make for the rest of your life? Christ has done for us what no one could ever do — He paid our sin debt on the cross of Calvary. The gospel truly is the best news one could ever receive. The penalty we should have received for our sin was taken away by His death. Many scholars call this the great exchange — Christ taking what we deserve (eternal damnation) and giving us what we do not deserve (salvation and everlasting life with God).

The prophet Isaiah said it this way:

“Surely He took on our infirmities and carried our sorrows; yet we considered Him stricken by God, struck down and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray, each one has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all”

Isaiah 53:4-6 (BSB)

The gospel says God saw us at our worst and knew we couldn't help ourselves; therefore, He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to help us. We all are sinners, born and shaped in our iniquity (Psalm 51:5). We are unable to love the Living God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength; hence, why Jesus came to help us. Jesus is our everything. He came so we might have everlasting life in Him.

The gospel tells us Christ died, was buried and rose three days later (Mark 16:1-7). In this, we find our hope. Jesus didn't stay in the grave but was raised and seated at the right hand of the Father in glory (Mark 16:19; Colossians 3:1). Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have a Great High Priest who is making intercession on our behalf (Hebrews 4:14-16). This is good news because we have One who is pleading our case in heaven, fighting for us, and empowering us through the Holy Spirit to run the race marked out for us (Hebrews 12:1-3).

We will never be able to earn God's love and favor apart from Jesus. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). No one can get to God except through Jesus. Through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, He tore down the dividing wall of hostility that once separated us from God and made it possible for every one of us to be reunited with Him (Ephesians 2:14). He took our place on the cross so we might receive the free gift of salvation and live without condemnation. He shall return one day in all of His glory to bring home His ransomed sons and daughters (1 Corinthians 15:23-25) to a place where there will be no more death, mourning, sorrow or pain (Revelation 21:4).

This is the gospel. This is our hope. And this is what we stand on.

READ ISAIAH 53:1-6.

1. In your own words, what is the gospel?

2. What hope does the gospel provide for sinners?

3. What truths does the gospel provide us (Ephesians 2; John 6:44; Romans 10:9; Romans 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17)?

4. How does the gospel contradict mankind's natural instinct to work in order to earn God's favor or receive salvation?

Reflection and Application

Do you believe Christ has done everything necessary to save you? Do you believe that on your best days Christ loves you, and on your worst days Christ loves you the same? Have you put your trust in Christ based upon what He has done for you and not by your "good" deeds? Reflect on those questions and write down your thoughts.

Week 6: Responding to the Gospel

“For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”

Romans 10:13 (ESV)

If the gospel proclaims salvation is a work of God that delivers us from sin and its penalty, restores us to a right relationship with God, and imparts to us eternal life, then it requires a response. A decision to either receive what Christ has done for us or reject what we have heard. The Bible proclaims Jesus Christ is salvation and all who have a relationship with Him are saved.³ *But how is a relationship with Jesus obtained? How is one saved? How does one receive the good news of the gospel?*

Romans 10:9 says, “If you declare with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Here’s how it all works together:

1. God’s Spirit convicts you of sin (John 16:8). He reveals you are a sinner and utterly wicked, destined for eternal damnation due to your sin (Romans 6:23). As He pulls back the curtain and allows you to see your wrongdoings, this revelation leaves you hopeless and in need of saving grace.
2. When hearing the gospel, the message of salvation comes through Christ. This message explains you are dead in your trespasses and sins. Carrying out the desires of your flesh, you deserve the wrath of God (Ephesians 2:1). But God, being rich in mercy and with great love has provided salvation for you as a free gift (Ephesians 2:4-8). God has made a way for you to know Him. *How do you respond to this?* One may be led to cry out like one of the hearers during Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:37, “What shall we do to be saved?” Another may choose to reject this news and be disturbed like the Sadducees in Acts 4:1-2.

² Akin, Danny, *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville: B&H, 2014), 543-545.

³ IBID

3. To receive salvation, you must repent. Repentance that leads to salvation means you are outwardly turning away from a lifestyle of sin and turning to God and His service in all of life.

This requires a confession with your mouth, "Lord Jesus, I am a sinner in need of being rescued from my sin. I see that my sin is against a Holy God and deserves punishment, but there's nothing I can do to save myself. I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to do everything necessary to save me. I believe in Him, save me."

To receive salvation means you inwardly recognize God sent Jesus to not only save you from your sin and eternal damnation, but to change you and make you more like Christ. It is acknowledging that God gives you a new heart and you are a new creation in Christ Jesus (Ezekiel 36:26-28; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Salvation is initiated by God, through God and for God's glory. I like to think of it this way: All you bring to the table is your sin, confession and repentance; God does everything else (Philippians 1:6).

READ EZEKIEL 36:24-28 AND 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-19.

1. How is salvation made possible? Who initiates salvation? (Ezekiel 36:26; 2 Corinthians 5:19)

2. Is it possible to be saved by the good things we do? How are we saved?
(Ephesians 2:8-9)

3. Why does God save us? (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

4. How do you define repentance? Why do you think this is important? Is
repentance necessary for salvation? (See Romans 10:9-11)

5. If salvation is initiated by God, then how do you think one keeps his or her salvation? (Refer to 1 Corinthians 1:8; John 10:28-30)

Reflection and Application

God has been better than good to us. He has done for us what we could not have done for ourselves — restored our fellowship with Him. Have you stopped lately and thought about how good the gospel is? When was the last time you thanked God for saving you? Write a prayer of thanksgiving for God’s salvation.

A DISCIPLE IS...

Part Three

*Because Jesus has done everything necessary to save us,
our lives should be radically different.*

Week 7: Who is a Disciple of Jesus?

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."

Matthew 4:19 (NIV)

Early on in Jesus' ministry, He called a few men to follow Him — Peter, James, John, Andrew, Bartholomew (Nathanael), James the Lesser or Younger, Judas, Thaddeus, Matthew, Philip, Simon the Zealot and Thomas. These men didn't know exactly who Jesus was nor what it meant to follow Him, but it wasn't long before they learned who they were following and what that entailed. They saw Christ raise the dead, heal the sick, give sight to the blind, turn tables over in the temple, feed thousands, care for the needs of others, preach repentance, forgive sin, and declare He is the Messiah. Jesus embodied for His disciples how He wanted them to live.

As I explore more of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, I think of two words — *who* and *what*. Oftentimes, I have heard the question asked, *"What is a disciple of Jesus?"* "What" denotes an object and makes me think of a long checklist of things. But I'd like to think of the question this way: *"Who is a disciple of Jesus?"* "Who" denotes a person and helps me to think of someone embodying characteristics of another person. It is similar to the question, "What is the church vs. who is the church?"

Jesus is a distinct person of the Trinitarian Godhead. We are not following a concept, mystical figure or an object, but a Person who has a distinct identity. As 1 John 4:14 says, *"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world."* Let's also think about John 20:21, *"Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.'" Jesus Christ was sent by God from heaven to be the Savior of the world. This is who Jesus is — His identity. He calls people who need to be radically transformed to follow Him. This is what Jesus did with His disciples. As a result, the disciples' actions changed, including how they lived their lives in light of who they believed in and followed.*

Therefore, I define a disciple as a person who puts their trust in Jesus through repentance and faith, follows Him in obedience, and seeks to become like Him through their character in what they say and do. Three verses come to my mind when I think of a disciple of Jesus:

1. *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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.”*
– Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)
2. *“And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’”*
– Matthew 4:19 (ESV)
3. *“So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”* – Acts 2:41-47 (ESV)

In the next five sections, I will break down characteristics of the early church and delve into the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, sharing how these apply to followers of Jesus. By no means are these descriptors an exhaustive list of a disciple, but just a few foundational ones. I don’t want you to see the next several sections as a checklist of what you need to do, but rather as what you should embody with the help of Christ (Galatians 2:20).

**REREAD MATTHEW 28:18-20; MATTHEW 4:19;
ACTS 2:41-47.**

THEN, READ 2 TIMOTHY 2:1:8-14; 2:1-2.

1. In your own words, who is a disciple?

2. What characteristics should be displayed in a disciple's life?

3. What did Jesus' followers do in Acts 2?

4. Acts 2 is known as the birth of the first church. How would you describe the people in this church?

5. What is the Apostle Paul asking Timothy to do in 2 Timothy 2:2?

6. What did Timothy hear from the Apostle Paul in the presence of many witnesses (2 Timothy 1:8-14)?

Reflection and Application

Write a prayer asking God to empower you to follow Jesus well and live as He has called you to live.

Week 8: One Who Shares the Gospel

“It is just as the Scripture says: ‘Anyone who believes in Him will never be put to shame.’ For there is no difference between Jew and Greek: The same Lord is Lord of all, and gives richly to all who call on Him, or, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How then can they call on the One in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”

Romans 10:11-15 (BSB)

God didn't just save you so you could escape eternal damnation; He saved you so you could help others escape the same eternal damnation you deserved. I love how Acts 1:8 says, *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* Jesus is helping us see that once we receive Him as Lord and Savior of our lives, God's Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us, giving us power to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. A witness is someone who shares with others what they have seen or heard about a particular matter. In the case of Acts 1:8, the audience was eyewitnesses of Jesus' life, death, burial and resurrection.

While none of us reading this curriculum have seen Jesus physically, we have heard about His ministry. More importantly, we have received His free gift of salvation

and eternal life. This means we have a responsibility to tell others how they can find hope in a broken world. *How will they come to know Jesus if we don't go and tell them about Jesus?* This is the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:18-20.

We have been tasked to warn others about the coming wrath of God for man's sin, but we're also to share how in Christ, that wrath was satisfied. Our job is to tell others about the goodness of God in Christ. This is evangelism — going and making disciples (Matthew 28:19). This is done simultaneously in word and in deed; not one without the other. Through the Holy Spirit, God has empowered us to do the work He has called us to do.

**READ MATTHEW 28:18-20; MATTHEW 4:19;
ROMANS 10:8-15.**

1. According to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20), what is your task as a follower of Jesus?

2. What does Jesus say to His future disciples in Matthew 4:19? What do you think this means?

3. Looking at the two Matthew passages, what are the consequences of disobedience?

4. According to Romans 10:8-15, how does one become a follower of Jesus? How do you help people become followers of Jesus?

5. In Romans 10:14, what is the progression that the Apostle Paul lays out for salvation?

6. What is the “good news” the Apostle Paul refers to in Romans 10:15?

Reflection and Application

To follow Jesus means to actively share our faith with those who do not follow Him. Make a list of people you know who are not following Jesus. Use this list to pray for their salvation. Ask God to give you the boldness to share the gospel with them.

Week 9: One Who Obeys God

“But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.”

James 1:22 (NLT)

As we follow Jesus, we seek to make Him known to others. As others come to saving faith in Jesus, we have another task — teaching them to obey Christ. A disciple of Jesus Christ not only obeys God’s Word themselves, but they teach others to obey. Obedience begins with us, but does not end with us.

I love what John Piper once said about the second half of the Great Commission. “It did not say: ‘Teach them all *that* I have commanded you.’ There’s an important difference. It says, ‘Teach them to *observe* all that I have commanded you.’ My responsibility as a discipler of the nations is not just to inform them what Jesus commanded. Rather, it is to speak in such a way, to teach in such a way, to pray in such a way that people actually *do* what He commanded.”⁴

We are called to help those who follow Jesus become so in love with His Word that they seek to obey it at all cost. We are tasked with helping those who follow Jesus to not just love hearing His Word, but to love doing His Word, as James would say.

Oftentimes, I have struggled with obeying God’s Word. I still do today. I think it’s because I often view the Bible as a heavy burden to obey. It conflicts with my own sinful desires and in many cases, seems too hard for me to obey. There’s often fear associated with my disobedience — *if I don’t obey God, will He punish me and send me to hell?* Sometimes I think that my obedience equals God’s acceptance of me, and somehow my disobedience will cause me to lose my salvation or receive eternal damnation.

⁴ <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/you-cannot-obey-god-without-god>

What I've come to learn is that I cannot obey God's Word without God or abiding in the gospel. For it is my delight in the gospel — what Christ has done for me on the cross as an unworthy sinner — that creates in me a desire to obey. It is my dependence upon God's Spirit that gives me the strength and courage to obey (John 15:5). The more I treasure up the gospel in my heart and the more I depend on God, the more I want to obey Him out of a desire to please Him. The burden to obey and the fear associated with disobedience fades. Obeying God becomes more delightful than burdensome. As Tim Keller says:

“Without the gospel, we may obey the law, but we will learn to hate it. We will use it, but we will not truly love it. Only if we obey the law because we are saved, rather than to be saved, will we do so ‘for God’ (Galatians 2:19). Once we understand salvation-by-promise, we do not obey God any longer for our sake, by using the law-salvation-system to get things from God. Rather, we now obey God for His sake, using the law’s content to please and delight our Father.”⁵

We need the gospel of power in order to obey God with pleasure. This is what we must seek to embody and help others realize as well.

READ JAMES 1:22-25; ACTS 2:42-47; JOHN 14:23; JOSHUA 1:8.

1. Why do you think it's important to obey God? Why is it hard to obey God's Word?

⁵ <http://dailykeller.com/category/obedience/>

2. Is obeying God's Word hard for you? Why or why not?

3. How does James describe the person who isn't a doer of the Word but only a hearer?

4. What do you observe from Acts 2:42-45 that followers of Jesus should seek to obey?

5. What are God’s instructions to Joshua? What is the importance of this in the life of a follower of Jesus?

Reflection and Application

Spend a few minutes in prayer asking God to give you the power to love and obey His Word. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind areas where you may be disobeying God. Write those areas down below.



Week 10: One Who is Devoted to the Word and Prayer

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

Acts 2:42 (ESV)

When I was a young Christian in college, I was first told I needed to have a quiet time. Quiet time? There isn’t anything quiet about me. I’m loud and love to talk, so the thought of being quiet makes me uneasy. But, I soon found out that a quiet time is a time to set aside daily to commune with God. Sounds a bit odd? I thought so, too. I began to sleepily get out of bed early in the morning to read my Bible even though I had no clue what I was reading in half the passages.

And I’m supposed to pray during this time as well? Pray about what? How do I even pray? If you’re anything like me, then much of your quiet time was spent trying to figure out what to read and say during it. As I began to develop consistency and rhythms with my Bible reading and prayer time, I immediately felt like it was burdensome — I had to do it or God would be mad at me. I knew this is what Christians are supposed to do, but was stressed by this. Shouldn’t it be somewhat enjoyable?

I began to see that my approach to reading the Bible and prayer was wrong. I treated it like any other task to check off my list daily. If I missed a day, skipped a day on purpose, or was slothful during my quiet time, I felt guilty and unworthy, like I wasn’t a good Christian. What I soon came to realize is that God isn’t in heaven keeping a track record of how many times I pray and read my Bible per day. He isn’t mad at me when I skip a day of prayer and reading the Bible. God won’t punish me nor send me to hell for not having a consistent quiet time. However, God has created us for communion and fellowship with Him. God knows you and I need time in His Word and prayer just as much as our body needs food and water

— prayer and the Word sustains us. For Jesus even said in Matthew 4:4, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Looking at Acts 2:42, the meaning of the word “devoted” in Greek is “to endure” or prevail or persist. To continue to do something with intense effort despite difficulty. To keep on keeping on. There’s not an example anywhere in the Bible where followers of God got it 100% right all the time. That’s why we need grace and it is made available to us.

Grace gives us the strength to make mistakes while we try to figure out the nuances of a quiet time. Grace covers us when we lack the motivation to be devoted to God in prayer and the Word. Grace says try again tomorrow when we neglect personal time with God. There’s so much grace for you and me. However, as Paul said in Romans 6:1, we are not to continue going down the wrong path of sin and unrighteousness because grace abounds to us. We must keep moving in the right direction. To be devoted to the Word and prayer is to consistently persist in communion and fellowship with God no matter how challenging.

**READ THE FOLLOWING: 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17;
PSALM 119:105; JOSHUA 1:8; HEBREWS 4:12;
JEREMIAH 29:12-13; PHILIPPIANS 4:6; JAMES
5:16; MATTHEW 6:9-13.**

1. What do these verses say about prayer or reading the Bible? What role do you play? What role does God play?

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Psalm 119:105

Joshua 1:8

Hebrews 4:12

Jeremiah 29:12-13

Philippians 4:6

James 5:16

Matthew 6:9-13

2. What promises are attached to these verses?

Reflection and Application

How has your view of “quiet time” changed through reading this lesson? Are there any practical changes you need to make your quiet time to be more disciplined or consistent?



Week 11: One Who is Generous

“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

Romans 8:32 (ESV)

Have you ever met a person so generous they would give you the clothes off their back? They're typically the first ones to volunteer for something. They're quick to meet a need. The ones who always pick up the tab at a restaurant for you. They show up at your house with meals during a hard time, showering you with love. And they seem so joyful when they do it. They don't appear to be doing these things out of obligation or begrudgingly. They're just generous. Do you know those people? Perhaps you're one of them. I'm always convicted when around them. I wonder why it's hard for me to exhibit this type of generosity, free from compulsion or hesitation. Maybe you're like me and just not there yet or are struggling to get there. There's hope for us.

When I think about a disciple of Jesus being one who embodies generosity, I immediately go back to Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” In the beginning God was generous — generous enough to create an entire world to reflect His beauty and glory. Starting with Adam and Eve, this would lead to over 7 billion people in the world today.

The Bible is filled with story after story of generous people. I immediately think of Abraham being willing to sacrifice his one and only promised son, Isaac, in obedience to God. It is a perfect mirroring of God being gracious and willing to sacrifice His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, for us. Jesus was generous enough to face the most brutal execution and give up His life for me and you. He endured the punishment on the cross that we should have received for our sins. A life of joy, hope, peace and eternal security is now possible because of His sacrifice. This is what it means to be a disciple who is generous — to be ready to share and impart, freely giving.

But the only way one can become a generous disciple is by abiding in the gospel. Treasuring what God did for us compels our hearts to be generous. The imagery the Bible paints of Jesus' execution convicts and overwhelms us to the point of repentance — turning our lack of generosity to a life of generosity. The gospel is our only hope at becoming a generous disciple.

**READ ACTS 2:37-47; MARK 6:30-42;
2 CORINTHIANS 9:1-13.**

1. Where do you see the first example of someone being willing to share? What did they share? (Acts 2:42-47)

2. What happened as a result of this sharing? (Acts 2:37-41)

3. What did the early church do that made them so generous in Acts 2:44? Explain what you think the verse means.

4. What happened as a result of their generosity? (Acts 2:47)

5. How did Jesus demonstrate generosity in Mark 6:30-42? What was the result of His generosity?

6. According to the Apostle Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 9:1-13, what should our attitude be about generosity? Is this your attitude about generosity? Why or why not?

Reflection and Application

Have you ever been characterized as a generous person? Why do you think this is true about yourself? Spend time thinking deeply about why. If you don't consider yourself generous, what are some contributing factors? (e.g., I've never been characterized as a generous person. This stemmed from growing up in poverty and trying to hold onto everything I had.)



Week 12: One Who Gathers in Community

“And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.”

Hebrews 10:25 (NLT)

“But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today,’ so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.”

Hebrews 3:13 (NIV)

When I first began dating my wife, I quickly knew she was the one I wanted to marry. She was so kind, gentle, patient, selfless and had a beautiful smile. It was clear she loved Jesus and wanted to follow Him. By the grace of God, I convinced her to marry me. During our 11 years of marriage, I have witnessed firsthand what a true gift she is. She's a tremendous blessing to our family. She enriches our lives and whoever she is around. I could write pages of the many qualities and things I love about her. But those pages wouldn't be void of the many conflicts and arguments we've had over the years. They wouldn't lack our sin struggles and areas of growth. On one hand she's amazing, and on the other, she's a work in progress, just like all of us.

We are a work in progress constantly being formed into the image of Jesus (Romans 8:29). And that's why we all need each other. God has not called us to be lone rangers. We are not supposed to be doing this Christian walk alone. It's not just you and Jesus; it's you, Jesus and the entire body of Christ.

Jesus shed His blood not just for the forgiveness of your sins, but for the forgiveness of sin for all those who believe in Him (Matthew 26:28; John 6:40). Christ instituted

community through His death. It is through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ that people from all walks of life can come together in community. Through Jesus, these people are unified, encouraged, prayed for, rebuked and corrected. In community we rejoice and weep with others, meet their needs, and enjoy meals. Community is a gift that God has given from the beginning of time (Genesis 2:18). God exists in a perfect community with Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. We were created to enjoy community with Him and others.

**READ HEBREWS 10:25-26; HEBREWS 3:13;
GENESIS 2:15-18; ACTS 2:42-47.**

1. Looking at all of these verses, what is the recurring theme?

2. What do you think the writer of Hebrews is trying to warn the people of?

3. What happens when we neglect being in community with other believers?
(Hebrews 10:26, 3:13)

4. What do you think God’s heart was behind creating Adam and Eve?
(Genesis 2:15-18)

5. In Acts 2, what did the new believers do together in community?

Reflection and Application

What makes being in community so challenging? What are the rewards of being in community? Reflect on the past 12 months of your life. Have you been faithful and consistent in community? Why or why not?

Conclusion: What Next?

“FOR I DELIVERED TO YOU AS OF FIRST IMPORTANCE WHAT I ALSO RECEIVED: THAT CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SCRIPTURES, THAT HE WAS BURIED, THAT HE WAS RAISED ON THE THIRD DAY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SCRIPTURES.”

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (ESV)

After all those years growing up in church, no one ever taught me how to follow Jesus or what it looked like to help others follow Him. I always thought the gospel — the message of Christ dying and being raised from the dead for my sins — was only needed for my salvation. I soon realized the gospel is everything. It’s what I also needed for sanctification, the process of becoming more like Christ. The gospel empowers us to be all that God has called us to be in Christ Jesus.

At the Summit Church, we like to say the gospel isn’t just the diving board we jump off, but the pool we swim in. We need it continually until Christ calls us home or returns. This means you and I must fight to abide in the gospel (John 15:5). We must seek to feed ourselves the gospel daily. We also must do what the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:3 — deliver the message of the gospel to others. We must beg and persuade others to be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:11-21). Why? Because Jesus is worth it. His death, burial and resurrection accomplished for us what we could have never done on our own. We would have never been able to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps nor do enough good deeds to wipe our sin away. Jesus was the perfect and spotless sacrifice that accomplished the forgiveness of our sins and redemption. One day we will see our Redeemer. The world needs to hear this from you — this is discipleship.

Discipleship doesn’t start when someone makes a profession of faith and you begin to help them grow spiritually. No, discipleship begins with evangelism.

Jesus says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Discipleship starts with you actively sharing the gospel with those who don't follow Jesus. It moves to conversion once that person makes a decision to follow Jesus, and it never ends. It's a lifelong process. I love how Jeff Vanderstelt defines discipleship in his book, "Saturate":

"It is the ongoing process of submitting all of life to Jesus, and seeing Him saturate your entire life and world with His presence and power. It's a process of daily growing in your awareness of your need for Him in the everyday stuff of life. It is walking with Jesus, being filled with Jesus, and being led by Jesus in every place and in every way."⁶

A lifelong journey of you being a disciple is investing time, energy and resources in your spiritual formation towards Christ-likeness; while making disciples is investing your time, energy and resources in someone else's spiritual formation towards Christ-likeness.

My prayer is that you have gained a clearer picture of the Bible, and understand what it means to truly follow Jesus. I pray and challenge you to find someone else that you can begin taking through this book.

I pray that through your faithfulness to make disciples, the Lord adds to your numbers those who are walking with Jesus. And, I pray this would result in praise to God (Acts 2:47).

**"MAY THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST,
THE LOVE OF GOD AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT BE WITH YOU ALL"**

2 Corinthians 13:14

Darrick Smith

⁶ Vanderstelt Jeff, *Saturate*. Crossway: Wheaton Illinois 2015 (page 85).

