

UNDERSTANDING DISCIPLESHIP

A Comprehensive Biblical Teaching and Spiritual
Formation Guide

Foundational Scripture: Matthew 28:18–20

Supporting Scriptures: Luke 9:23–24; John 8:31–32; John 13:34–35; John 15:1–8; Acts 2:42–47;
Romans 12:1–2; Ephesians 4:11–16; 2 Timothy 2:2.

Central Teaching Principle

Salvation brings us into relationship with Jesus Christ. Discipleship teaches us how to follow Him, become like Him, obey His Word, and participate in His Kingdom assignment.

STUDY GUIDE

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Scripture quotations marked KJV are from the King James Version. Additional passages are referenced throughout the teaching for study and reflection.

LESSON 1: THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF DISCIPLESHIP

1.1 What Is Discipleship?

Discipleship is the intentional, lifelong process of following Jesus Christ, learning His teachings, submitting to His authority, being transformed into His likeness, and living in obedience to His Word through the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is not merely attending church, participating in religious activities, acquiring biblical knowledge, or identifying oneself as a Christian.

Biblical discipleship involves an inward transformation that produces an outward demonstration of the life and character of Jesus Christ.

A disciple does not simply know about Christ. A disciple is learning to live under the Lordship of Christ.

In the New Testament, the Greek word translated *disciple* is **mathētēs (μαθητής)**, meaning a learner, student, or follower.

A disciple in the biblical sense was more than a person receiving information. The disciple attached himself or herself to a teacher, learned that teacher's instruction, observed the teacher's example, and increasingly adopted the teacher's way of life.

Jesus called individuals not only to hear His teachings but to follow His person, embrace His ways, and continue His mission.

Matthew 4:19 (KJV)

"And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Notice the three dimensions of this invitation:

- **"Follow me" — Relationship and surrender.** Jesus called them to attach themselves to Him.
- **"I will make you" — Transformation and development.** Jesus assumed responsibility for shaping those who followed Him.
- **"Fishers of men" — Purpose and mission.** Their transformation would prepare them to participate in bringing others to God.

Foundational principle: Discipleship is not merely about what we learn from Jesus. It is about who we become through our relationship with Jesus and what we are subsequently commissioned to do.

1.2 Discipleship Was Always Part of God's Intention

God's intention has never been limited to gathering people who acknowledge His existence. His purpose is to form a people who know Him, reflect His character, walk in His ways, and demonstrate His will in the earth.

Genesis 1:26–28 reveals humanity's original calling to bear God's image and exercise responsible stewardship over creation. Although sin distorted humanity's relationship with God, redemption through Jesus Christ begins the restoration of our relationship with Him and the renewal of our lives.

Romans 8:29 teaches that God's purpose includes conforming believers to the image of His Son. **2**

Corinthians 3:18 explains that believers are progressively transformed into the image of Christ through the work of the Spirit.

Therefore, discipleship is not simply behavioral improvement. It is spiritual formation according to the image of Jesus Christ.

1.3 The Difference Between Being a Believer and Growing as a Disciple

The New Testament connects saving faith with following Jesus, while also acknowledging that believers grow at different rates in their maturity and obedience.

A person may genuinely believe in Jesus while remaining spiritually immature and needing further instruction, correction, and development.

1 Corinthians 3:1–3 describes believers whom Paul addressed as spiritual infants because jealousy and division continued to characterize their conduct. **Hebrews 5:12–14** warns against remaining spiritually immature when growth should have occurred.

Spiritual immaturity is not the intended permanent condition of the Christian life.

Receiving salvation	Growing in discipleship
Reconciliation with God through Christ	Increasing conformity to Christ
Receiving God's grace through faith	Learning to live in response to that grace
Entering a new relationship with God	Developing maturity within that relationship
Beginning the Christian journey	Continuing the Christian journey
Becoming a new creation in Christ	Learning to walk according to that new identity

Ephesians 2:8–10 provides the proper order: believers are saved by grace through faith, not by their works, and are subsequently created in Christ Jesus for good works.

We do not practice discipleship to purchase salvation. We follow Jesus because His grace has brought us into a new life.

Teaching emphasis: Salvation is a gift received by grace. Discipleship is the ongoing response of faith, love, and obedience to that grace.

LESSON 2: THE GREAT COMMISSION – CHRIST'S COMMAND TO MAKE DISCIPLES

2.1 Understanding Matthew 28:18–20

After His resurrection, Jesus gave His followers a commission that established the continuing mission of His Church.

Matthew 28:18–20 (KJV)

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

This passage contains four major principles concerning discipleship.

Principle One: Discipleship Operates Under the Authority of Jesus Christ

Jesus begins by declaring that all authority has been given to Him. The mission of the Church is therefore established upon Christ's authority, not merely human ambition, religious tradition, or organizational influence.

True discipleship must remain Christ-centered. Church leaders, pastors, teachers, and mentors are entrusted with responsibility to serve Christ and His people, but they do not replace Christ as Lord.

Colossians 1:18 identifies Jesus as the head of the Church.

Application: Every discipleship ministry must direct people toward deeper dependence upon Jesus Christ, not unhealthy dependence upon a particular leader.

Principle Two: The Church Is Commanded to Make Disciples

In Matthew 28:19, the central command in the Greek text is commonly translated “**make disciples.**” This is important because evangelism and discipleship are related but not identical responsibilities.

Evangelism announces the gospel and invites people to respond to Jesus Christ. Discipleship teaches those who respond to follow Him faithfully.

The Great Commission includes the proclamation of the gospel, baptism, instruction, and the development of obedient followers of Christ.

A church must therefore consider not only how many people hear the gospel but also how people are being equipped to live according to it.

Principle Three: Baptism Identifies Believers With Christ

Jesus connects disciple-making with baptism. Baptism is an important act of obedience associated with repentance, faith, identification with Christ, and inclusion in the visible community of believers.

Romans 6:3–4 connects baptism with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the believer's newness of life. **Acts 2:38–41** demonstrates the early Church's proclamation of repentance and its practice of baptism among those who received the apostolic message.

Baptism is not meant to be an isolated ceremony without continuing spiritual growth. It belongs within the larger journey of following Jesus.

Principle Four: Disciples Must Be Taught to Obey

Jesus did not simply command His followers to teach information. He instructed them to teach believers to **observe** everything He had commanded. The word *observe* communicates the responsibility to keep, practice, and obey His instructions.

Biblical discipleship therefore moves beyond knowledge acquisition into practical obedience.

James 1:22 (KJV)

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”

A person can possess extensive biblical information while failing to practice biblical truth. A healthy discipleship ministry must teach Scripture accurately and help believers apply its teachings to their conduct, relationships, priorities, decisions, and responsibilities.

2.2 The Continuing Presence of Jesus

The Great Commission concludes with Christ's promise to remain with His followers. Discipleship is not carried out in human strength alone.

Jesus remains present with His Church, and the Holy Spirit empowers believers for Christian living and witness. **Acts 1:8** teaches that believers receive power through the Holy Spirit to become witnesses of Christ.

The Church is called to make disciples, but only God can produce genuine spiritual life and lasting transformation.

LESSON 3: THE CALL TO FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST

3.1 Discipleship Begins With a Personal Response

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus called people into a relationship of following Him. Examples include:

- **Peter and Andrew — Matthew 4:18–20:** They responded to Jesus' call and left their fishing nets.
- **James and John — Matthew 4:21–22:** They left their boat and followed Him.
- **Matthew — Matthew 9:9:** He arose from his place of work and followed Christ.
- **Philip — John 1:43:** Jesus personally called him to follow.

These accounts demonstrate that following Christ involves a meaningful response to His invitation. Jesus' call required His followers to reorder their lives around His person and purposes.

Not every disciple is required to abandon a profession or physical residence. However, every believer is called to place Christ above competing claims to ultimate allegiance.

3.2 The Call Requires Surrender

Luke 9:23 (KJV)

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Jesus identifies three dimensions of following Him.

Deny Yourself. Self-denial means surrendering the claim that our personal desires, preferences, and ambitions should determine the direction of our lives apart from God. It involves yielding our will to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Self-denial does not mean denying our God-given worth, neglecting healthy responsibilities, or accepting mistreatment as a spiritual requirement. Rather, it means refusing to allow self-centered desires to govern our lives.

Take Up Your Cross Daily. In the first-century Roman world, the cross represented suffering, shame, and execution. Jesus' instruction communicates the seriousness of identifying with Him even when obedience involves sacrifice, rejection, or suffering. The word *daily* emphasizes that discipleship is not merely a one-time emotional commitment. It involves repeated choices to remain faithful to Christ.

Follow Me. To follow Christ means to continue walking according to His teaching and example. Following Jesus is not limited to moments of worship or corporate gatherings. It includes everyday life. **Galatians 2:20** describes the believer's life as one fundamentally shaped by union with Christ and faith in Him.

3.3 The Cost of Discipleship

Luke 14:25–33 contains one of Jesus' strongest teachings about the cost of following Him. Jesus speaks of placing loyalty to Him above family relationships, carrying the cross, and renouncing competing claims upon one's life.

In Luke 14:26, the language of *hating* one's family is understood in the context of the passage and the broader teaching of Scripture as a forceful expression of comparative allegiance. Jesus is demanding supreme loyalty, not commanding cruelty or abandonment of biblical responsibilities toward family.

Matthew 10:37 clarifies the principle: love for Christ must take priority even over one's closest earthly attachments.

Jesus illustrates the importance of considering this commitment through two examples:

1. A builder calculates whether sufficient resources exist to complete a tower.
2. A king considers the realities of battle before entering a conflict.

Both illustrations emphasize that following Jesus is a serious, intentional commitment.

Discipleship is free from the requirement to earn God's grace, but it is not free from the responsibility to follow Christ faithfully.

LESSON 4: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE DISCIPLE

The New Testament identifies recognizable characteristics that should increasingly develop in the lives of those who follow Jesus. These characteristics are not standards by which believers earn God's acceptance. They are expressions of authentic spiritual formation.

4.1 A Disciple Continues in the Word of God

John 8:31–32 (KJV)

*"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;
And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

The term *continue* emphasizes remaining, abiding, and persevering. A disciple does not treat Scripture as occasional inspiration but as an ongoing source of divine truth and instruction.

Continuing in the Word involves reading, studying, meditating upon, believing, and obeying Scripture.

Psalms 119:105 describes God's Word as a lamp to the feet and a light to the path. **2 Timothy 3:16–17** teaches that Scripture is profitable for doctrine, correction, reproof, and instruction in righteousness, equipping believers for good works.

Application: Consistent biblical instruction is essential because spiritual maturity requires our minds and behavior to be shaped by truth.

4.2 A Disciple Demonstrates Christlike Love

John 13:34–35 (KJV)

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

Jesus establishes love as a distinguishing mark of His followers. Biblical love involves more than affection or verbal expression. It is demonstrated through action, sacrifice, compassion, truthfulness, patience, forgiveness, and concern for others.

1 Corinthians 13:4–7 describes the conduct of genuine love. **1 John 3:18** calls believers to love through action and truth, rather than words alone.

Discipleship must therefore address how believers treat other people. Spiritual activity without Christlike love does not reflect the fullness of Christian maturity.

4.3 A Disciple Bears Spiritual Fruit

John 15:8 (KJV)

“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”

In John 15, Jesus describes Himself as the true vine and His followers as branches. Branches do not produce fruit independently of the vine. Likewise, believers cannot produce authentic Christlike character apart from their continuing relationship with Him.

John 15:4–5 emphasizes the necessity of abiding in Christ. Spiritual fruit is the visible evidence of inward spiritual life and growth.

Galatians 5:22–23 identifies the fruit of the Spirit:

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Longsuffering

- Gentleness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Meekness
- Temperance, or self-control

The fruit of the Spirit reflects the transforming work of the Holy Spirit within a believer's character.

A mature disciple is not identified merely by spiritual gifts, public visibility, ministry titles, or biblical vocabulary. Christlike character must accompany spiritual activity.

4.4 A Disciple Lives in Obedience to Christ

John 14:15 (KJV)

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Love for Christ and obedience to His Word belong together. Jesus teaches that obedience is an expression of genuine love for Him.

Luke 6:46 challenges those who call Jesus Lord while refusing to do what He says. Discipleship involves aligning our decisions and behavior with Scripture, including when obedience challenges personal preferences.

Obedience should arise from faith and love, rather than merely a desire to appear religious.

4.5 A Disciple Perseveres in Faith

Colossians 1:21–23 connects reconciliation in Christ with continuing in the faith. **Hebrews 12:1–3** encourages believers to run with perseverance while looking to Jesus.

Biblical discipleship includes remaining faithful through seasons of testing, opposition, correction, and difficulty. The presence of challenges does not automatically indicate that a believer is outside God's will.

Spiritual perseverance requires ongoing trust in His character, His promises, and His Word.

LESSON 5: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE INNER LIFE

5.1 Discipleship Begins Within

True discipleship addresses more than outward conduct. It involves the transformation of the mind, desires, motives, priorities, and patterns of life.

Romans 12:1–2 calls believers to present their bodies to God as living sacrifices and to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. Paul contrasts conformity to the world's patterns with transformation through renewed understanding.

The believer must learn to think according to divine truth rather than allowing cultural pressures, sinful habits, or unexamined desires to govern conduct.

This renewal affects how a person understands identity, relationships, responsibility, morality, forgiveness, stewardship, and purpose.

5.2 Sanctification and Discipleship

Sanctification refers to being set apart for God and progressively formed into holiness through His work in our lives. **1 Thessalonians 4:3** identifies sanctification as God's will for believers.

John 17:17 (KJV)

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

Jesus connects sanctification to divine truth. As believers grow in discipleship, the Word of God confronts areas of thought and behavior that are inconsistent with His character.

Through repentance, obedience, and the Holy Spirit's transforming work, believers increasingly learn to live according to God's will.

Sanctification is not a claim that Christians immediately achieve complete moral perfection. Instead, it is an ongoing work of God's grace that calls for a continuing response of faith and obedience.

Philippians 1:6 assures believers of God's continuing work. **Philippians 2:12–13** shows both the believer's responsibility to respond faithfully and God's power operating within the believer.

5.3 The Difference Between Conviction and Condemnation

During discipleship, God's Word may reveal sinful attitudes, harmful behavior, or areas requiring repentance. However, believers must understand the distinction between conviction and condemnation.

John 16:8 describes the Spirit's work in convicting the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. **Romans 8:1** declares that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Godly conviction directs a believer toward truth, repentance, and restoration. Destructive condemnation seeks to hold a person in shame, hopelessness, and spiritual paralysis.

1 John 1:9 affirms God's faithfulness to forgive and cleanse those who confess their sins.

The discipleship process must create an environment where biblical correction is accompanied by grace, truth, accountability, and the possibility of restoration.

LESSON 6: THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN DISCIPLESHIP

6.1 The Holy Spirit Is Essential to Spiritual Growth

Discipleship cannot be accomplished through human determination alone. Although believers must exercise discipline, spiritual growth ultimately depends upon God's grace and the Holy Spirit's activity.

John 14:26 teaches that the Holy Spirit instructs believers and brings Jesus' teachings to remembrance. **John 16:13** describes the Spirit's work in guiding believers into truth. **Romans 8:13–14** connects life by the Spirit with putting sinful deeds to death and being led by God.

The Holy Spirit enables believers to understand Scripture, resist sinful desires, develop Christlike character, and participate in God's purposes.

6.2 Walking in the Spirit

Galatians 5:16 (KJV)

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

Walking in the Spirit describes a continuing manner of life. It involves yielding to the Spirit's work and responding to the truth He communicates through Scripture.

Paul contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:19–23. The goal of Spirit-led discipleship is not merely to cultivate spiritual experiences but to produce obedient, fruitful followers of Christ.

6.3 Spiritual Gifts and Spiritual Maturity

The Holy Spirit also distributes gifts for the building up of the Church. **1 Corinthians 12:4–11** identifies a variety of spiritual gifts. **Romans 12:6–8** describes differing gifts that believers are to exercise according to grace.

However, the possession of a spiritual gift does not automatically demonstrate spiritual maturity. **1 Corinthians 13:1–3** emphasizes that even extraordinary spiritual activity is deficient without love.

This teaches that the development of character must never be separated from the development of spiritual function. A disciple should seek both to become more like Jesus and to serve others faithfully according to the grace God provides.

LESSON 7: THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES OF A GROWING DISCIPLE

Spiritual disciplines are intentional practices that create opportunities for believers to grow in communion with God and obedience to His Word.

They are not methods for earning salvation or forcing God to act. They are practices of faith through which believers cultivate attentiveness to God's truth and His presence.

7.1 Prayer – Developing Communion With God

Luke 11:1 records the disciples asking Jesus to teach them to pray. **Matthew 6:5–13** contains Jesus' instruction concerning prayer, including the model commonly called the Lord's Prayer.

Prayer is an essential dimension of the believer's relationship with God. Through prayer, believers express worship, thanksgiving, repentance, dependence, intercession, and their requests before the Father.

Philippians 4:6–7 instructs believers to present their requests to God with thanksgiving. **1 Thessalonians 5:17** calls believers to pray continually.

Consistent prayer helps disciples cultivate dependence upon God rather than self-sufficiency.

7.2 Bible Study – Developing Understanding

2 Timothy 2:15 calls believers to handle the word of truth correctly. **Acts 17:11** commends the Bereans for examining the Scriptures to evaluate the teachings they received.

A growing disciple must develop the ability to study biblical passages carefully. Healthy Bible study considers the literary context, historical setting, intended meaning, and application of Scripture.

Disciples should avoid selecting isolated verses merely to validate personal opinions. The goal of Bible study is to understand what God has revealed and respond faithfully.

7.3 Worship – Honoring God With the Whole Life

John 4:23–24 teaches that true worshipers worship the Father in spirit and truth. **Romans 12:1** connects worship to the offering of one's life to God.

Worship includes singing, thanksgiving, and corporate praise, but it extends into daily conduct and obedience. The disciple learns to honor God through words, actions, relationships, and stewardship.

7.4 Fasting – Practicing Spiritual Humility and Dependence

Matthew 6:16–18 provides Jesus' instruction concerning fasting. **Acts 13:2–3** records believers worshiping, fasting, and praying during a significant moment of ministry commissioning.

Biblical fasting often involves voluntarily abstaining from food for a defined period in association with prayer and devotion to God. Its purpose is not to manipulate divine power or establish spiritual superiority. It is a practice of humility, dependence, and focused devotion.

Fasting should be approached wisely, with appropriate consideration for a person's health and circumstances.

7.5 Fellowship — Growing With Other Believers

Hebrews 10:24–25 encourages believers to gather together and stimulate one another toward love and good works. **Acts 2:42** describes the early Church's devotion to apostolic teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer.

Christian discipleship is personal, but it is not intended to be isolated. Believers mature as they learn to worship, serve, pray, study, and practice love in community.

7.6 Stewardship — Managing What God Has Entrusted to Us

1 Peter 4:10 calls believers to serve one another as faithful stewards of God's varied grace. **1 Corinthians 4:2** identifies faithfulness as a requirement of stewardship.

Discipleship includes the responsible management of time, abilities, opportunities, relationships, financial resources, and spiritual gifts. Stewardship teaches the believer that life is entrusted by God and should be lived for His honor.

LESSON 8: JESUS CHRIST AS THE MODEL OF DISCIPLESHIP

8.1 Jesus Called His Disciples Into Relationship

Mark 3:13–15 describes Jesus appointing the twelve so that they might be with Him and be sent out to preach.

Notice the order: First, they were called **to be with Him**. Then, they would be commissioned **to serve**.

This reveals an important distinction between formation and function. Before discipleship becomes a public assignment, it must involve personal relationship and development.

Ministry activity is never a substitute for knowing Christ.

8.2 Jesus Modeled What He Taught

Jesus did not only communicate commandments. He demonstrated the life His disciples were to imitate.

John 13:3–17 records Jesus washing His disciples' feet. His actions confronted worldly assumptions about status, greatness, and authority.

John 13:14–15 shows that Jesus provided an example for His followers to imitate through humble service. Biblical discipleship requires instruction accompanied by example.

A spiritual leader cannot effectively teach humility while consistently operating through pride, domination, or self-exaltation.

8.3 Jesus Corrected and Developed His Disciples

The disciples did not begin their journey with complete spiritual understanding. Jesus taught, corrected, redirected, and developed them.

In **Mark 9:33–37**, He corrected their argument about who was greatest. In **Luke 9:51–56**, He rebuked James and John after they suggested calling down destructive judgment. In **Matthew 16:21–23**, He confronted Peter when Peter opposed the path Jesus had revealed.

These accounts show that discipleship involves receiving correction. However, correction must remain consistent with Christ's character and the teachings of Scripture.

Biblical spiritual leadership is not authorization for humiliation, intimidation, exploitation, or unquestioned obedience to human demands.

1 Peter 5:2–3 calls spiritual leaders to shepherd God's people willingly and by example, not through domineering conduct.

8.4 Jesus Entrusted His Disciples With Responsibility

Jesus eventually sent His disciples to participate in ministry. **Luke 9:1–6** describes Jesus giving the Twelve authority and sending them to proclaim the Kingdom of God. **Luke 10:1–20** records the sending of a larger group of disciples.

After their ministry assignments, they returned and reported their experiences. Jesus used instruction, participation, reflection, and correction to help develop His followers.

This provides a biblical model for ministry training:

Relationship → Instruction → Example → Practice → Multiplication

Jesus' ministry demonstrates that effective discipleship involves learning in relationship, observing faithful examples, practicing what is taught, and preparing others to continue the work.

LESSON 9: THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN MAKING DISCIPLES

9.1 The Church Is a Community of Spiritual Formation

The local church has an important responsibility in the development of believers. The Church is not merely a place where people attend services.

It is a community in which the gospel is proclaimed, believers are taught, spiritual gifts are exercised, relationships are formed, and the people of God are equipped for service.

Ephesians 4:11–13 explains that Christ gave various ministry leaders for the equipping of the saints, the work of ministry, and the building up of the body of Christ.

The goal is that believers grow toward unity in faith and knowledge of the Son of God, becoming mature in Christ.

9.2 Equipping Is Different From Entertaining

The purpose of biblical ministry extends beyond maintaining attendance or producing engaging gatherings. Teaching, preaching, pastoral care, and other ministry activities should contribute to the development of believers.

Ephesians 4:14–15 describes the intended result of maturity: believers become less vulnerable to deceptive teaching and increasingly grow in Christ through truth and love.

A healthy church should equip disciples to understand what they believe, explain biblical truth, identify false teaching, demonstrate godly character, and serve according to their gifts.

9.3 Discipleship Requires Biblical Community

Acts 2:42–47 provides a model of the early believing community. The early Church emphasized apostolic doctrine, fellowship, prayer, sharing, worship, and care for practical needs.

Their spiritual life was not confined to a weekly meeting. They participated in an ongoing community of faith.

Application for Believers International Ministries: A local ministry should provide clear opportunities for new believers to receive biblical instruction, participate in worship and fellowship, receive appropriate pastoral support, discover opportunities for service, and mature in their relationship with Christ.

LESSON 10: SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND DISCIPLESHIP RELATIONSHIPS

10.1 Why Accountability Matters

Spiritual accountability involves encouraging one another toward obedience, truthfulness, faithfulness, and maturity.

Proverbs 27:17 uses the image of iron sharpening iron to illustrate the refining influence of relationships.

Galatians 6:1–2 instructs spiritual believers to restore those overtaken in wrongdoing with gentleness and to bear one another's burdens.

Biblical accountability is restorative rather than punitive. Its objective is spiritual growth, not control.

10.2 The Importance of Spiritual Mentorship

2 Timothy 2:2 (KJV)

“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

Paul presents a model of transmitting sound teaching through trustworthy and capable believers. Paul instructs Timothy, and Timothy is to equip others who can teach still more people.

This passage provides a foundational principle of discipleship multiplication. Mature believers should help develop other believers who can eventually guide others in biblical truth.

The objective is not perpetual dependency upon one teacher. The objective is increasing maturity, faithfulness, and capacity to serve.

10.3 Healthy Spiritual Authority

Hebrews 13:17 acknowledges the responsibility of church leaders who care for souls. However, Scripture also establishes ethical standards for those entrusted with spiritual oversight.

Mark 10:42–45 teaches that Christian greatness is expressed through service rather than domination. **Acts 17:11** shows that believers may examine religious teaching against Scripture.

Healthy discipleship relationships should therefore be marked by biblical integrity, transparency, appropriate boundaries, mutual respect, and accountability.

No human leader possesses authority to require disobedience to God, conceal abuse, or demand personal loyalty that displaces devotion to Jesus Christ.

LESSON 11: DISCIPLESHIP AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

11.1 Jesus Proclaimed the Kingdom of God

Mark 1:14–15 records Jesus proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom and calling people to repent and believe. The Kingdom of God refers to God's reign and sovereign rule, decisively manifested in Jesus Christ.

Discipleship involves learning to live under that reign. It includes adopting the values, priorities, and ethical instruction of the King.

Matthew 6:33 calls believers to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. A Kingdom-centered disciple recognizes that following Jesus affects every area of life.

11.2 Discipleship Produces Kingdom Character

The Sermon on the Mount, recorded in **Matthew 5–7**, provides extensive instruction concerning the character and conduct of those who follow Jesus.

Its themes include humility, mercy, purity of heart, peacemaking, reconciliation, integrity, generosity, prayer, forgiveness, trust in God, and obedience.

Matthew 5:14–16 identifies Christ's followers as the light of the world and calls them to live so that their good works glorify the Father.

The disciple is therefore called to demonstrate Kingdom values in ordinary life. This includes conduct within the home, workplace, community, and Church.

11.3 Kingdom Authority Must Remain Submitted to Christ

Luke 10:19–20 describes Jesus granting authority in the context of a particular ministry assignment, while also redirecting His disciples' attention toward their relationship with God.

Authority in Christian discipleship must never become a pursuit of status, superiority, or personal power.

Matthew 20:25–28 teaches that those who lead among God's people must embrace service.

Kingdom authority is exercised under Christ's Lordship and according to His character. The mature disciple understands that spiritual responsibility must be accompanied by humility, love, truth, and faithful stewardship.

LESSON 12: DISCIPLESHIP IN EVERYDAY LIFE

12.1 Discipleship Must Be Demonstrated Beyond Church Gatherings

Christian discipleship is not limited to religious environments. Scripture calls believers to follow Jesus in every sphere of life.

Colossians 3:17 teaches believers to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, with thanksgiving to God. **Colossians 3:23–24** emphasizes faithful work offered to the Lord.

Our daily lives provide opportunities to demonstrate what we have learned.

12.2 Discipleship in Personal Conduct

A disciple increasingly seeks to practice honesty, sexual integrity, self-control, compassion, humility, and responsible decision-making.

Ephesians 4:22–32 instructs believers to put away former sinful patterns and embrace a renewed way of life. Paul specifically addresses truthful speech, anger, work, generosity, and forgiveness.

12.3 Discipleship in Relationships

Ephesians 4:32 calls believers to kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. **Romans 12:9–18** teaches sincere love, mutual honor, patience, hospitality, and the pursuit of peace.

Discipleship should affect how a believer speaks to family members, resolves disagreement, handles offenses, and treats those who cannot provide personal benefit.

12.4 Discipleship in the Workplace and Community

Titus 2:7–8 emphasizes integrity and sound conduct. **Micah 6:8** calls God's people to justice, mercy, and humility.

A disciple should endeavor to demonstrate ethical conduct, honesty, service, and concern for others. Christian witness is strengthened when professed beliefs are reflected in daily behavior.

LESSON 13: THE OBSTACLES TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Understanding discipleship also requires recognizing the issues that can hinder maturity.

13.1 Spiritual Immaturity

Hebrews 5:12–14 addresses believers who had not advanced in their understanding as they should have. Spiritual growth requires a willingness to receive teaching and develop discernment.

13.2 Worldliness and Competing Desires

1 John 2:15–17 warns against loving the world in ways that oppose devotion to God. **Romans 12:2** calls believers not to conform to the pattern of this age.

A disciple must learn to discern values and influences that compete with biblical truth.

13.3 Unforgiveness and Bitterness

Ephesians 4:31–32 instructs believers to reject bitterness and practice forgiveness. Unresolved resentment can damage relationships and obstruct healthy spiritual development.

Forgiveness does not require excusing harm, eliminating appropriate boundaries, or remaining in unsafe relationships. It involves responding to wrongdoing in ways consistent with Christ's teaching while still recognizing the importance of truth, accountability, and justice.

13.4 False Teaching

2 Timothy 4:3–4 warns that people may reject sound doctrine in favor of teachings that satisfy their own desires. **1 John 4:1** instructs believers to test spiritual claims.

Disciples need a solid scriptural foundation to recognize doctrinal error.

13.5 Discouragement and Spiritual Weariness

Galatians 6:9 encourages believers not to grow weary in doing good. **Hebrews 12:2–3** directs believers to consider Jesus when facing discouragement.

Maturity includes learning to trust God during seasons when spiritual growth feels slow or difficult.

13.6 Isolation

Hebrews 10:24–25 highlights the importance of gathering and encouraging one another.

Although believers may experience seasons of solitude, persistent isolation can remove valuable opportunities for support, instruction, correction, and encouragement. The Christian life was designed to include meaningful participation in the body of Christ.

LESSON 14: FROM DISCIPLE TO DISCIPLE-MAKER

14.1 Mature Disciples Help Others Grow

The Great Commission calls the Church to make disciples. This responsibility extends beyond pastors and teachers alone.

All believers may participate in the work of Christian witness, encouragement, service, and helping others grow according to their maturity and gifts.

2 Timothy 2:2 demonstrates that biblical teaching is meant to be entrusted to others who can continue teaching faithfully. **Colossians 1:28–29** identifies the goal of proclaiming Christ and teaching others so that they may be presented mature in Him.

14.2 Discipleship Is Designed to Multiply

Consider the biblical pattern:

1. **Jesus Christ** — The source, Lord, and model of discipleship.
2. **The First Disciples** — Called, taught, formed, and commissioned.
3. **Faithful Believers** — Receive and practice sound biblical teaching.
4. **Equipped Disciple-Makers** — Help others follow Jesus and grow in maturity.
5. **Continuing Generations of Disciples** — The gospel is proclaimed and the Church continues its mission.

This model is illustrated in **2 Timothy 2:2** and rooted in Jesus' commission in **Matthew 28:18–20**.

Discipleship multiplication is not simply about increasing numbers. It is about helping people become faithful followers of Jesus who can encourage and equip others.

14.3 The Responsibility of a Disciple-Maker

A spiritually mature believer who helps disciple others should strive to:

- Teach Scripture accurately and in context.
- Model integrity, humility, and Christlike love.

- Encourage personal prayer and independent engagement with Scripture.
- Help newer believers apply biblical principles.
- Provide appropriate encouragement and accountability.
- Recognize when pastoral or other specialized support is needed.
- Keep Jesus Christ, rather than personal influence, at the center.

1 Corinthians 11:1 records Paul's call for others to follow his example insofar as he followed Christ. The authority of a Christian example is always subordinate to Christ Himself.

LESSON 15: A PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY FOR BELIEVERS INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

The following model provides a structured framework for helping people move from an initial response to the gospel toward increasing spiritual maturity and participation in Christ's mission.

Phase	Focus	Core scriptures
01 – CONNECTION	Responding to the Gospel	Mark 1:15; Romans 10:9–13
02 – FOUNDATION	Establishing Biblical Understanding	Acts 2:42; Hebrews 6:1–2
03 – FORMATION	Developing Christlike Character	Romans 12:1–2; Galatians 5:22–23
04 – MATURITY	Growing in Wisdom and Obedience	Ephesians 4:13–15; Hebrews 5:14
05 – SERVICE	Using Gifts to Build Up Others	1 Peter 4:10; Romans 12:6–8
06 – MULTIPLICATION	Helping Others Follow Christ	Matthew 28:18–20; 2 Timothy 2:2

Phase One: Connection — Establishing the Relationship With Christ

Objective: Help individuals understand the gospel, respond to Jesus Christ, and begin their Christian journey.

Core instruction should include the nature of salvation, repentance, faith, grace, assurance in Christ, prayer, and baptism.

Primary Scriptures: John 3:16–17; Romans 3:23–26; Romans 10:9–13; Ephesians 2:8–10; Acts 2:38–41.

Phase Two: Foundation — Establishing Biblical Understanding

Objective: Help new believers develop foundational Christian beliefs and practices.

Recommended subjects include understanding the Bible, the nature of God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, prayer, worship, the Church, baptism, Christian identity, and the importance of fellowship.

Primary Scriptures: Acts 2:42; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Hebrews 6:1–2.

Phase Three: Formation — Developing Christlike Character

Objective: Help believers apply biblical teachings to their inner lives and daily conduct.

Subjects include renewing the mind, sanctification, the fruit of the Spirit, identity in Christ, forgiveness, emotional maturity, personal integrity, and developing spiritual disciplines.

Primary Scriptures: Romans 12:1–2; Ephesians 4:22–32; Galatians 5:16–25.

Phase Four: Maturity — Establishing Discernment and Responsibility

Objective: Develop believers who can study Scripture responsibly, exercise wisdom, maintain spiritual integrity, and respond faithfully to challenges.

Subjects include biblical interpretation, discernment, perseverance, spiritual accountability, godly decision-making, and servant leadership.

Primary Scriptures: Hebrews 5:12–14; Ephesians 4:13–15; James 1:5.

Phase Five: Service — Discovering and Exercising Spiritual Gifts

Objective: Help believers understand how God has equipped them to serve within the body of Christ and the broader community.

Subjects include gifts of the Spirit, the diversity of the body of Christ, Christian service, stewardship, ministry ethics, and serving with humility.

Primary Scriptures: Romans 12:3–8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–27; 1 Peter 4:10–11.

Phase Six: Multiplication — Developing Disciple-Makers

Objective: Equip mature and faithful believers to help others understand Scripture, follow Christ, and grow in spiritual maturity.

Subjects include sharing the gospel, mentoring, teaching foundational Christian doctrine, modeling godly conduct, facilitating small groups, and supporting newer believers.

Primary Scriptures: Matthew 28:18–20; 2 Timothy 2:2; Colossians 1:28–29.

Important: These phases describe areas of development, not fixed ranks of spirituality. Believers may grow in several areas simultaneously and should continue learning throughout their lives.

LESSON 16: THE EVIDENCE OF A GROWING DISCIPLE

How can a believer evaluate spiritual growth? Scripture directs attention toward increasing faithfulness, obedience, love, wisdom, and Christlike character.

Spiritual growth is not adequately measured by church attendance, religious titles, emotional experiences, or the number of biblical passages memorized. These may be associated with aspects of spiritual life, but none of them alone demonstrates maturity.

The more meaningful question is whether the life of Jesus is increasingly evident in the believer.

Area of growth	Biblical evidence	Scripture
Relationship with God	Increasing trust, prayer, and devotion	John 15:4–5
Biblical understanding	Growing knowledge and application of truth	2 Timothy 3:16–17
Obedience	Willingness to practice Jesus' teaching	John 14:15
Character	Increasing fruit of the Spirit	Galatians 5:22–23
Love	Compassion, service, forgiveness, and unity	John 13:34–35
Discernment	Ability to distinguish truth from error	Hebrews 5:14
Service	Faithfully using gifts to benefit others	1 Peter 4:10
Perseverance	Continuing in faith through difficulties	Hebrews 12:1–3
Multiplication	Helping others grow in Christ	2 Timothy 2:2

Spiritual Maturity Is Progressive

2 Peter 3:18 (KJV)

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Peter's instruction emphasizes continuing development. Spiritual growth requires time, consistency, repentance, instruction, and dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

Mature disciples should recognize their continuing need for God's grace rather than assume they have reached a state of complete spiritual independence.

LESSON 17: THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF DISCIPLESHIP

17.1 Becoming Like Jesus Christ

Romans 8:29 teaches that God's purpose includes conforming believers to the image of His Son.

The central goal of discipleship is not institutional loyalty, personal popularity, religious status, or the accumulation of spiritual information. The goal is increasing likeness to Jesus Christ.

17.2 Growing Into Spiritual Maturity

Ephesians 4:13 describes the Church growing toward maturity and the fullness of Christ.

Maturity includes sound doctrine, stable faith, genuine love, responsible conduct, and faithful service.

17.3 Living for the Glory of God

1 Corinthians 10:31 instructs believers to do all things for God's glory. A mature disciple understands that the Christian life is fundamentally oriented toward honoring the Lord.

17.4 Participating in Christ's Mission

Matthew 5:16 teaches that believers' good works should direct others toward glorifying the Father. **Acts 1:8** identifies the Church's responsibility to bear witness to Jesus Christ.

Discipleship is therefore both transformational and missional. God forms believers in Christlike character and sends them into the world as witnesses of His grace and truth.

LESSON 18: DISCUSSION AND SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

These questions can be used for classroom instruction, small-group discipleship, personal study, or ministry mentoring.

1. According to Matthew 4:19, what does following Jesus require, and what does Jesus promise to do in those who follow Him?
2. What is the relationship between salvation and discipleship according to Ephesians 2:8–10?
3. Why is making disciples central to the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20?
4. What does Jesus mean when He instructs His followers to deny themselves and take up their cross daily in Luke 9:23?
5. According to John 8:31–32, what relationship exists between continuing in God's Word and genuine discipleship?

6. Why does Jesus identify love as a distinguishing characteristic of His disciples in John 13:34–35?
 7. What spiritual fruit is becoming more evident in your life, and where do you recognize a need for further growth?
 8. How does the Holy Spirit help believers grow in obedience and maturity according to Romans 8 and Galatians 5?
 9. In what ways does biblical fellowship strengthen a disciple's spiritual development?
 10. What does 2 Timothy 2:2 teach about the responsibility to develop other disciples?
 11. What are the differences between healthy spiritual accountability and unhealthy spiritual control?
 12. How can you demonstrate Christlike character in your family, workplace, ministry, and community?
 13. What spiritual practices need greater consistency in your personal life?
 14. What obstacles may be hindering your spiritual growth?
 15. What practical steps can you take to become more intentional about following Jesus and helping others grow in Him?
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LESSON 19: PERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Use the following as a practical response exercise after completing the teaching.

My Next Steps in Discipleship

- ☐ Read and study Scripture consistently — **2 Timothy 3:16–17**
- ☐ Establish consistent personal prayer — **Luke 11:1**
- ☐ Participate in biblical fellowship — **Hebrews 10:24–25**
- ☐ Apply a specific teaching of Jesus to daily life — **James 1:22**
- ☐ Find an opportunity to serve someone — **1 Peter 4:10**
- ☐ Seek appropriate spiritual guidance and accountability — **Galatians 6:1–2**
- ☐ Share the gospel or encourage another believer — **Matthew 28:18–20**

Area where I want to grow spiritually:

One action I will take this week:

My personal prayer:

LESSON 20: CONCLUSION – THE LIFELONG CALL TO FOLLOW CHRIST

Discipleship is not an optional religious program reserved for a select group of Christians. It is central to the calling Jesus Christ places upon those who belong to Him.

Every believer is called to continue growing in grace, biblical understanding, obedience, love, holiness, and faithful service.

The purpose of discipleship is not simply to produce more knowledgeable church members. It is to cultivate men and women whose lives increasingly reflect the person, teachings, and character of Jesus Christ.

Throughout Scripture, we see that genuine discipleship involves relationship with Christ, surrender to His authority, instruction in His Word, transformation through the Holy Spirit, participation in the community of faith, and commitment to His mission.

The disciple learns to move beyond merely hearing the Word into practicing the Word. Beyond observing spiritual service into serving faithfully. Beyond depending exclusively upon the instruction of others into developing personal understanding and discernment through Scripture. Beyond personal growth alone into helping others follow Jesus Christ.

Discipleship is the lifelong journey of becoming more like the One we follow.

Final Scripture: Colossians 2:6–7 (KJV)

*“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:
Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”*

This passage provides a fitting conclusion to the teaching. Receiving Jesus Christ is the beginning of a transformed life. Walking in Him is the continuing responsibility of every disciple. Being rooted and built up in Him describes the development of stability and maturity.

Being established in the faith requires believers to remain grounded in sound biblical instruction. And thanksgiving reminds us that the entire journey is sustained by the grace and faithfulness of God.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ and for the privilege of being called His disciples.

We acknowledge that following Jesus requires more than a confession of faith. It calls us into a life of surrender, obedience, spiritual growth, and faithfulness to Your Word.

Teach us to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow Christ with sincere hearts.

Renew our minds through the truth of Scripture. Transform our character through the power of the Holy Spirit. Develop within us the fruit of righteousness, love, humility, patience, faithfulness, and self-control.

Deliver us from spiritual complacency, pride, deception, and every pattern that hinders our growth in Christ.

Give us hearts that are teachable, minds that are grounded in truth, and lives that reflect the character of Jesus.

Strengthen Believers International Ministries to become a community where disciples are nurtured, equipped, encouraged, and prepared to fulfill the Great Commission.

Raise up faithful believers who will teach sound doctrine, demonstrate godly character, serve with integrity, and help others grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

May our lives bring glory to Your name, and may everything we do remain submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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