

Discipleship Course: Class One

September 29, 2024

INTRODUCTION

The Importance of Discipleship

I am so thankful that you are here to learn and grow in your understanding and practice of Discipleship. I cannot emphasize enough how important Discipleship is for the health and growth of your Christian walk and the church as a whole.

But, I am not sure everyone sees it this way. In fact, I believe if I went around and asked everyday Christians what are the most vital practices of the church? They would probably say the following:

- Preaching
- Worship (Music/Singing)
- Ordinances
- Healthy Leadership
- Prayer
- Evangelism. Maybe?

These are all vital, for sure. But, I believe many would leave Discipleship off the list. But discipleship is so essential and so vital. Not only would I make sure it was on the list, but I would put three exclamation points after it, underline it three times, circle it, highlight it.

Why? Because Discipleship is the way we pour the Gospel grace of Jesus Christ into one another's lives, without which our growth would be stunted (and yes, I have biblical support for that statement which I will get into later).

So, I am glad you are here to grow with me in Discipleship.

Keys to the Class

1. Stay in your table group throughout the class.

Not a rule, but is a key that will help. You will study texts together, memorize Scripture together, encourage one another and pray for one another throughout the course. So, staying in your table groups will help you grow comfortable and grow depth in your relationships together.

2. Review your notes each week and work at Scripture memorization.

There will be no home work in this course, accept reviewing your notes (with a spirit of prayer) and memorizing three key Scriptures.

Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 1:28-29; Ephesians 4:15-16

3. Interact.

There will be times for table interaction and also when I am teaching the large group, please do not be bashful if you have a truth or insight you want to share or a question you have. This class is built for in class interaction and a lot of greater understanding and mutual encouragement results from interaction.

4. Food. Help with Food.

There is a sign up sheet to contribute food items. Talk to Laura if you want can contribute.

First Table Interaction

1. Introduce yourself
2. Share how long you have been coming to ITC
3. Share any experience (good or bad) that you have had with discipleship in your past
4. Share what you are hoping to gain from this course
5. Briefly pray for one another?

PART ONE: UNDERSTANDING DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship Confusion and Misconceptions

1. Discipleship is done exclusively via one-on-one relationships where you meet weekly
2. Discipleship is when an older, more mature believer meets with a young, less mature believer
3. Discipleship is when you hang out with another believer a lot doing the life on life thing
4. I don't have enough time for discipleship in my life
5. Discipleship is optional for the Christian
6. Discipleship is about a disciple becoming like me or me becoming like my discipler
7. In order to disciple, I must know how to solve every problem in someone's life
8. I have to be a spiritual giant and have a degree in bible or biblical counseling in order to competently disciple someone

9. I have to have a discipleship personality aura or uber outgoing in order to be an effective discipler
10. I need (and I hope this class will provide for me) the perfect Discipleship formula in order for me to effective at Discipleship

Where Is the Word, “Disciple,” in the Bible?

In the NT, the word, “disciple,” is first seen in:

Matthew 5:1

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. (ESV)

Where else?

- Jesus had disciples that he called to himself and who followed him: the twelve, the 72 (Luke 10:1, 17), 120 (Acts 1:15)
- But, chronologically, we learn that John the Baptist had disciples before Jesus
- Throughout the Gospels alone the term disciple is used 230 times, referring mostly, of course, to Jesus’ followers

Who were the disciples?

Its not hard to see throughout the Gospels that disciples where committed followers of Christ, who learned from and sought to obey his teachings and imitate his ways.

The word, “disciple,” is the Greek word, μαθητής/*mathetes*, and it simply means someone one who is a learner.

BDAG Definition:

1. one who engages in learning through instruction from another, pupil, apprentice
2. one who is rather constantly associated with someone who has a pedagogical reputation or a particular set of views, disciple, adherent

One important truth that stands out:

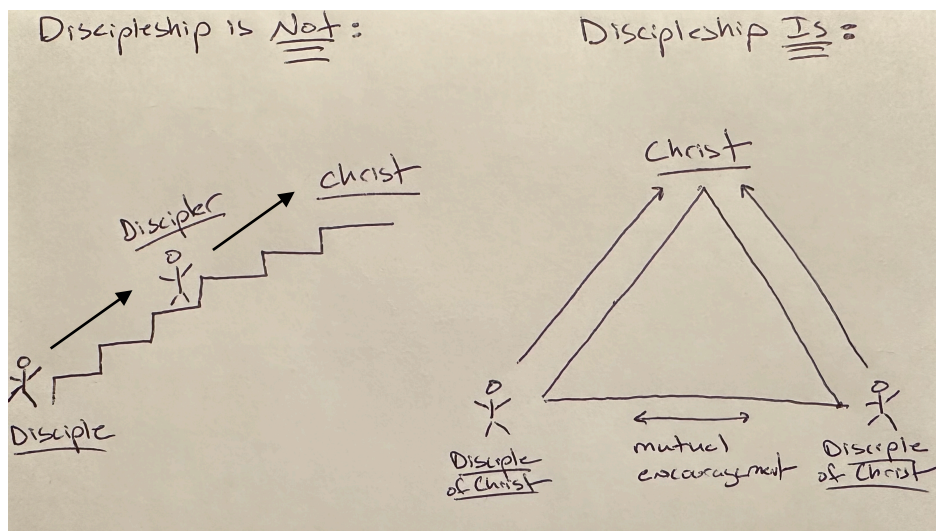
In all the uses of the word, disciple, in the NT, the orientation of the disciple in the church (so from the book of Acts on) is always to Christ.

Curiously missing is any reference to Peter’s disciples or Paul’s disciples or Bartholomew’s disciples. Christian disciples are always referred to as “disciples of Christ” or “the disciples”

Why is this?

- We are called our entire lives, as Christians, to take on the posture of an apprentice or student, learning from Christ
- We are learners of Christ before anyone
- Christ is still the great teacher
- Christ is head of the church, from whom all spiritual vitality flows, and no man can provide what Christ alone provides.

Illustration: Discipleship Is Not, Discussion Is...



In the first illustration, you see that the disciple feels he needs to go through the discipler in order to connect with Christ and grow with Christ. In this scenario, the discipler takes on two big of a role, almost a mediatorial role. But we know that Christ is our one Mediator (1 Tim 2:5). More accurately, illustration two shows how everyone one is first and foremost a disciple of Christ and is connected directly to Christ. But, as we mutually encourage one another in Christ, this continues to be a catalyst to know Christ and become more like Christ. Illustration is a more biblically accurate way of portraying Discipleship. We are disciples of Christ and then we come alongside one another to mutual encourage one another in Christ.

And yet, even though we are disciples of Christ, Christ calls us to make disciples/discipleship. Where do we see this?

The Call to Discipleship/Discipling/Disciple Making

A Table Study of Matthew 28:18-20

Matthew 28:18-20

[18] And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] 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, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (ESV)

Read the text and as a group discuss the following questions:

1. What is the primary thing Jesus is calling his disciples to do? And what does this mean?
2. Read the following texts and discuss how they relate to making disciples: Romans 10:13-17; Acts 6:7
3. Back to our main passage: What are the two activities we are to do with newly made disciples? And why are these activities so important?
4. Why are Jesus’ words in verse 18 important to the disciple making process?
5. Some have said that this command was made only to the disciples of Jesus’ day. How do we know, from this text, that this commission is for all Christians today?
6. Why do we need Jesus’s final words at the end of the passage?

Jesus called His first disciples to come and follow him in passages like Matthew 2:18-22. Here is where Jesus said, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.”

So our job, brothers and sisters, is to:

- Call people to the same thing Jesus called them to, to follow Christ. This is casting the net by preaching the Gospel. God then does the powerful work of converting them, by the power of the Gospel (Rom 1:16-17) into permanent followers or “disciples” of Christ.
- Then we are to baptize them. This is when they publicly profess to be disciples of Christ and we recognize them as Christ’s disciples. This is how we know who are disciples and who are in the church! In baptism, disciples are declaring their identity as Christ’s disciples.
- Then we teach them Christ’s ways. This is the life long process of helping Christ’s disciples grow in Christ, in obedience to his teachings and ways.

And throughout this entire process, Christ’s authority and presence is with us!!! How encouraging and amazing is that?!?

PREP FOR NEXT WEEK: prayerfully review your notes and start memorizing Matthew 28:18-20.