

# **DISCIPLESHIP**

**A Series of**

**Bible Studies**

**Presented at the**

**Plymouth Church of Christ**

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## LESSON ONE: FOLLOWING JESUS

*What is a disciple?*

- A disciple is a follower

When Jesus was alive he had many disciples or people who followed him. Sometimes there were thousands. Other times there was just a handful and still other times he was all alone.

In John 6 we have the story of Jesus feeding the 5000 people who had come out to hear him teach. After he feeds them he starts teaching them some pretty difficult things. Not everyone is happy with what Jesus has to say and we learn in **John 6:66-69** how the people responded.

*What was the difference between the crowd that left and the twelve disciples who stayed?*

The question for us is this – *Why do you follow Jesus?*

The way you answer that question may say a lot about how you view your relationship with Christ. Some follow Jesus because they don't want to go to hell while others follow Him because, as Peter said, Jesus is the source of true life! There is quite a bit of difference in those two reasons.

But this question isn't for anyone else...it is for you. As we go through these lessons on discipleship we will learn how to better follow Jesus. Following Jesus is not to be confused with memorizing a list or rules for rules sake but seeking out a real and authentic relationship with Jesus Christ.

The top two reasons we follow Jesus is Peter's reason for staying. **Read John 6:68-69 again.**

*What two reasons did Peter give for staying?*

If you are going to follow someone you have to know who they are – Jesus is the Christ, the "Holy One of God" and Jesus is teaching people how to follow Him because He "has the words of eternal life." That means Jesus is the solution to life's problem, death, and if we want to have life we must follow Him. We must be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Not everyone will believe that Jesus is Lord. Not everyone will choose to follow him. Still others will believe in him out of selfish or improper motives. It is important that we do more than just **believe in Jesus** but that we actually **follow Him**.

*What is the difference between believing in Jesus and actually following Him?*

- James 2:19 vs. Luke 9:23

Last, notice that Jesus says following Him is a daily duty. It is not limited to Sunday or to a specific building or location. It takes place on Sunday in an auditorium or Sunday night in a small group but it also happens the other six days of the week. Following Jesus is a part of who we are and it transforms us as we live the life Jesus calls us to live.

**Application:**

*Who are you really following?*

You might find the answer to that question based on whether or not there is anyone or anything in life you depend on more than God and Jesus Christ.

*How can you take up a cross this week in following Jesus Christ?*

*How might those in this group help you to do that?*

**Prayer time:** Take time to pray for one another as we all try to grow closer to God and seek to follow Jesus Christ with our all. If any specifics were mentioned in Application question #2 pray for those.

## ASSIGNMENT FOR LESSON TWO

### Memorize John 6:68

#### Monday:

- *What makes Jesus the perfect leader for us to follow today?*

#### Tuesday: Read Acts 11:26 and answer the following questions.

- *Who were called Christians in Antioch?*
- *What makes "Christian" a good name for a disciple of Jesus?*

#### Wednesday: Read Matthew 10:24-25 and 1 John 2:6. Then answer the following questions.

- *What is the goal of a disciple (student)?*
- *Can a person who has no intention of becoming "like Jesus" be his disciple? Why?*

#### Thursday Read John 6:66-69 and answer the following questions.

- *Why did the Twelve not go away from Jesus when other disciples left him?*
- *What caused some other "disciples" to leave Jesus?*

#### Friday: Read John 12:42-43 and James 2:13-14. Then answer the following question.

- *"Believer" sometimes means "disciple." Yet, some believers are not disciples. How can this be?*

#### Saturday: Read John 9:26-34 and answer the following questions.

- *What caused the previously blind man to be a disciple of Jesus?*
- *Why didn't those who were questioning this man about what happened to him become Jesus' disciples?*
- *What does this suggest is necessary if we are to be Jesus' disciples?*

## LESSON TWO: WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

Of the 295 times the word “disciple” is in the Bible all but two are in the Gospels & Acts.

### **What Does the Word Mean?**

In the Greek world of Jesus’ day, a *disciple* was one learning information or conduct from an “authority” (or personal teacher) on whom the disciple depended.

In the New Testament the word is almost always used to refer to the relationship of Jesus’ followers to their Master.

### **Read Mark 10:28 & Luke 9:23**

Carrying a cross is no easy task. It is not easy to carry a cross for a few minutes much less “daily”.

*What does Jesus mean when he talks about taking up our cross and following Him?*

*What is the cost of being a disciple?*

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ requires commitment and trust.

*How committed do you think most Christians are today? How committed are you?*

*What things seem to come as a challenge to following Jesus today?*

*How do we resist those things?*

We live in a world where comfort is king. We don’t like discomfort. We don’t like inconvenience. Crosses are both.

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ means committing ourselves to greater levels of service and personal commitment to the person of Jesus. We want him as our mentor, teacher, guide and Master. We want to become his apprentices, protégés, pupils, followers and servants. He is willing to take us under his wing - if we are willing (cf. **Matthew 23:37-38**).

*What does Jesus say is the alternative to being “under his wing”?*

*Who is the most serious disciple of Jesus Christ you have ever met? What made you think that about them?*

### **Read John 10:10 & John 14:6**

*Why do we follow Jesus?*

*How has Jesus given you a fuller life for following him?*

*How might it have gotten harder at times as well?*

The truth is, we are all following someone. It is essential that we pick the right leader. That leader is Jesus Christ not just because he was wise or because he was a better teacher than most. We follow Jesus because he is the source of life and the only way to eternal life.

**Application:**

*What qualifies Jesus as our leader? How does that inspire or remind you to follow Him?*

*In what ways are you experiencing "life to the full" as a direct result from your walk with Jesus?*

*How might you go about helping others receive a full life as well?*

*What might help people move beyond Christian "in name only" to actually being a Christ follower?*

## ASSIGNMENT FOR LESSON THREE

### Memorize Matthew 16:24

#### Monday:

Complete the self-evaluation (see below). This is not an exercise in feeling guilty but more of a thermometer. Overevaluating our lives on a constant basis can be unhealthy but so can underevaluating it.

#### Tuesday: Read Luke 6:46; Matthew 12:30 and Revelation 3:15-16.

- *What do inactive disciples do to the Lord's harvest?*
- *Why do those who fail to gather end up scattering?*
- *What makes a person or church "luke-warm"?*
- *How does the Lord view this condition?*

#### Wednesday: Read Matthew 8:18-22.

- *Why would Jesus mention he had no place to lay his head when someone offered to follow him?*
- *Why was he so "hard" on the man who wanted to bury his father before following Jesus?*
- *What can be "first" before following him?*

#### Thursday: Read Matthew 16:21-26.

- *What does taking up your cross mean?*
- *Why did Jesus rebuke Peter so severely on this occasion?*
- *Why must anyone who desires to follow Jesus take up a cross?*
- *How does "saving" your life cause you to "lose" it?*
- *How does "losing" your life cause you to "save" it?*

#### Friday: Read 1 John 3:16-17 & Ephesians 5:25-30.

- *How does one "lay down his life for his brother"?*
- *How does a husband "give himself up" for his wife?*
- *How does giving up selfishness equate to dying on a cross?*

#### Saturday: Read Mark 1:17; Acts 4:13 and 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 (note footnote in NIV).

- *What did Jesus promise to "make" the fishermen if they would follow him?*
- *How did the Jewish leaders realize Peter and John had been with Jesus?*
- *What did being with Jesus cause Peter and John to become?*
- *What happens when we behold the Lord's face?*
- *How are we transformed "from one degree of glory into another"?*

**Self-Evaluation:**

*This evaluation is private. But we urge each person to fill it out. When we honestly see where we are, we will have greater motivation and power to improve. Rate yourself on each of the following categories from 1 to 5 on the following scale: 1, very low; 2, some, but not much; 3, moderately so; 4, good, but can improve; 5, no improvement needed.*

Church Attendance

Giving

Worship Participation

Personal Holiness/Christ-likeness

Prayer Life

Personal Bible Study

Desire for Spiritual Growth

Teaching Others

Good Reputation

Salt & Light in the World

Attitudes

Behavior

Love for God

Love for Neighbor

Goodness

Self Control

Patience

Humility/Gentleness of Spirit

Mercy/Forgiveness

Serving Others

**Total Scores**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON THREE: THE CALL

Jesus' call to his followers is radical. He wants our complete, full allegiance. You can't just go half way.

**Consider these statements and the demands implicit in them:**

- *He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. --Matthew 12:30*
- *Therefore, come out from them and be separate. --2 Corinthians 6:17*
- *Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs - he wants to please his commanding officer. --2 Timothy 2:3-4*
- *Why do you call me, "Lord, Lord" and do not do what I say? --Luke 6:46*
- *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.--Matthew 6:33*

*Why is being a Christian a serious matter?*

*What influences do we face that can pull our convictions away from Christ?*

*How do we overcome those obstacles to following Jesus?*

**His Characteristic Invitation: "Come Follow Me!"**

Jesus gave this invitation to several people during his ministry – "Come and follow me"

- **Matthew 19:21**
- **Matthew 4:19-20**

*What did Jesus mean when he said "come follow me"?*

- It was more than an invitation to walk behind Jesus
- It was an invitation to come and learn to do the things Jesus was doing

*How did the people respond differently in those two scriptures?*

- Some left all and followed
- Others didn't want to leave anything and didn't follow

*Why do you think they responded differently?*

- How we respond to Christ's call says a lot about what is in our heart
- If we really love God it only makes sense we will obey that call
- If we are unwilling to follow Jesus, it speaks volumes about the state of our heart

**What does this mean for us today?**

*Even though we don't actually hear Jesus calling us by name today do you think we are still called to follow him today? Why?*

*How are we invited to follow Jesus today?*

- It may be an invitation on Sunday morning

- It may be a personal conviction to turn our lives around
- It may be we feel pulled to a particular ministry
- Jesus still calls

*The question for us then is this – How do we respond to that call?*

- God wants us to respond with our all (See again **Matthew 4:19-20**)

**There are two questions for us:**

*1 – Are we listening*

It is hard to respond to Christ's call to follow him if we aren't listening for it.

*2- Are we responding?*

There is also quite a difference between hearing the call of Christ and actually responding to it.

**Application:**

*How has this lesson helped you to understand that the call of Christ is more radical than filling a pew?*

*Are there areas in your life you really need to listen to God again about?*

*What has gotten in the way? Or What things in your life have become improper priorities that have too easily pushed God out of his place in your life? What are you willing to do with those things?*

## ASSIGNMENT FOR LESSON FOUR

### Memorize Galatians 2:20

#### Monday:

- Do you agree or disagree with the opening statements of this lesson: “*Jesus has not called us to be dabblers in religion. He gives a radical call....*”? Why?

#### Tuesday: Read Galatians 2:19-20 and Romans 6:1-4.

- *When does the Christian “die” with Christ?*
- *What happens with regard to sin when you die to the law?*
- *How does the one crucified with Christ then live?*
- *How does the Christian then live with regard to sin?*

#### Wednesday: Read Romans 6:5-7 & Colossians 3:1-3.

- *What follows our death with Christ?*
- *Can there be a resurrection with Christ without a death with Christ? Why?*
- *When we are raised with Christ, how are we to live?*

#### Thursday: Read Philippians 3:7-11.

- *What passionate desire did Paul have?*
- *How does this desire mark him as a disciple of Jesus?*
- *How did Paul indicate he would “attain to the resurrection of the dead”?*

#### Friday: Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-12.

*Note: “this treasure” is “the knowledge of the glory of God” (v. 6). It is this that we “reflect” or “behold” (3:18), and it is this, which makes the difference in our lives.*

- *Where does the Christian get the power to live the life of a disciple?*
- *Note that the victorious life is not always a “bed of roses.” In fact, there can be no victory without a battle.*
- *How does Paul describe the battle and the victory in this text?*
- *Why does Paul say he is being “given over to death”?*
- *How can the life of Jesus be revealed in your mortal body?*

#### Saturday: Read Luke 9:23-24 and John 12:23-28.

- *When is the disciple to “take up his cross”?*
- *Why did Jesus say the seed must die?*
- *How was Jesus glorified?*
- *How was the Father glorified in Jesus?*
- *How, in these texts, do we serve and follow Jesus?*

## LESSON FOUR: GROWTH THROUGH SUFFERING

One basic principle of the gospel is that the disciple must share the Master's suffering. As we discussed two weeks ago, the cross is not limited to the hill outside Jerusalem; it is to be carried by each disciple. Each one of us must learn to empty ourselves so that he may be filled with Christ. Just as our Lord gave up his glory to take up his cross, we must give up the "glory" we *claim* for ourselves and take up our cross. Then the Father will glorify us because we will be following in the steps of his Son.

### **Sharing in Christ's Sufferings:**

#### **Read Romans 8:17 & Hebrews 2:10**

*Probably none of us will be nailed to a cross during our lifetimes. So how do we share in the sufferings of Christ?*

*What does Paul say will happen if we share in Christ's sufferings?*

*What does Hebrews 2:10 say happened through Jesus' sufferings?*

*How might suffering bring about both things we read about in these two verses: bring glory to God and refine/perfect us?*

The problem with suffering is that it is not always obvious that either of those two things are happening. It takes a tremendous amount of faith to endure through suffering.

#### **Read James 5:10-11**

*How does James say we are to deal with suffering?*

*What does James say will ultimately result from suffering?*

- God's compassion and mercy will be made known

### **To Know Christ We Share His Suffering**

#### **Read Philippians 3:7-11**

*Paul says that everything he previously valued is nothing when compared with what?*

*What three things does Paul say he desires to know?*

It sounds like Paul is not just saying he wants to **know about** Christ's sufferings. He says he wants to share in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. *What is the difference?*

### **The Humility of Christ is Learned Through Suffering:**

#### **Read Philippians 2:8**

- *Why did the cross ever happening in the first place hinge on Christ being humble?*

Imagine if Jesus, the Son of God, had been arrogant...would we have had any hope for his sacrifice for our sins? Of course not!

*Why isn't humility usually learned when things are running smoothly and everything seems to be "under control"?*

**Application:**

*What kind of suffering have you had to endure just because you are a Christian?*

*What kind of suffering have you had to endure due to your own bad decisions?*

*How do we learn the lessons of patience and humility when we suffer?*

*Why do some allow suffering to push them away from God when those moments have great potential to draw us closer?*

## ASSIGNMENT FOR LESSON FIVE

### Memorize 2 Corinthians 4:5

#### Monday:

- *Why is cross-bearing so much a part of the disciple's life?*
- *Can the church today be what God calls it to be without a more fervent commitment to cross bearing?*
- *How can we begin to make this more a part of our Christian walk?*

#### Tuesday: Read John 13:12-16; John 15:20 and Matthew 10:24-25.

Note: *Servant* in these texts can be translated *slave*.

- *Whose feet did Jesus wash?*
- *What did he say they called him?*
- *What terms did he use in referring to them?*
- *What do these terms suggest about the relationship of the disciples to Jesus?*

#### Wednesday: Read Luke 6:46-49.

- *If Jesus is my Lord, what should I do?*
- *What if I do not do this?*
- *What does this suggest about the relationship of the disciple to Jesus?*

#### Thursday: Read John 6:66-69.

- *Why did some disciples leave Jesus and not follow him any longer?*
- *Why did the Twelve not leave him?*
- *What confession did Peter make concerning the person of Jesus?*
- *What does this suggest about the relationship of the disciples to Jesus?*

#### Friday: Read 1 Corinthians 1:11-13; 1 Corinthians 4:6-7 and 2 Corinthians 4:4.

- *Why would some say they were of Paul, Cephas, or Apollos?*
- *To what extent can a disciple of Jesus follow a man?*
- *How does a true disciple of Jesus present himself when teaching someone else?*
- *What does this suggest about the relationship of the disciples to Jesus?*

#### Saturday: Read Acts 8:30-31; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 2 Timothy 2:2 and Hebrews 13:7-8.

- *When can (should) a disciple of Jesus listen to a human teacher?*
- *What faith or example in others are we to imitate?*
- *What does this suggest about the relationship of the disciple to Jesus?*

## LESSON FIVE: THE DISCIPLE AND HIS MASTER

*What does the word “Lord” mean?*

*What do we mean when we say “Jesus is Lord” or “Jesus is our Lord”?*

It is important that we, as Christians, know why Jesus is Lord. Jesus was called many things: Rabbi, teacher, Lord, Master. However, Jesus was not just any teacher. There were many teachers in Jesus’ day but Jesus was different than all the rest.

*What are some differences between Jesus and other teachers or Rabbis?*

- Other teachers aren’t raising the dead, healing the sick, or teaching with authority

Anyone can try to claim to be Lord but there are several things that support the fact that Jesus is the one and only Lord and that we are to follow Him.

### **Jesus’ Authority:**

#### **Authority in teaching - Read Mark 1:27**

When teachers in Jesus day taught about scripture they would read it and offer their interpretation of what they thought it meant. *How was Jesus’ teaching different?*

- Jesus didn’t talk about what things might mean...he taught exactly what God wanted and could speak exactly to what God was doing in the world.

*Why was Jesus’ able to teach like that?*

#### **Authority over the spiritual realm – again Mark 1:27**

*How does Jesus ability to command demons and them obey show us Jesus is Lord?*

If we have spiritual problems today, we need to take them to the one who has authority over the spiritual realm, Jesus Christ.

#### **Authority over the natural world - Read Matthew 8:23-27**

*Why does Jesus have authority over the natural world?*

- He created it all himself (John 1:3)

*Why did Jesus have these three types of authority?*

- Because he is the Son of God and God has given him all authority (**Matthew 29:18**)

#### **Authority over death – Read Rev 1:18**

*Why does Jesus have the right to hold the keys to death?*

*How does that give us hope?*

Because Jesus rose from the grave he has authority over death. This sets Jesus apart. How many other teachers have risen from the dead to prove their teachings are true and to make a way for us to have life? Jesus is the only one and he even prophesied that it was going to happen!

### **Our response**

#### **Jesus is to be worshipped – Read Matthew 28:9-10, 17**

One of the first reactions of Jesus' followers to his resurrection was worship.

*What is the difference between worshipping someone and respecting someone?*

*Why do you revere or respect Jesus?*

*Why do you worship Jesus? What draws you in and makes you excited about worshipping Jesus?*

#### **Jesus Is To Be Obeyed**

If Jesus is worthy of our worship and has authority from God then his teachings certainly to be obeyed. Jesus is not just a "good teacher" he is the Messiah and if we want to have a relationship with God we have to respond to Jesus and his teachings.

#### **Read Luke 6:46 & Matthew 7:21**

*Where do Christ's teachings come from?*

*Why is it important that we obey Christ's teachings?*

#### **Application:**

*Have you ever had doubts about Jesus' Lordship? What has encouraged you through those?*

*What would you say to a Christian who was experiencing doubts about their faith?*

How do you think for some Christians Jesus is Lord/Master in name only but not when it comes down to actually actions and attitudes? How do we make that right if we struggle with that?

## ASSIGNMENT FOR LESSON SIX

### Memorize John 13:35

#### Monday:

- *How does faith in who Jesus is lead us to accept his instruction about how to live?*
- *What does quibbling about Jesus' words suggest about our discipleship?*
- *How can you decide when to listen to a man giving religious teaching?*

#### Tuesday: Read Mark 10:35-40.

- *Of whom were James and John thinking: Themselves, Jesus, or others?*
- *How did they drink the cup Jesus drank?*
- *For whom is the honor of sitting at Jesus' left and right prepared?*

#### Wednesday: Read Mark 10:41-45.

- *Why were the other disciples indignant with James and John?*
- *How did Jesus say his disciples would be great?*
- *In this, whom were they following?*
- *How is this related to discipleship?*

#### Thursday: Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20.

- *Why are there many members in the one body?*
- *What would the body be like if all members were alike?*

#### Friday: Read Romans 14:1-4 and James 2:1-4.

- *What two kinds of judges are described in these texts?*
- *Why is each of these rebuked?*

#### Saturday: Read 1 John 4:7-12 and John 13:34-35.

- *Why is love important to God?*
- *Why should disciples of Jesus love one another?*
- *What does it show the world when Jesus' followers love each other?*

## LESSON SIX: THE DISCIPLE AND HIS FELLOWS

There is no such thing as a “Lone ranger Christian.”

*What does that phrase mean to you?*

*Why is it important Christians have each other?*

### **Members of Christ's Body:**

When we become a Christian we are added to Christ's body

### **Read 1 Corinthians 12:14-20 & Acts 2:47**

*Who does it say arranges us into the body of Christ?*

*How do we, as parts of Christ's body have different roles to play in the body?*

*What role do you think you play in the body of Christ?*

Since we are all members of the same body, we belong to Christ and to each other.

*Why then is it important to treat each other with love and grace?*

### **We Serve Each Other:**

One of the primary ways we are to see each other as Christians is servants.

**Read the following verses and mention ways these verses encourage the importance of service among Christians:**

- **Matthew 23:11-12**
- **Galatians 5:13**
- **Galatians 6:2**

### **Read Matthew 20:28 & 1 Corinthians 11:1**

*How do we follow Jesus' example in serving other Christians?*

*Are there things that make it hard to do that? (for example, a request from another Christian that demands more than you are willing to give.)*

*What do you do with those?*

*What happens when Christians take on the entitlement mentality...that means you exist to serve me?*

*Why is that attitude dangerous?*

*How do we combat it?*

**We are all Equal:**

People in the world love to compare themselves to others. Jesus talks about a man who does exactly that in **Luke 18:9-14**.

*Why is it easy to compare ourselves to the worst person we know and then claim moral superiority?*

*Who should we compare ourselves to?*

*What would the result actually be?*

In God's eyes we are all the same. Compared to God's holiness none of us wins out. We must be fair with one another, serve each other and not come into relationships with others for what we can get out of it but what we can give.

**Application:**

*What would happen if we all lived like that last statement?*

*What ways have you found to serve other Christians?*

*What has been the result when you do?*

*Who can you serve this week who is in need of help, encouragement, etc?*

## ASSIGNMENT FOR LESSON SEVEN

### Memorize Matthew 5:16

#### Monday:

- *How does loving one another show the world we are Jesus' disciples?*
- *Why is LORDING it over others the opposite of discipleship?*
- *What are some ways we judge one another?*

#### Tuesday: Read Matthew 5:14-16 and 2 Corinthians 4:6

- *How does letting your light shine bring glory to God?*
- *The Greek words you and your are plural in this text. What does this suggest about the "city set on the hill" that "cannot be hid" with reference to the church as a light in the world?*
- *Where does the church's/disciple's light originate?*

#### Wednesday: Read Philippians 2:1-4 and Colossians 3:12-14.

- *What negative qualities do Philippians 2:1-4 say we are to avoid?*
- *What qualities do Colossians 3:12-14 say we should have?*
- *How would these things affect the life of a congregation?*

#### Thursday: Read Ephesians 4:25-32.

*The theme of Ephesians is the church. How does this text suggest we are to be a church with integrity?*

#### Friday: Read 2 Peter 1:3-9.

- Verse 4 gives two great blessings: Escape from \_\_\_\_\_ And participation in \_\_\_\_\_
- *How would these blessings and growth in the Christian virtues of vv. 5-7 affect congregational life?*

#### Saturday: Read 1 Peter 2:2-3; 2 Peter 3:18 and Ephesians 5:8-10.

- *How is the new Christian (disciple) going to grow in the Lord?*
- *Why do we need to grow?*
- *How can you find out what pleases God?*

## LESSON SEVEN: A CHURCH OF DISCIPLES

The common thread amongst Christians is Jesus Christ. The church is more than a group of people who agree that Jesus is Lord. The church is a group of people who realize His Lordship and then follow Christ to a common goal.

*What is the difference between agreeing on Jesus' identity and actually following Jesus?*

The church is not just a group of Christ-believers. The church is a group of Christ-followers. There are things that we can do together that we just can't do on our own.

### **Read Matthew 5:13**

In Greek, the first word "You" is plural. Jesus is not saying individuals are the salt of the earth but that we, the church, are the salt of the earth.

*Have you ever just put a single grain of salt on your food? Why not?*

*What does Jesus mean when He says we as Christians are the salt of the earth?*

The question for us is this – *Are we still in the shaker or are we getting used, together?*

### **Read Matthew 5:14-16**

Again, Jesus is not just saying individual Christians are the light of the world... *Who or what is Jesus saying is the light of the world?*

*How is the church the light of the world?*

*How can we better carry that out together rather than as individuals?*

This raises another question...do the people near your group know you meet on Sunday nights and is there anyone who might benefit from being invited? There have been some really good developments on this in the last few weeks. Several groups have started having more visitors...another group put notes on the doors in the neighborhood. Still others invite their friends.

*How can your group be a light to those around you?*

*Do you think some Christians hide their light under a bowl? Why do we sometimes do that?*

*How do Christians give light to everyone around them?*

The truth is, the world needs the church to be the church. People in darkness can't find their way out. They need us to lovingly help them see what is true and what is not. That doesn't mean we have arrogance or hatred or anything unloving in us when we do so. It

also doesn't mean that the people we shine a light on have nothing to offer or don't have a clue. But the fact is, people outside of Christ need the life that only Christ can bring them and we have to be willing to shine our light and let our saltiness be known.

**Application:**

*How can your group turn the focus from in (yourselves) to out (others)?*

*What are some ways you are already doing that? Give thanks for that!*

*What are some things that can be done by groups of Christians that we would never be able to do on our own...without each other?*

*Who is someone you know who needs you to be salty? How can you make their life better?*

## ASSIGNMENT FOR LESSON EIGHT

### Memorize Matthew 11:28-30

#### Monday:

- *What would be the most attractive feature of a church of true disciples?*
- *What keeps the church of today from becoming a church of true disciples?*

#### Tuesday: Read John 20:24-31.

- *What caused Thomas to believe in Jesus?*
- *What causes us to believe today?*
- *How can one who believes without seeing be more blessed than Thomas?*

#### Wednesday: Read Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:2; Galatians 1:11-12.

- *Two of these passages say the church is to continue to teach. What is the source of its teachings?*
- *How did Paul receive the message he communicated to Timothy?*

#### Thursday: Read John 17:6-8, 14, 20 and Romans 10:17.

- *What message was communicated to the apostles?*
- *How is that message communicated to us?*
- *How does faith come for us?*

#### Friday: Read Ephesians 3:2-5; 1 Corinthians 14:37-38 and 2 Peter 1:12-16.

- *Why did Paul say he wrote his revelation down?*
- *What must the spiritual person acknowledge about what Paul wrote?*
- *Why did Peter say he wrote?*

#### Saturday: Read John 5:36-40 and 45-47.

- *What witnesses does Jesus claim to authenticate his ministry?*
- *How did Jesus say the Scriptures fit into the phalanx of witnesses?*
- *Why did the Jews (who studied the Scriptures diligently) not come to Jesus?*

## LESSON EIGHT: THE DISCIPLE AND THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus' first disciples had the blessing of actually living with Jesus. They walked with him, talked with him, learned from him and were led by him.

2000 years later we are still following Jesus even in his absence.

*How are we able to follow a man we have never met, whose voice we have never heard, who spoke a language most of us don't speak, and whose face we have never seen?*

- Bible study allows us to hear Jesus' teaching
- It allows us to follow in his steps
- It allows us to learn truth revealed from God

**Read each of these verses and mention something about the purpose of the Bible**

- John 17:17 – The Bible is God's Word & and it is truth
- Psalm 119:105 – God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. It guides us
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – The Bible is God's word, inspired and useful in our lives
- John 20:30-31 – These words are written that we may have life...

God's word exists to transform our lives by the truth and draw us into closer relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

*How have you experienced God's word transform or change your life?*

*How has God's Word/the Bible helped you grow closer to God?*

*When was a time in your life that the Bible helped give you guidance when things were tough?*

**We learn about Jesus through the Bible so we can teach others**

**Read Matthew 28:18-20**

These were Jesus' final instructions to them. *What did Jesus tell his disciples to do in his absence?*

**Read 2 Timothy 2:1-2**

*What did Paul tell Timothy to do?*

*Why did Paul tell Timothy to teach what he had learned (about the Gospel) to reliable men?*

*When someone teaches us about the Gospel...what should we do with that?*

- Pass it on by teaching others

*What does it say if we are unwilling to share the message that has transformed our lives?*

It can be intimidating to talk to someone about God. It is a very personal conversation. We need to pray that God would guide us and give us wisdom to have that conversation with someone when the time is right.

**Application:**

*What is your biggest fear when it comes to passing along your faith to others?*

*How might you be encouraged to move past that?*

*How often do you study the Bible outside of Sunday?*

*What benefit might you receive from studying it throughout the week (See the list of scriptures on the first page if you need to)?*

## ASSIGNMENT FOR LESSON NINE

### Memorize Luke 10:26

#### Monday:

- *Where can we go to learn from Jesus (cf. Matthew 11:28-30) today?*
- *Comment on the statement near the end of Lesson Seven: We must get into the written word of God if we want the Incarnate Word of God to get into us.*

#### Tuesday: Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

- *How were the ancient Israelite parents to communicate God's law to their children?*
- *What does this suggest about how God, our Father, wants to communicate his Word to us today?*

#### Wednesday: Read Psalm 1:1-6.

- *Where does the godly man go for his counsel?*
- *How does he learn to apply this to his life?*
- *What is the result of doing this?*

#### Thursday: Read Luke 10:25-37.

- *When the rich young ruler asked Jesus about eternal life, what question did Jesus ask him?*
- *How did Jesus make application of what the Scripture said to the practical matters of life?*
- *What does this suggest about how we are to come to understand our Lord's commands and teachings?*

#### Friday: Read Matthew 22:23-32.

- *What two things did Jesus say the Sadducee leaders did not know?*
- *What question did he ask them concerning the resurrection?*
- *Jesus' point about what God said about himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob hinged on the tense of the verb: am, not was. What does this suggest about how we are to read and study the Scriptures?*

#### Saturday: Read Matthew 11:28-30.

- *Why did Jesus say we are to learn from him?*

## LESSON NINE: HOW A DISCIPLE STUDIES THE BIBLE

How does a disciple of Jesus study the Bible? There is no one single, “right” answer to this question. Since people are different, they will study differently. In spite of all our different temperaments and interests, there are principles that will help us to see Jesus more clearly in our study of the Scriptures. Focusing on these principles will help us grow in our relationship with God as we get to know Him through His Word.

### **Principle #1: Seek Transformation**

#### **Read 2 Timothy 3:16**

*If all scripture is there to be a benefit to us, how do we get that benefit?*

- By reading it, understanding it, and applying it.

#### **Read Hebrews 4:12**

Bible study is more than just reading the words. The Bible is supposed to do something to us. *How have you experienced the Bible as a living, active thing that has impacted your life?*

Relationships take time. Having a relationship with God takes time in His Word. It is one more way we get to know Him.

*How often do you take time to read God’s Word?*

*What benefit have you found when you are able to read on a regular basis?*

The purpose of Bible study is not to just memorize facts. The purpose is to allow God’s truth to change us and fill us with the kind of life God wants for His people.

### **Principle #2: Be Consistent**

*How many of you have started reading your Bible like it was a sprint, only to fade out after a few days, weeks, or months?*

Bible study is not a sprint. It is a marathon. There is no end point at which you say you have mastered God’s Word and have no more need for it. A disciple cannot afford to start and stop in his pursuit of the Master.

*How can we study for quality rather than quantity?*

*How might that help us be consistent over the long haul?*

**Food example** - Think of how we feed the physical body. If we had to eat enough for a week at one sitting, we would not be very healthy. Is it any wonder that those who try to gain their week’s supply of spiritual sustenance in one dose are spiritually weak and

sickly? If we want to be spiritually healthy we must consume God's Word on a more regular basis than on just Sunday.

### **Read Deuteronomy 6:7**

*When does this verse say we are to be about studying God's Word?*

### **Principle #3: Be Meditative**

#### **Read Psalm 1:1-6**

*What does it mean to be meditative?*

- Think about what you read - it is diligent thought that seeks to understand and apply the word of God as we read it.

*What blessing comes from seriously considering God's Word on a regular basis?*

This will also involve prayer that will bring us nearer to God so that we might understand him.

### **Principle #4: Ask Questions**

As you study God's Word, ask yourself questions:

*Who?* Who is speaking? To whom? Of whom?

*What?* What is said? What did the speaker mean by it? What did his hearers understand (or misunderstand) him to mean?

*Why?* Why was it said? What in the context prompted this comment? *So what?* What difference does this make to me?

*How?* How does this relate to the rest of the Scripture? How can I apply this lesson?

The only way to apply scripture is to understand what it says. This takes investigation. Investigation requires we ask questions and find answers. Is there a promise to be received, a command to be obeyed, a warning to be remembered, advice to be cherished, a glory in which to rejoice, a principle to understand, or an example to follow or avoid?

The stories of the Bible are not just stories. They are the vehicles God uses to convey his truth to us. The Scripture offers a whole convoy of these vehicles. We understand his truth through the stories - but also through the commentary of the prophets and apostles.

### **Principle #5: Seek to Do God's Will**

This may be the most important principle of all. Without a genuine desire to follow Jesus, our study won't benefit our faith at all. This is because Bible study is not an end within itself; it is a means to the end of becoming more like Jesus.

### **Read Matthew 5:6**

Notice that he did not say hunger and thirst for *knowledge*. Our hunger must be for *righteousness* (or Christlikeness). Knowledge can help lead us to righteousness but knowledge all by itself is useless.

If our study is to bear much fruit, we must keep our eye focused sharply on the end: becoming like Jesus in doing God's will.

**Application:**

*When is the best time for you to read and study the Bible?*

*How much time can you carve out of each day to make it a priority?*

*Is there another Christian you know who could encourage you in your consistency in this?*

**Leaders: You may want to email this lesson to your group so they can continue to think about these five principles as they study on their own.**

## ASSIGNMENT FOR LESSON TEN

### Memorize Luke 11:1

#### Monday:

- *Do you agree that knowledge of the Scripture is not an end within itself but a means to an end?*
- *Why?*
- *What is the purpose for knowing the Scriptures?*

#### Tuesday: Read Luke 11:1-4 and Romans 8:26-27.

- *What was Jesus doing when the disciples asked him to teach them how to pray?*
- *Why would they ask him to teach them to pray?*
- *What limitation did Paul say we have in our prayers?*
- *How does God help us overcome this limitation?*
- *Does this cancel our need to be taught how to pray? Why?*

#### Wednesday: Read Matthew 6:9-10 and Matthew 26:39-44.

- *To whom is our prayer addressed?*
- *What is the significance of this address to God?*
- *What does "hallowed be your name" mean to you?*
- *Why did Jesus say to pray, "Your kingdom come"?*
- *What is the significance of praying "your will be done"?*

#### Thursday: Read Matthew 6:11 and Exodus 16:14-20.

- *Prayer for daily bread suggests what?*
- *Some of the Israelites did not follow Moses' instruction concerning keeping some of the manna for the next day.*
- *How does this illustrate the meaning of praying for daily bread?*
- *What does this prayer for daily bread suggest about our trust in God?*

#### Friday: Read Matthew 6:12, 14-15; Matthew 18:32-35 and Romans 6:1.

- *Why does Jesus teach us to pray for forgiveness "as we forgive others"?*
- *This suggests pointedly that prayer is to change us as well as to praise or petition God. How does prayer change us?*
- *Forgiveness of sins is not enough; we are also to pray what else about sin and evil? Why?*

#### Saturday: Read Matthew 6:13 (including foot. note) and Revelation 4:9-11.

- *The Lord's Prayer begins and ends focused where?*
- *Why does this prayer conclude with praise to God?*
- *What does this suggest the content of our prayers should be?*

## LESSON TEN: The Praying Disciple

Most of us have heard lessons on prayer before. This lesson will be a little different. It is different because we are studying what it means to follow Jesus Christ. How can our prayers reflect our desire to follow Jesus? That is the question this lesson is going to address.

### **Prayer is about a real relationship:**

It has already been mentioned that following Jesus is not about memorizing a list of rules for rules sake. It is about a relationship. Any good relationship requires conversation. Last week's lesson was about how a disciple studies the Bible. That is one half of our conversation with God. It is when God speaks and we listen.

*How is prayer like the other half of our conversation with God?*

Sometimes our prayers may feel like we are just going through motions. It is important to remember that we really are talking with God and He really does want to hear from us!

### **Read Matthew 6:5-8**

*How does Jesus emphasize the importance of our prayers being "real" or authentic?*

*What does Jesus say about those whose prayers aren't authentic?*

*What obstacles do you face to having an authentic prayer life?*

### **Finding Balance in our Prayer Life:**

#### **Read Matthew 6:9-15**

The Lord's Prayer is often thought of as a model prayer. That doesn't mean Jesus wanted his disciples to pray this word for word. Instead, Jesus was modeling for them and for us what praying to God can and should be like.

*What sorts of things does Jesus pray for in this prayer?*

*How does Jesus find balance between making requests, giving God praise, and prayers about how we are to live?*

While the whole prayer is directed to God there are two main emphases in this prayer. First are those things directed toward God in heaven. *What parts of this prayer are directed toward God?*

Second are the needs, concerns and practical living here on earth. *What parts of this prayer are about our need for God to impact us here and now?*

*How balanced are our prayers? Which things do we over emphasize and which do we under emphasize?*

The main point when it comes to prayer is that, like Jesus' prayers, our prayers are to be real, honest, and directed to our holy God in heaven. We don't have to hide anything. We don't have to cover anything up. We really can tell him what is really going on. Second, is that we are to have balance in our prayers. Prayers aren't all about ourselves. They are first about God.

**Application:**

*What has kept you from consistency in your prayers?*

*What might help you to become more real and authentic in your prayers?*

*Has anything kept you from having a balanced prayer life?*

*What prayer needs do you have tonight?*

## ASSIGNMENT FOR LESSON ELEVEN

### Memorize Ephesians 1:17

#### Monday:

- *What is the “center of gravity” of the Lord’s Prayer? Explain your reason for your answer.*
- *Why is it necessary that we be taught how to pray?*

#### Tuesday: Read Acts 4:23-3.

- *What were the circumstances of this prayer?*
- *What did the apostles and the church ask God to do in this prayer?*
- *How would we likely pray in similar circumstances?*

#### Wednesday: Read Ephesians 1:15-21.

- *Why did Paul say he always gave thanks for the Ephesian saints?*
- *What spiritual benefits did Paul ask God to give those saints?*
- *How is this prayer similar to or different from the prayers prayed in the church today?*

#### Thursday: Read Ephesians 3:14-19.

- *What spiritual power does Paul seek for the Ephesian brethren in this prayer?*
- *What does Paul pray about their relationship with Christ?*
- *What knowledge does Paul pray that they may have?*

#### Friday: Read Ephesians 3:20-21.

- *What powers does Paul attribute to God in this doxology?*
- *What glory does Paul pray God may have?*

#### Saturday: Read Ephesians 6:18-20 and Colossians 4:12.

- *How does Paul say we are to pray?*
- *What prayer request does he make for himself?*
- *What did Epaphras pray for the Colossian church?*
- *How does Paul characterize the earnestness of Epaphras’ prayer?*

## LESSON ELEVEN: EXAMPLES OF DISCIPLES PRAYING

One way we can learn to pray is by observing others pray. In fact, that is exactly how most of us learned to pray. Let's listen in on some of the early disciples in their prayers so we can learn about *what* to pray for as well as *how* we are to pray.

### **Prayers in Acts:**

There are 27 prayers mentioned in the book of Acts. The word prayer is used 34 times. Sometimes it just says they prayed and other times we learn exactly what was prayed.

*How does mentioning prayer 34 times in 28 chapters show how highly they thought of prayer in the early church?*

*If our lives were written in chapters, how often might prayer be mentioned?*

Many times these prayers are given at major turning points or during trials in people's lives. In Acts 4 Peter and John had healed a man. The high priest had them seized for questioning. After their bold response about the power of Jesus they are ordered to stop talking about Jesus (4:18), threatened them and released them (4:21). **Read Acts 4:23-31**

If there ever was a prayer in a time of great difficulty this was it. *What made this moment potentially frightening or difficult?*

- They had been threatened by the high priest

*Why do trials drive us to prayer?*

*What did they pray for at such an important time (See vs. 29-30)?*

They prayed for God to do exactly more of what got them in trouble just moments before. What is more, they praised God for using them as servants of the Lord!

*What does this prayer recognize about God and God's power?*

*How might our prayers recognize who God is and how powerful He is?*

This prayer recognizes that God is involved in the affairs of the world. God has a hand in what happens. Because of that we can have great boldness.

*Have you ever prayed for boldness? If so, why?*

*How did God respond to their prayer (vs. 31)?*

*Why do you think God did that?*

It is important that we recognize that without God in our lives we have nothing but emptiness. Prayer is an essential component of keeping God in the center of our lives, our thinking, our planning, and our purpose.

**Application:**

*What trials are you facing that need prayers?*

*What areas of your life do you face opposition and need God to give you boldness?*

*What are some prayers God has recently answered? How does that give you hope?*

**Spend time praying over these things and over any other prayer needs of the group.**

## ASSIGNMENT FOR LESSON TWELVE

### Memorize 1 John 2:15

#### Monday:

- *What was the focus of the prayers of the early disciples?*
- *How can the example of their prayers change the way we pray?*

#### Tuesday: Read John 17:13-19 and Matthew 6:33.

- *Why did Jesus say that he is not “of the world?”*
- *Jesus was sent into the world and sanctified himself. What does this mean?*
- *It is in the context of being in the world but not of the world that Jesus spoke of sanctifying his disciples by*
- *the truth. What is the significance of sanctification as it concerns our relationship to the world?*
- *Why does Jesus want his disciples to seek his kingdom first over worldly pursuits?*

#### Wednesday: Read 1 John 2:15-17; Luke 8:14 and 2 Timothy 2:4.

- *How does loving the world block out loving the Father?*
- *What will entanglement in “civilian pursuits” do to the soldier of the cross?*
- *What are the “thorns” that choke the word of God and keep it from being fruitful?*

#### Thursday: Read Philippians 3:17-21.

- *Paul contrasted himself with those whose god is their stomach. What essential difference did he stress?*
- *What political allegiance (citizenship) did Paul claim in this text?*
- *How could he also claim Roman citizenship (see Acts 22:25-28)?*

#### Friday: Read Romans 12:1-2 and 1 Peter 4:1-4.

- *How does the conduct of the disciple differ from that of people in the world?*
- *Why this difference?*

#### Saturday: Read Romans 12:9-16.

- *How do these verses show those in the church are to be different?*

## LESSON TWELVE: THE DISCIPLE AND THE WORLD

We have been learning about how to follow Christ in a world where that is not always the most popular thing to do. This lesson focuses on the world we live in and how God wants us to interact with the world in a Christ-like way.

### **In the World but Not of the World**

#### **Read John 17:13-19**

Jesus prayed this prayer before he was arrested and crucified. In this prayer he prayed for his disciples and for those who would come after them.

*What does Jesus say he is not praying for?*

*Why is it important that we are in the world?*

*What is the difference between being in the world and being of the world?*

- The word of is about possession. If you find the coat of your father, it is your father's coat. To be of the world is to belong to the world and be like the world.

*How, as a Christian, do we maintain a presence in the world without becoming like the world?*

*Why is that a very, very difficult thing to do?*

One of the biggest challenges of Christianity in America today is the temptation to buy into materialism over God. **Read 1 John 2:15-17**

*Are you tempted to do that? How?*

Jesus shows us that the only way to overcome that is by God's power. This is a very important point because our presence in the world is a big deal. 17:15 tells us that our very presence in the world makes us targets of Satan. So it is important we understand these verses, rely on God for help and be in prayer about how we live in this world.

#### **Read 17:17-19 again**

*What two "S" words does Jesus ask God to do for those who come after Jesus?*

- Sanctify
- Send

*What does the word "sanctify" mean?*

- It means to make clean and holy

Jesus wants us to remain sanctified in an unsanctified world.

*What do you think Jesus wants us to do when he says he is sending us, sending to do what?*

Jesus is teaching us that our place in this world is bring a sanctifying element into the world around us and for us to go and do what God has called us to do.

*How does living out our faith help sanctify the world (much like salt and light we have discussed before)?*

God wants you in the world. God wants you to be a change agent in the world to help bring people to Jesus Christ. Our sending may not be across the world. It might be next door. It might be right in our own home! The place of the Christian in the world is of extreme importance because God has a mission and a purpose for us all.

**Application:**

*Do you feel God has a purpose for your life, if so, what?*

*How are you living in a way that advances that purpose?*

*Where or to whom do you believe God is sending you?*

*What do you need to be sanctified from to keep your effectiveness in God's mission?*

## ASSIGNMENT FOR LESSON THIRTEEN

### Memorize 1 Corinthians 9:25

#### Monday:

- *How can the disciple of Jesus be in the world but not of the world?*
- *What happens to the disciple when he puts down roots in this world and feels at home here?*

#### Tuesday: Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 and 1 Corinthians 11:31-32.

- *Why is the disciple of Jesus, who is running the heavenly race, to be purposeful and disciplined in life?*
- *What happens to disciples who do not discipline themselves?*

#### Wednesday: Read Proverbs 1:1-3; Proverbs 5:11-12 and Proverbs 10:17.

- *Why did Solomon say he wrote the book of Proverbs?*
- *When one rejects discipline in life, what does he do at the end of life?*
- *When one walks a disciplined life, how does it impact others?*

#### Thursday: Read Hebrews 12:4-11.

- *Is God a doting Father who spoils his children? Why?*
- *When hardship comes into our lives, how are we to consider it?*
- *Why does God discipline his children?*
- *How does God discipline his children?*

#### Friday: Read 1 Timothy 4:7-8 and Titus 1:6-9.

- *How was Timothy to train himself?*
- *Why is this contrasted with "godless myths and old wives' tales"?*
- *Why does Paul say the elder is to be a disciplined man?*

#### Saturday: Read James 3:1-4 and James 3:13-18.

- *Bits and rudders provide guidance or discipline for horses and ships. What do we need to discipline?*
- *If we do not discipline our tongues, what spectacle do we present to others?*
- *What else needs to be disciplined besides our tongues?*

## LESSON THIRTEEN: DISCIPLINE AS DISCIPLES

*When you hear the word “discipline” what do you think of?*

- Many will think of punishment

*While discipline is often used to refer to punishment, the base meaning is training.*

Christian disciples are to be disciplined people.

### **Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27**

In their day winners of the race often received a crown of leaves. *What does Paul say we receive if we are disciplined enough to endure to the end?*

Next, Paul gives a picture of what it looks like to run the race of life without discipline.

*How does he describe those who run like that?*

In 1 Thessalonians 5 Paul discusses the ultimate end of the race of life, the second coming of Jesus Christ. In 1 Thess 5:8 Paul tells us that because we know Jesus is going to return we are to be self controlled.

*How do self-control and discipline go together?*

*How does knowing Jesus will return one day to take us home help us live lives of self-control and discipline?*

### **Read Romans 6:13**

*How does living a disciplined life help us better avoid sin and seek righteousness?*

If we are undisciplined, it is much easier to justify sin because we often feel very entitled to whatever we want. Discipline helps us remember that our choices are important and have an impact on ourselves and those around us.

Let us be people of discipline.

### **Application:**

*What areas of your life do you feel you lack discipline?*

*What practices or activities might help you to become more disciplined and face those issues?*

**Prayer:** Pray that we might live a disciplined life in the Lord and overcome the challenges that face us all.