

Christian Discipleship Guide



“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 alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.’” (Matthew 28:18-20)

17. Discipleship

There is an abundance of biblical materials in our world. Bibles, books, tapes, videos, tracts and the like are found in plentiful supply. If there is a missing ingredient in learning the Bible, it is the process of biblical discipleship, that is, a loving, caring, selfless Christian who is committed to teach another “All things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). Revival, evangelism, missions and **discipleship**, all energized by effectual, fervent prayer, done in a spirit of charity, are the lifeblood of the Church.

A disciple’s purpose is to become like his Master and to adhere strictly to the Master’s teaching and truth. All Christians are not disciples! Discipleship, like salvation, involves a conscious decision to follow the Savior whatever the cost. There are five primary ministerial goals that serve to fulfill the biblical command of what we call “The Great Commission.” They are as follows:

1. To evangelize the world (Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15).
2. To establish edifying churches (Acts 11:19-26).
3. To build individual disciples (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18).
4. To bring disciples and their churches to “Christ-likeness” (Romans 8:29; Galatians 4:19).
5. To bring glory to God (Isaiah 43:7; Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

Discipleship is the pivotal element between goals 1 & 2 and 4 & 5 (above). Although Christ certainly evangelized and established His Church, He did not build what we would call a “big” church during His ministry on earth. His goal was to leave disciples behind at His ascension that could do what He had done. Christ’s three-and-a-half-year ministry was primarily a discipleship ministry. In the establishment of New Testament churches, the Apostle Paul understood and taught this principle when he said: “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” (2 Timothy 2:2). Jesus said: “Teaching them to observe all things...” This is not primarily a pulpit process, but a personal, people process, one on one!

Discipleship is not ...	an activity	...	Discipleship is ...	an attitude
	a program	...		a philosophy
	a series of lessons	...		a way of life
	education only	...		edification / exhortation
	teaching only	...		your life as an example
	a handbook	...		heart-to-heart ministry
	a rapid formula	...		a long-lasting
				relationship

Personal Discipleship accomplishes many things, including the following:

1. It establishes the Christian in the foundational truths of biblical Christianity (1 Thessalonians 3:2).
2. It provides the new believer with a caring, comforting friend to help him or her through the difficulties of transformation (1 Thessalonians 3:2).
3. It affords the Christian additional spiritual protection through the counsel and prayer support of a mature Christian (1 Thessalonians 3:5).
4. It provides mutual accountability both to the disciple and disciple. The accountability factor affords both with motivation to grow in Christ and walk in faith (1 Thessalonians 3:6).
5. Discipleship provides fellowship. The Christian needs Christian friends. The discipler assumes the role and responsibilities of a friend and serves to introduce the disciple to others

in his fellowship
(1 Thessalonians 3:6).

6. It provides the Christian with encouragement. The disciple serves to motivate the Christian to higher levels of growth, dedication and commitment (1 Thessalonians 3:8).
7. It brings the Christian toward perfection or maturity in Christ, “And he gave some ... teachers; for the perfecting of the saints ...” (Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 3:10).
8. It most naturally leads to ministry rather than mere activity. Many Christians are in motion, few are in ministry. Discipleship exemplifies what Christianity is all about – people serving other people
(1 Thessalonians 3:12).
9. It provides the Christian with a living picture of what a Christian ought to be. The discipler becomes the disciple’s example (1 Thessalonians 3:12).
10. It provides godly counsel to the disciple. It divides the load of the counseling ministry among those in the local church body (1 Thessalonians 3:13).
11. Discipleship, therefore, in accomplishing all of these purposes, must bring forth glory to God

(1 Thessalonians 3:13).

Our discipleship investment is intended to bring forth a godly product. In fact, our ultimate goal is to bring glory to God. What should the final product look like? Our seven-fold goal for our disciples is to bring them to loyalty and obedience to Christ (Luke 14:26); submission and selflessness (Luke 14:26); focus and tenacity (Luke 14:27); priorities and perspective (Luke 14:33); reading, studying and meditation (John 8:31); charity (John 13:35; 2 Peter 1:4-8); and fruit bearing (John 15:8; John 15:15-16). Charity and fruit bearing are at the top rungs of what is known as the “ladder of Christian maturity.”

The Christian’s growth process should focus on the following principles found in 2 Peter 1:5-7: faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity. And, according to the apostle Peter, “For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:8).

Discipleship involves a number of things. The Lord Jesus Christ stated what some call “The Disciple’s Oath” in Luke 9:23, “... If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” This biblical commitment to discipleship involves at least the following five things:

1. Desire: “If any man ...”
2. Decision: “will come after me ...”
3. Denial: “let him deny himself ...”
4. Dedication: “take up his cross daily ...”
5. Determination: “and follow me.”

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...” (Matthew 28:20).

Questions:

1. What are the five primary ministerial goals of the local church?

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

2. Briefly describe what biblical discipleship is NOT.

3. List the seven-fold goal of biblical discipleship.

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

(6)

(7)

Additional Scripture Verses:

Luke 9:23; 2 Timothy 2:2.