

STEPS

TO BECOMING A

DISCIPLE-MAKING DISCIPLE



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DISCIPLE-MAKING DISCIPLE: FIRST STEPS.

The beginning of any new path in life starts with a decision. I will walk this way, and not that way. So it is with becoming a disciple-making disciple. We must decide that we want to learn this way of Jesus, and begin to walk in it.

Step 1:

I ask the Lord Jesus to teach me to be a disciple who can make another disciple.

This must become my heart's desire. I must pray this with sincerity. I must write this down on paper, and most of all in my heart. I must get serious that I will not stop praying this prayer until I know the Lord's favor has been granted to me, and I am living the new life of a discipler. I will pray this every day.

Step 2:

I look up and memorize the passages in Holy Scripture where Jesus tells me what a disciple looks like.

It is a surprise to some to discover that Jesus not only modeled this behavior in his earthly ministry, but he also explicitly taught about it. There are in fact six passages of scripture, and only six, where Jesus specifically says either "my disciple" or "my disciples" and then gives clarity to the meaning of the phrase as he uses it. Let Jesus be your teacher.

I recommend you begin with the three that are found in the Gospel of Luke. There we are told that the challenge of becoming a disciple of Jesus requires the surrender of our whole life into his hands. The place to look is Luke 14:26,27, and 33. This section is often referred to as "the cost of discipleship" passage.

There are three distinct teaching statements here, but they can all be summed up in the famous dictum of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."

These hard sayings of Jesus that Luke records for us are not for graduate level Christians. They are for anyone who says: "Jesus is Lord." This teaching is not the wrapping paper on a present, but the present itself. In effect our Lord says: "If you want to follow after me, your life becomes mine. You no longer are in control of it. It belongs to me. Nothing else comes before me. The will of my Father for you must become your will. For this to be so, you will experience it as death, but you will find that it leads to life."

Memorize these three scriptures and meditate on them often.

DISCIPLE-MAKING DISCIPLE: STEP 3.

I find someone who understands being a disciple of Jesus to help me put this into practice.

None of us can become a disciple of Jesus without the help of someone who already is one. Find that person. Men, find a man. Women, find a woman.

A disciple, by definition, is being taught by another. But the principle thing to grasp is not “taught” as in a classroom, or by a curriculum, but by a lived relationship with someone who is further down the road than you are. You must have someone to imitate if you are to learn the first steps. As the apostle said: “Imitate me as I imitate Christ.” This is the inner dynamic of all discipleship.

Let us discuss some of the characteristics of the disciple-making man or woman you need to find.

First, they are known to be serious in their desire to follow Jesus. Those who know them best are aware that they are not pretend Christians, or occasional Christians, but devoted to the Lord Jesus and his word. They have a demonstrable maturity, compared to you, in following the Lord Jesus.

Second, they are not confused by the question, “Would you be willing to disciple me?” They will know almost immediately what you are looking for, and will be able to prayerfully decide if they are to say “yes.”

Third, they are in an accountable relationship to their spouse, if married, and their home church. They are not lone rangers, and they are not looking for a relationship that satisfies their God given desires in any other way than God alone wills. They are not needing a relationship with you because they have none at home. Instead, they are able to help you because their home life is stable and holy. They do not function in opposition to a local body of believers, but are properly submitted in the midst of one.

Fourth, they do not have pamphlets and programs to give you. They know that the Word of God, guided by the Holy Spirit of God, is sufficient for the journey. They know that discipling another person is about a relationship of trust and openness lived before God, not about “getting a certificate.” It is about learning to live according to God’s will revealed in Holy Scripture.

And fifth, they have time for you. The depth of a discipling relationship can be absolutely charted by the amount of time spent together. Nothing less than one and a half to two hours a week will suffice for this journey. And even that will not lead to rapid growth. In the discipling journey, slow is good. Good fruit does not grow quickly! Disciple-making can not be rushed. It requires quality time. Lots of it.

DISCIPLE-MAKING DISCIPLE: STEP 4.

To become a disciple-making disciple like Jesus Christ expects us to be, requires that we get a new pair of trifocal glasses. We have to improve our vision.

Step 4: I Internalize that there are three things that must remain in the forefront of my mind and practice: What Jesus teaches in John chapters 8, 13, and 15 about his disciples. I must see everything through these three lenses.

First, John the Beloved tells us that our Lord said only one thing shows him that we are really his disciples. We abide in his word. This shows him that we are truly his disciples. If we do this we will know the truth. We will be free to do the Father's will. (John 8:31,32)

This is so clear that only the enemy of our souls could keep us from understanding it.

We are not to become an expert in anyone else's opinion. We are not to be devoted to someone else's ideas. We are not to become scholars of ancient languages. We are not to give lectures about the meaning of words. We are not to have friendly neighborhood bible studies. These are all good things in their proper place, but they are not what Jesus tells us will satisfy him that we are his disciples. We are to abide in the words of Jesus. They are to be graven on our hearts. They are to be on the tip of our tongues. They are to teach us how to know his voice in any and all circumstances. They are to bring us into intimate friendship with him. This alone shows that we are "truly [his] disciples."

Second, the quality of relationships between believers in the body of Christ is the witness that we belong to him. We love one another like he loves us. Nothing else shows that the way of Jesus is the way to truth and life. I can not be the disciple of the Lord and remain at odds with my believing spouse. I can not speak against my brother. I can not harbor deep resentments and unreconciled issues within my local church fellowship. The Risen Lord said we would be his witnesses, and he makes clear that the witness of our love for other believers is what he meant (John 13:34,35). Others are to know a follower of Jesus when they see how we love one another.

Third, the true disciple, the loving disciple, bears much fruit for the kingdom of God by bringing others along the path of discipleship. The call to "come and see" becomes the call to "follow me," which in time becomes "go and make." Nothing else will last for eternity, except another believing follower of the Lord Jesus. Nothing else we give our energy to will last. We must make other disciples if we are obedient ourselves. And the Lord does not expect a little fruit. We bear much fruit. This is so plainly taught by Jesus that, again, we must assume for a Christian to not know it, to not seek to do it, is the result of a deception from the enemy. (John 15;7,8)

Put on the trifocal glasses of these three passages, if you want to be a disciple-making disciple of the Lord Jesus.

DISCIPLE-MAKING DISCIPLE: STEP 5.

Assuming you have found someone to disciple you, and you have memorized the six scriptures in which Jesus gives us guidance for what we will look like when we become the disciples he desires, what comes next?

Step 5: I make a practical covenant with the person discipling me. I will spend quality time each day in the word of God, beginning with the gospels. It will be my personal appointment with the Lord. I will prayerfully open the scriptures in order to meet with him. I will be accountable to my discipler for this appointment with Lord. I will develop with him or her a plan to gradually become grounded in the whole counsel of God in the Old and New Testaments.

When I started my journey to ordination, on the first day of my classes at seminary, the professor in my first class said this: “More people praise the scriptures than read them. More people read the scriptures than understand them. More people understand the scriptures than follow there teachings.” Forty-nine years later I can attest to the truth of that teaching moment. The church is full of men who do not follow the teachings that God has revealed to us in his Holy Word. Many do not understand, even if they read. Many do not read at all.

Beginning regularly to come into the presence of the Lord with the Bible open on our laps, or on our table, is the bedrock new habit for someone wanting to learn to be a disciple of Jesus who can make another disciple. This “hour” (yes, it should grow over time to be this, at least) must become sacred. We do not miss it. We make plans to keep it even in difficult circumstances. We grow to never miss it because we so often meet the Lord. He waits to meet us, and we do not want to miss him. He so often speaks to us through his word written.

Most of those I have known who are serious about this discipling journey keep some kind of notebook or journal by which they keep a record of these times with the Lord. They have found that making notes about what they have read, or pondered, or “heard” during their times with the Lord, helps to keep them on track. It gives them a way to remember the Lord’s mercy when times are difficult. It shows them their progress with the Lord. It gives them a way to share with the one who is discipling them.

Let us end here. We must be willing to be held accountable to this covenant. If we will not seek the Lord when and where he may be found, we are wasting our time and that of our discipling leader. If we cannot give this time to the Lord Jesus, most days if not all, then we must ask, “Are we really wanting what he has to offer to us?”

DISCIPLE-MAKING DISCIPLE: STEP 6.

Step 6: The ministry of the discipling disciple is to be honest and transparent before the Lord Jesus, in the company of the one being disciplined. You are not better, you are a brother, you are a servant.

The person discipling another is most of all showing the one being disciplined what a life looks like lived in the light of the scriptures. Not a perfect life, but one struggling honestly to allow the Spirit of God to “conform them to Christ.”

The disciple-making disciple is equally as accountable to the Lord as is the one being disciplined. Both are accountable under the word of God.

In a very short time, the two will find they are not any longer “one up, one down,” but two on the road side by side. Either may “speak the truth of the Lord” to the other, at any moment. They are listening with the ears of their hearts for the glorious sweet voice of Jesus.

What happens when you meet? The ordinary things of the day, the events of the week, are discussed prayerfully. What does the Word of the Lord have to say about this? What is Jesus speaking to you? Have you heard his voice this week? What has he revealed to your heart?

Then the truth God has revealed in Jesus is brought to bear upon the subjects that you have talked about. It is turned into prayer. That is it. Everything is turned toward the Lord Jesus. His word. His will. His love.

The meeting will not be a burden. It will be a joy! It will be a time of expectation. “Come Lord Jesus” will be the cry of the heart of those who meet.

DISCIPLE-MAKING DISCIPLE: STEP 7.

Step 7: You are praying to be reproduced. You are not content until the one being disciplined has begun to disciple another. They take up the ministry of being a disciple-making disciple along with you. You want them to soar, not remain dependent on you.

Perhaps the biggest difference between someone who says he is following Jesus, and a disciple-making disciple following Jesus, is that the latter is desirous of becoming part of the spread of the kingdom of God. He or she wants to be actively ensuring that the love of the Savior that has come to them goes to others. They know that means another person following Jesus. Nothing else will satisfy. They have heard the Lord Jesus teaching plainly, that if they “bear much fruit” they will “prove to be his disciples” (John 15:8). They do not want to be tested by the Lord and found to not be proved.

Many at first think this means becoming an evangelist, but this is not so. It only means intentionally finding someone to walk with on the road of discipleship, and then another, and another. This is a universal calling for the Christian. It is the same for a plumber or a school teacher. It is the same for a clergyman or a congressman. It is not about the occupation, but the vocation: the call of all believers. And this ministry path, once begun, is for life. It does not have a season.

With one person it may start when you introduce them to a life changing relationship with the Lord Jesus. With another it may be clarifying the gospel they already say they believe. With another it may be helping with the basic nurture needed after conversion, which if well done will last them a lifetime. With another it may be helping them find the equipping they need to fulfill their calling. With another it may mean helping them find the arena for their particular ministry. But with all, it will mean helping them become a reproducing disciple. There is a goal in discipling. It is that they faithfully reproduce.

The constant prayer of your heart for the one being disciplined is for them to begin to disciple another.

Why? Because a disciple who is not making other disciples is not yet fully disciplined. It is that simple.

5 OBSTACLES TO BECOMING A DISCIPLE-MAKER.

We have now gone through the initial seven steps we believe to be necessary to becoming a disciple-making disciple, and still some of you who read this are stuck. Do not worry, the same thing was true of the first followers of Jesus! Most of them were very slow to learn, too. Here are five of the most common obstacles to beginning.

Fear of rejection. I am told that the Holy scriptures have this phrase, or a version of it 365 times: “Be not afraid.” Once for every day of the year. It must be a common problem! Ask the Holy Spirit to come to you and embolden you. You will not find a discipling teacher until you ask. No true Christian woman or man will be upset if you ask them to help you learn to be a disciple-making disciple. They may point you to someone else, but they will not have a negative response to your quest.

I don't know who to ask. There is a clear picture hiding in plain view in the pages of the Scriptures that will break you out of this concern. Who do you already know, like, or admire? Who is already a part of your life that you would like to be with on the disciple-making journey? These are people with whom you have some affinity already. They should be the first you approach. Andrew went to his brother. Philip went to Nathaniel. Paul and Priscilla and Aquila had a bond of affinity because they shared an occupation. Do not ask a stranger. Ask someone whom you believe you have some affinity with already. Almost always God has someone already in your life, in your field of acquaintance, who will be right for you.

What do we talk about when we first meet? As we pointed out earlier, there are a small number of scriptures that must guide the disciple-making journey, if it is to be in obedience to Jesus' teaching. These are: Luke 14:26,27,33; John 8:31-32; 13:34-35; 15:7-8. Let discussion of these scriptures be at the center of your time together until you are sure it is time to move on without ever forgetting them. Any serious disciple-making disciple must memorize them. Also Matthew 4:19; 6:33; and 28:19. These twelve verses must be read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested. They will be a reference to your entire journey.

What structure do we follow? We have learned through many years that the key to discipling another person is time with them, and honesty before the Lord. There is not a rigid structure. We pray to begin and end our time together. We speak of the things the Lord is teaching us from our daily time with him in scripture. We bring our struggles and difficulties into the light. We laugh. We encourage. We build one another up.

Learning this is difficult. No one sets out on this path and immediately finds it easy. It requires tenacity and a willingness to start again when we fall. We have been told repeatedly by the Lord that this way is narrow and hard, but he promises us that it leads to life. Ask him to help you. Constantly flee to him for help. He will come to your side.

LAST THOUGHTS: IF I WAS STARTING OVER AGAIN.

I became deeply aware of the call to become a disciple-making man years after I was converted. That “second call” occurred on February 1st, 1988, and I have been trying to learn to walk in this disciple-making path since that day. When I first surrendered my life to the Lord Jesus in 1968 it was with the intention of never turning back, but there was so much I did not know. What do I wish that someone could have helped me to understand?

First and foremost, **I wish that someone would have helped me understand the difference between participating in the ecclesia of God and in the organized Church.** By that I mean the difference between sharing my life with those who imply they are the Lord’s by their participation in the institutional forms of church life, and those in whom the Spirit of Jesus is truly living and reigning. All the joy of my walk has come from my fellowship with the latter group of men and women. The ecclesia of God is not invisible.

The second thing I wish is **that someone would have helped me focus day by day on the truth that is revealed in the Holy Scriptures alone.** Somehow, largely unconsciously, I became convinced that I had to read other books, study other peoples’ ideas about the scriptures, and implement someone else’s idea about how to live the life of Christ Jesus. It is embarrassing to admit how many years I tried to follow Jesus without giving his written word priority in my daily life. Even more, how far from an intimate walk with him I was in those days—even after I began to read the Holy Scriptures day by day. I was focused on reading them, not meeting the Lord Jesus as I read. A true discipling friend would have spotted that. It is possible to be very religious and not a disciple of Jesus.

The third thing I wish is **that someone would have helped me understand the nature of a truly Christian marriage.** All the examples in my life suggested that the work of serving the organized Church took priority over the responsibility I had—given by the Lord!—of caring for and discipling my wife, and my children when they came along. The implicit message I had received was, “the ordained ministry of the Church comes first, the family comes second.” I now know what a damnable lie that is, but for many years I did not. The institutional Church, as I experienced it, brooked no rivals. It did not teach me that my marriage and family were central to my ministry rather than an afterthought. I believed I had a ministry and a marriage, but my marriage was in truth part of my divine calling to ministry.

My fourth desire would be **that someone would have come alongside me when our children were young enough to still be shaped in the ways of the Lord.** Someone who could have lovingly helped us see that our children were being disciplined by the culture more than by their parents and faith community.

When I look at my own list of things I wish I had known sooner, one thing stands out above all else. **I wish I had known a disciple-making elder when I was younger.** I knew true believers, but I did not know a discipling Christian.

Till the day I die, this is what I want to help other believers to be: Disciple-makers.



If you have found this booklet helpful, have more questions or would like more help to become a disciple-making disciple of Jesus Christ, write to us at the following address: info@namsnetwork.com or directly to the author and leader of NAMS, Canon Rev. Dr Jon Shuler: jon@namsnetwork.com

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What is NAMS?

NAMS stands for New Anglican Missionary Society. We are a community of pioneering, global church planters engaged in calling the faithful Church of Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to be obedient to the final command of Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20) by making disciple that make disciples, raising leaders that make disciples and planting churches that make disciples.

We are headquartered in Pawleys Island, South Carolina, USA. NAMS colleagues and associates are making new disciples and planting new communities of faith on 5 continents and are working in or developing work in 42 nations.

You can get more information about us at our website: www.namsnetwork.com or by writing to us at info@namsnetwork.com

Check out our Youtube channel 'NAMS Network' for more disciple-making resources that we have produced to help Christians obey Jesus' final command.

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