

Following Christ: Disciple – Student



Slice F2

Disciple – Student

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1 Memory Verse

John 8:31-32 (ESV)

31 'So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free".'

2 Disciple – Student

A new believer is not only called into a relationship with Jesus but is also called to serve. Note how the gospels describe the method Jesus used to call people to follow Him.

Matthew 4:18-20 (ESV)

18 'While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him.'

Each believer is called into service; they become disciples learning at the feet of the master. This is done by spending time with Him, reading the Bible, attending Sunday services, attending Bible studies, and through prayer.

John 8:31-32 (ESV)

31 'So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free".'

2.1 *The Rabbi and his Talmidim*

Yeshua was a rabbi (teacher), and those who learned of Him were His *talmidim* (students), who would study their Rabbi's teachings. The talmidim of today must also study Yeshua and His teachings, but not just to accumulate knowledge. The study of God's word is worship for the Hebrew mind: 'Greeks study in order to comprehend, the Hebrews study in order to revere' (Abraham J. Heschel).

The word 'disciple' (*mathētēs* in Greek) means literally, 'learner' or 'pupil,' another word for talmidim. In the Gospels, it usually refers to one who is constantly associated with a reputable teacher with a particular set of views. A leading rabbi would gather talmidim around him, who would follow him wherever he went. They would listen to him, follow his teachings, emulate him, and even copy his style of dress, and assist him with his work.

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We see this pattern reflected in the Gospels. For example, Yeshua said, 'A disciple is not above his teacher.... It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher....' (Matthew 10:24-25).

Understanding the teachings of Yeshua as being in the manner of a Jewish rabbi enables us to read the Gospels in their true colours and with freshness. For this we use Hebrew, not Greek spectacles. In Matthew 28:19, Yeshua gives His disciples a commission, which involves not just bringing others to salvation, but also discipleship! Making disciples involves teaching the whole Bible, which includes eschatology (end times), a much-neglected study in today's churches.

Yeshua calls us to obey Him as disciples. In the Upper Room, Jesus exhorts the Twelve as their Rabbi and Lord (*kyrios*). One who has a right to command: "'You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you' (John 13:13-15).

3 Read the Bible Daily

The Bible is not a book, it is a library made up of 66 books; the Latin word *Biblia*, literally means 'books'. There are 39 Old Covenant books, and 27 New Covenant books, which were composed by 40 different writers from all walks of life. These books were written over a period of 1 500 years, yet the Bible have one consistent storyline running all the way through, and just one ultimate author - God. The Bible has no equal, it is the best-selling book of all time, having sold around five billion copies to date (170 000 Bibles are either sold or given away every day), in over 3 000 different languages. It records the story of creation, the devastating results of the fall and the unfolding plan of the life, death, resurrection, and return of God's Son, the Lord and Saviour, Jesus that was conceived in eternity and revealed through the prophets. Jesus will in time return to earth and rule over His Millennial Kingdom and, at the end of a thousand years, He will establish a New Heaven and a New Earth.

Many of the authors of scripture would have been considered uneducated labourers, such as fishermen, farmers or herdsmen. These authors were not academics, yet the Bible is considered a literary masterpiece. It has challenged the greatest minds of history and stood the test of time. Despite many attempts to discredit the Bible, historical discoveries through archaeology are continually proving the Word of God to be true and accurate. The most famous example of this is the Dead Sea scrolls. The Bible answers the most important questions for mankind: Who am I? Where did I come from? What is the meaning of life? Is there life after death? How should people live their lives? And most importantly, is there a God?

The Bible is given by the inspiration of God:

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2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV)

‘All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.’

The power of the Holy Spirit moved men to record the sacred words of Scripture, which gives us unshakeable confidence in the authority and wisdom contained in the writings.

4 Reading God’s Word

To read God’s word, you obviously need to have a Bible. If you do not yet have a Bible, Church on the Way recommends the ESV Study Bible or the Zondervan NASB Study Bible. These versions are easier to read, and both have good study guides to help you understand the scriptures.

Always start your Bible reading with prayer, because it is the Holy Spirit that will illuminate God’s word.

Following Jesus as his disciple means learning from Him so that your life begins to conform itself to His teaching and value system. Since Jesus is not here in the flesh, the best way to learn from Jesus is to read His Teachings in the Bible.

Always start by using your study Bible and first do some research about the book of the Bible you are about to read. In your study Bible, you will learn about the author, date, theme of the book, key verses, why the author wrote the book, and other relevant facts. This information is valuable as understanding the context of a book of the Bible is very important in understanding the scriptures in it. Remember also, none of the books of the Bible were written with chapters and verses, these were added in much later as a means of locating Scripture. The Scriptures are written with a flow that is often interrupted by chapters and verses. One of the most common errors among Christians is reading a Bible verse in isolation and attempting to add meaning to it, which is a sure-fire way to misinterpret the meaning of a verse. Verses must be read in context with the chapters and verses before and after them.

A daily reading guide is very important, and there are several strategies suggested that allow a person to read the Bible in a year. However, any Bible teacher would prefer that a person reads half the Bible in a year and understands what they have read, rather than the whole Bible with little comprehension of the background and context of the books they have read. That is why a study Bible is recommended and the reader encouraged to always read the scriptures with the aid of the relevant study guide information.

The daily reading can be divided into three parts:

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1. Genesis to Esther, which includes the Torah (Pentateuch) and the books of history.
2. Job to Malachi, which includes the books of wisdom and the prophets.
3. The New Testament.

5 Learning to Pray

Prayer is an extremely important part of a believer's relationship with God. God is our 'Abba' Father and He desires that we develop a relationship with Him founded in prayer. A believer does not have to be eloquent and spout grandiose words to impress God. Praying is talking directly to God in our own words, communicating about our feelings, concerns, desires, and events affecting our lives. Praying is not petitioning God for selfish gain. Most of our prayers should actually be bringing others before God.

The Acronym ACTS is an aid to help new believers learn how to pray:

5.1 Adoration

The Lord's Prayer teaches us to start our prayers with adoration. God is worthy of our love and praise. When we pray to the Father, it is important to establish Him on His throne, Almighty God, who is in control of all things. Being grateful and acknowledging the privilege we have in approaching the throne of grace is an important part of prayer.

Praying into prophecy is an important part of adoration. God is moving mankind to an expected end, and He requires us to pray that His Kingdom on earth is achieved and that our King of Kings takes His rightful place on the throne of David in Jerusalem.

5.2 Confession

God hates pride as it elevates the individual as being more important than others. Believers are to take on the mind of Jesus, which has an attitude of service and putting others first. Therefore, confessing our sins, and recognising we are not perfect is an important part of attaining humility before God. Recognising our weaknesses then enables us to ask God for help to avoid sinning and to escape the traps of the evil one.

5.3 Thanksgiving

Recognising in faith that God is working in our lives daily, caring for and providing for us is extremely important in our nurturing of a mature relationship with Him. Giving thanks to God and being grateful to Him in ALL circumstances is an important part of prayer and worship. God promises that He will supply all our needs and giving thanks to Him for this is a mark of faith.

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5.4 Supplication

The last letter 's', for Supplication, which means 'asking for something.' This does not mean that prayer is dominated by seeking only the things that are important to our needs. Certainly, we should pray that our Yahweh provider takes care of our needs, but we should also pray humbly seeking His guidance, provision, and protection.

Remember that our supplication should not only be about ourselves but should also include:

- Family and friends.
- Your church and the Elders. Also, any of the church family in need.
- Work colleagues.
- Your country and government leaders.
- Israel is the centre of God's plans and purpose for the future and, therefore, requires our prayers. Prophecy is the full gospel message - we are all commissioned to be watchmen.

6 Set Aside a 'Quiet Time'

Having a 'quiet time', where they can spend time reading the Bible, praying, and listening to God is essential for all believers. You cannot build a relationship with God by continually neglecting your quiet time. Believers who allow this to happen never mature as believers and will very likely fall away from serving God. The more dedicated the believer is in developing their relationship with God, the stronger their relationship with God will become.

All believers still have a sinful nature; we are flawed and need to stay close to God to be able to continually overcome our weaknesses. We are like an urn with a tap at the bottom that can never be fully turned off and leaks the Holy Spirit all the time. Church attendance, home group attendance and quiet times are when the urn is continually being refilled with the Holy Spirit. Neglecting these times of fellowship with God is not only not being refilled but opening the tap to drain the Holy Spirit away more quickly.

A prayer time of at least 15 – 20 minutes before going to work in the morning is a good way to start the day. The believer is committing their day to the Lord and looking for His leading and guidance in their lives. They can ask God to direct their steps, guide their actions and keep them from temptation. When a believer does this, they can then be assured that whatever comes their way during the day is from the Lord and that He has a plan and purpose behind it. Then in the evening, the believer can set aside time to thank the Lord for His hand on them that day, and for the events of the day - good or bad! Bible reading can also be done then. For married couples, it is recommended that the evening prayer and Bible reading be done together. Those that pray and read together, stay together!

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Believers should continually be in conversation with God and not limit their prayers only to a quiet time. Eventually, a believer will be able to be aware of God's continual presence with His children and be able to remain in touch with Him throughout the day.

The last point regarding quiet times is learning to listen for God's guidance as a relationship involves a two-way conversation. God can guide your thoughts during prayer time if you allow time for Him to respond to your prayers. Also, God often uses His word to speak into situations in our lives, both while we are reading His word and praying over what we are reading, and by bringing His word into our minds as we pray.

While the disciples were able to follow Jesus and to learn from Him directly, the believer today follows Jesus spiritually, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit:

- Each believer must see themselves as a disciple learning from their master. This means that they must sit at the feet of the master and learn. This requires attending church, attending Bible studies, reading the Bible and praying often and regularly. Believers must humble themselves before their master and seek His guidance for their lives; they are called with a holy calling and are required to seek God to ascertain what that calling is.

You now have a road map to a relationship with Jesus, the journey of a thousand kilometers starts with the first step.

7 Practically

- A new believer is not only called into a relationship with Jesus, but is also called to serve, so continue to seek the Lord for guidance as to your giftings and for clarity on what service the Lord has planned for you.
- Ensure that you set aside time every day for prayer and reading your Bible; a study Bible such as the ESV, or the Zondervan NASB Study Bible is highly recommended. Plan a reading programme that allows you to cover more than just one book of the Bible at a time. Remember that learning from Jesus as the Word of God helps you to conform to His teachings and value systems.
- Learn to listen for God's guidance during your quiet times.
- Prayer is an extremely important part of a believer's relationship with God. God is our 'Abba' Father and He desires that we develop a relationship with Him founded in prayer. Use the Acronym ACTS as an aid to guide you through your prayer time.

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8 Proclamation

'I declare that I am a much-beloved child of God, who has been called into a partnership of service with Him. As part of my developing relationship with Him, I am determined to daily spend time in prayer and reading His word, looking to grow and mature in the service of my loving Father. I willingly step forward on the path He has set before me, believing that He is always with me and will never fail me.'

9 Prayer

'Thank you, Lord Jesus that you have not only chosen me for salvation but also called me into service with you. As I spend time with you in prayer and reading your word, I ask that you guide me in my understanding and knowledge of you. I understand there is a long road to growing and maturing into the servant that you want me to be, so I commit my life's journey into Your hands and seek Your guidance, direction, help, and support. May I, through your abundant grace, succeed in all the plans you have for my life.'